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SHOPPING CENTERS

By Matthew Hammond, PE, Traffic Planning & Design

**Time value
of access permits**

Without safe and efficient access to the motoring public, a

development is simply a landmark. Without access to a development, consumers cannot purchase merchandise and people cannot get to work or get to their homes. Developments are major investments and must be designed and constructed efficiently in order to generate profit. Eliminat-



Matthew Hammond

ing one plan submission from the approval process can save months on the construction schedule, as well as significant sums of money in carrying costs. An experienced Traffic Engineer, whose career focuses solely on obtaining these access permits, can ensure a developer's project is not delayed.

In order for a development to be accessible and profitable, access permits (HOPs in Pennsylvania, MAAs in New Jersey, Entrance Permits in Delaware, etc.) must be obtained from the proper governing authorities. The best method

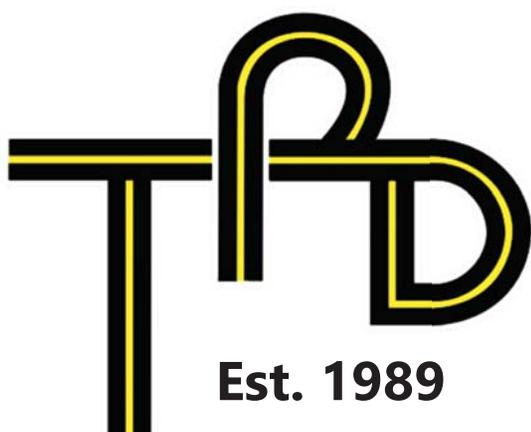
to ensure that such permits are in place is to hire the engineer most familiar with the review agencies and governing bodies, the engineer that deals with these same agencies and governing bodies on a daily basis and with the expertise to obtain permits quickly.

The value of timely access permits can best be measured in time-saving dollars through the entire development process. Once a developer purchases or takes an option on a piece of ground, the clock starts ticking and the dollars for soft costs and interest/option expenses start flowing. Longer-than-required access permit approvals not only increase these costs, but also push revenue stream from rents/sales further into the future. The most efficient way to combat these rising costs is to turn the land into an accessible development as quickly as possible.

Too often Traffic Engineers are selected based on their price for services with the job going to the low bidder. Many developers believe that all engineers are created equal and therefore, will select the one with the best price. On the approval triangle of Time, Quality and Cost, the developer can control two of the three items. Since quality is a prerequisite for approvals, the choice comes down to time or cost. The firm that can gain the approvals in the shortest time is likely going to cost more simply because their engineers' expertise is developed through better training and higher compensation in order to retain their employees.

Cost is driven by time, and the interest clock is always ticking. This is why fast approvals and easily constructable designs are necessary for developments to be considered a success. Having all approvals in hand except for the access permit(s) makes this situation even more exasperating. With an experienced Traffic Engineer on the project team, access permit issues will not hold the project back.

Matthew Hammond serves as executive vice president of Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. (TPD). He was recently named a Rising Star in the Civil Engineering industry by *CE News* magazine. ■

Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.www.TrafficPD.com

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