Streamlined environmental review processes overview

States and cities use the environmental review process to determine whether a proposed development will have a negative impact on the environment, and to identify potential alternatives or strategies to reduce or eliminate those impacts.

In some places the environmental review process can take several years—deterring new development by lengthening the timeline and raising costs. The extended timeline may be the result of legitimate environmental issues; however, in some cases the process is prolonged by duplicative or conflicting requirements, inconsistencies in the level of review required, other procedural inefficiencies, and extended litigation. Streamlining these processes can help cities, towns, and counties avoid undue delays and uncertainty in the development timeline—both of which may deter developers looking for a site for a new project—while providing a comparable level of protection for the environment. While environmental review requirements are in most places determined by state law, cities, towns, and counties are typically responsible for implementing the environmental review law locally. Those jurisdictions seeking to increase the supply of housing may wish to assess what steps they can take at the local level and what changes can be made at the state level to streamline the process.

Learn more about how local jurisdictions can also streamline the review process for all permits.