

# **EPIC PROGRAM (Expedited Permitting, Inspection and Certification)**

## **POLICY NO. 43-01**

### **PURPOSE:**

To offer an expedited permitting and inspection process that provides Hernando County a competitive edge in the relocation and retention of businesses and industries that create value-added jobs thereby enhancing the local economy.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

The objective of the EPIC Program is to allow companies expanding in or relocating to Hernando County to construct needed facilities and infrastructure within a timeframe that will meet company goals and/or deadlines. The EPIC Program will provide an expedited permitting and inspection process that ultimately reduces the overall time to Certificate of Occupancy.

This timeframe will typically be shorter than the time it would take the project under the standard permitting procedures without special assistance. The EPIC Program does not eliminate or circumvent existing land use regulations or construction standards. It is a recognized Hernando County Policy to accelerate the construction process by facilitating decision making regarding the development of the land and facilities in a more expeditious manner.

### **CRITERIA:**

The eligible company can be either an existing business wishing to relocate or expand, or a business new to Hernando County. The Office of Economic Development will determine the eligibility of a company to utilize the process. To qualify for the EPIC Program, a company must meet the following criteria:

1. The company must be a county designated targeted industry or a specific support business to the targeted industry base as determined by the Office of Economic Development.
2. The company must have an average wage that equals or exceeds the Annual Average Wage for all industries in Hernando County, as published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.
3. The relocation or expansion must create a minimum of 10 new jobs or have a capital investment greater than \$ 1,000,000.
4. The company must have a critical timing need that would jeopardize the project if the expedited process is not utilized.

## **EPIC TEAM:**

With the full support of the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners and the County Administrator, the Economic Development Director will act as the EPIC Facilitator. The Facilitator will have the authority to call a meeting of the EPIC Team and will act as the liaison between departments and the customer should any significant concerns arise during the process. Depending on the scope of the project, different individuals/departments may be called upon for different projects. As appropriate, the Facilitator may also request that external agencies participate in the EPIC Team meetings.

Team members will be composed of various county departments including but not limited to: Administration, Building, Permitting, Zoning, Planning, Utilities, Public Works, Engineering, Stormwater, Fire, Airport, and Economic Development. As needed, a representative from other external agencies such as the Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Transportation, etc., may be asked to participate. Team members should be decision-makers within their department or agency. To the extent feasible, decisions will be made during team meetings.

There must be a general understanding that "time is of the essence" and when an EPIC meeting is called, members are asked to make every reasonable attempt to attend or send suitable representation. The goal of the program is early identification of potential hurdles, problem/issue solving and expedited identification of options and resolution.

## **COMMENCEMENT:**

When a company is identified as eligible to utilize this process, the EPIC Team will host a "Kick-Off Meeting" with the company, their contractor, engineer and others as appropriate to further define the parameters of the project, set expectations and discuss timelines. The company should provide as much information as possible, in advance, to facilitate the process. However, at a minimum, the following information concerning the proposed development shall be provided by the company:

1. All proposed uses
2. Square footage of all structures
3. Building square footage for each use, if more than one use is proposed
4. Total employment
5. Location, to include Property Identification Number
6. Utility information (Information related to special needs concerning water and sewer)
7. Aerial photo of site and surrounding area
8. Special traffic issues (multiple working shifts, delivery and pickup issues, etc.)
9. Preliminary engineering to include a proposed site plan and/or conceptual building construction plan.
10. Estimated timetable for permitting, construction and occupancy

## **TIME FRAME FOR PROCESSING:**

Projects selected for this process will be prioritized and provided expedited permitting and priority inspections. Upon receipt of a project's **complete** permit submittal, initial department review times should not exceed 10 working days. Necessary land use applications and approvals are not included in this timeframe.

The specific timeframe for a project should be discussed and developed as a result of the initial meeting between the applicant and the EPIC Team. It is understood that certain projects will require more or less time than other projects depending upon complexity. The timeframe for processing is dependent on receipt of approval from all applicable external agencies.

The EPIC Facilitator will provide regular updates to the County Administrator on the status of the project.

**CONSTRUCTION/CERTIFICATION:**

During construction, the project will be identified as an EPIC Program project and will receive the benefit of expedited inspections, re-inspections through construction to the issuance of Certificate of Occupancy. Throughout this process, issues or concerns shall immediately be directed to the Facilitator who will continue to act as the liaison with the customer until the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.

**Close-Out Meeting.**

When the project has reached at least 75% completion, a Close-Out Meeting with the contractor, Engineer of Record and all appropriate county departments will be scheduled by the Facilitator. The purpose of the meeting will be to identify outstanding items or concerns and set the timeline and final steps for issuance of Certificate of Occupancy.

**PROJECT DEBRIEF:**

Within two (2) weeks of the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy, the Facilitator will schedule a Project Debrief meeting. The goal of the debrief meeting is to provide project feedback, review processes utilized, identify and discuss issues encountered, gain efficiencies and continuously improve the program for the customer and county staff.

Adopted: January 14, 2020