

HOW TO

5 Reasons to Hire a Code Consultant

HOW YOU CAN SAVE TIME, MONEY, AND ENERGY ON YOUR NEXT BUILDING PROJECT.

By Maia Welbel

As building technology progresses, building codes become increasingly important. These regulations address public health, safety, and environmental protection while ensuring sustainable and livable conditions for generations to come. But they're also changing rapidly. In order to be effective, architects and engineers must make decisions that comply with regularly updated codes, revolving around everything from fire and earthquake safety to light and air quality.

Vidaris, a consulting firm with the latest building code know-how, helps design teams make these decisions. Senior Principal **Robert LiMandri** joined

Vidaris in 2014 and established the firm's code advisory division after serving as the New York City Department of Buildings Commissioner. During his time in city government, he saw how architects and expeditors often faced confusion around compliance, and he wanted to correct that. "Code consulting firms like Vidaris streamline the arduous and confusing process. We want to help design teams bring their projects to fruition," LiMandri says.

Hiring a code consultant like Vidaris can come with another significant advantage because Vidaris has a holistic suite of complimentary service offerings. With focused departments for façade design, roofing, and waterproofing

Vidaris consultants cover services including handicapped accessibility reviews, due diligence surveys, fire and safety evaluation, and green consulting services for rating systems like LEED, WELL, and Fitwel.



measures as well as both energy efficiency and sustainability, this allows Vidaris' code consultants to interact in-house with other experts in their own focused practice area, and allows Vidaris' clients to get top-of-the-line service. **Matrix Development Group** recently worked with Vidaris on a global logistics center project in Staten Island.

"Matrix has had a significant relationship with Vidaris since the project's conception, and they have been of tremendous value," says **Joseph Taylor**, president and CEO of Matrix Development Group. "Our involvement together started as code review and has expanded to every area of the project, master plan, and individual building design. Our relationship has saved Matrix significant time as we work through the approvals and permitting process. Bob and his team at Vidaris have been an invaluable member of our team."

These are just a few reasons why you should work with a consultant on your next building project.

1

FOCUS ON YOUR FIELD OF EXPERTISE, AND LET A CODE CONSULTANT DO THE REST.

Architects and engineers are hired to design buildings—they shouldn't spend their time bogged down in textbooks and accreditation. Code consultants take care of those responsibilities accurately and efficiently.

2

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CODE CONSULTANTS' DIVERSE EXPERIENCE.

Any regulatory compliance issue you face on a building project has probably also been faced by many before you. Consultants can implement strategies they know succeed because they've applied them in the past with clients in similar situations, saving you valuable time and resources. "We are there as a sounding board, offering ideas and solutions," LiMandri says.

> **REAL-LIFE SCENARIO:** For the development of four warehouse buildings on a 3.4 million-square-foot brownfield site on Staten Island, Vidaris consultants drew from their expertise in master planning, code advisory, and expediting. They consulted on each step of development, from the design and layout of the buildings to strategically engaging governing agencies to speed up the process.

3

KNOW YOUR BIGGEST HURDLES EARLY AND MITIGATE YOUR RISKS.

Thanks to their comprehensive familiarity with federal, state, and local building laws, code consultants can identify potential conflicts or violations early in the development process, heading off the need for a costly and time intensive redesign later.

> **REAL-LIFE SCENARIO:** Vidaris recently worked on a new hotel and residential building development in Manhattan that was cited for not having compliant windows in every unit. Vidaris advised the architect on how to adjust the location of the windows to satisfy code requirements for fire separation distance and window opening area, and as a result, all units were preserved, saving the owner/developer thousands of dollars.

4

STAY ABREAST OF THE LATEST REGULATIONS.

Building codes are updated every three to five years at the federal, state, and local levels. Code consultants can point out new terms in the legislation and provide context for why those provisions were adopted. It's the consultant's job to research and understand how code matures over time, so you can be confident your project complies with the most current standards. Vidaris also sits on multiple code revision committees to provide feedback to code officials and help shape the next code iterations.

> **REAL-LIFE SCENARIO:** When an affordable housing development in Manhattan was damaged by Hurricane Sandy, municipal agencies amended flood maps, raised designated flood elevations, and introduced new requirements for properties in flood zones. Vidaris helped the design team navigate this new legislation and secured a code interpretation that eliminated the need for a major building system redesign.

5

NAVIGATE CONFLICTS BETWEEN BUILDING CODES AND ZONING LAWS.

In addition to building codes, which regulate how a development is constructed, design teams must adhere to local zoning laws, which regulate what types of developments can be constructed in a particular area and how they relate to their surroundings. Code consultants can guide you when it's unclear how to integrate and reconcile these requirements/mandates. They can also collaborate with the city's building department to settle more complex compliance issues.

> **REAL-LIFE SCENARIO:** Vidaris recently worked with the development team on a high-rise development in Brooklyn that met objections in municipal review due to issues with the building footprint, its impact on a nearby railroad, and vehicular access. The consultants assisted with a redesign that complied with code and zoning, expediting the project review process and ultimately getting the project approved.

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