



Don't be a shlub at the Hub: New "Virtual Borough" has been a positive experience

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Recent press releases report that the Hub has resulted in three times "faster" approvals.

Although some of these reports seem suspect, the Hub (albeit with some bugs) has been an enhancement over the normal "borough filing" and approval process.

For one, initial job meetings which may be done prior to filing have created a much needed "pre-construction" design dialogue which goes far toward alleviating many objections by allowing design/code questions to be resolved and incorporated into plans prior to filing.

In addition the CCD1 and ZD1 process has been proven to be light-years quicker to get an answer from Hub staff, although one may run into the pitfalls of a technical 3rd party review upon post audit by the DOB upper management technical staff.

Also, Hub staff has been accessible to give guidance and answer questions as well as being helpful and expediting answers to questions that may require a more "policy" oriented answer or review (stalled sites, old code/new code protocol) by DOB executive staff.

One early issue seemed to be an electronic failure of the system to lock in staff appointments which early on resulted in some "broken" appointments. This issue seems to be rectified.

The wholesale benefit of the one- stop shopping by coordination of the ancillary agencies is still an immense benefit and we can only hope someday the FDNY will join the fray.

One thing about the Hub that must be publicized to clients in order to utilize the Hub's full benefits is one can no longer file incomplete plans. In order to take full benefit and not bog down the review process and avail themselves of the expedited process a minimum of 80% CD's must be utilized for filing.

This will reduce changes and questions and thus minimize objections, determinations, post approval amendments and problems.

Nowhere is this concern more at issue than in the mechanical submissions where drawings historically lag the architectural and structural submissions.

This will also provide the basics for a more efficient "phased" permitting (excavation and foundation, etc.) if so desired since all plans will be in and reviewable (even underground plumbing, SOE, etc.)

The Hub has also allowed a more expedited review of PAA's and required item plans such as site safety, tenant protection, temporary standpipe, etc.

Also, the expediency works to one's advantage given the DOB's new rigidity regarding the approval protocol for the proper and required sequencing of plan review and construction signoffs (i.e. demo approvals and S/O before ALT1 or NB permits; SOE drawing approvals prior to excavation and foundation permit, etc.)

Many jobs have combined the Hub with the hi-rise task force which utilizes an ongoing personal involvement and monitoring of the job by the inspectorial areas through the construction process to

allow for expedited inspections and signoffs through all functional areas (construction, plumbing, elevator, and boiler) during the TCO/FCO process.

In sum, the new "Virtual Borough" has been a positive experience given the DOB's commitment to make it work, the assignment of excellent top management and a streamlined process as it only seems to be getting better.

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