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Former city official opens practice to help developers adapt to building-code changes

Robert LiMandri has created a division at Vidaris to help builders get through new building-code requirements.

[Daniel Geiger](#)

Published: April 21, 2015 - 1:21 pm

The former head of the Department of Buildings is aiming to help developers adapt to the city's new building codes, which were implemented late last year.

Robert LiMandri, who ran the city's Department of Buildings for five years before [joining architecture firm Vidaris](#) last year, has established a new division within Vidaris that will focus on assisting developers clear the requirements.

Mr. LiMandri said the codes have created an extra hurdle for builders at a time when construction is booming and the Department of Buildings is backlogged with projects waiting for approval.

"There's confusion about the changes," Mr. LiMandri said. "It has become a lot more stringent."

A big element of the new codes include making buildings safer, but these changes have had a direct influence on design. Developers constructing glassy high-end residential towers, for instance, have to design and install enhanced fire-protection systems to compensate for the bigger window lines, which can feed a blaze. Additionally, emergency elevators, which are used to evacuate a building in the event of a fire, require a special design that will properly ventilate smoke.

"More and more, builders are looking for experts to help them vet their designs" before handing them to the Buildings Department, Mr. LiMandri said.

Making sure that projects are approved expeditiously has become a major concern for developers, given the rising costs of land, building materials and labor. There is mounting pressure to quickly get through the construction process in order to alleviate carrying costs. Developers also want to complete their projects while the real estate market is still hot.

Vidaris, a company that focuses on building façade design, was acquired last month by management and private-equity firm Cortec Group. Mr. LiMandri said Cortec wants to make more acquisitions to build Vidaris into a firm with a broader array of specialized construction advisory expertise.

"What I'm doing is a step in that direction," said Mr. LiMandri. "I think there's a lot of room to add other specialized expertise."

Correction: Vidaris is an architecture firm. That fact of misstated in an earlier version of this article published online April 21, 2015.



Associated Press

Robert LiMandri has established a new division at Vidaris to help developers understand new building codes.

