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# **Analysis of Code Enforcement and Implementation, Permitting Requirements and Fees, and Training and Education in Florida Jurisdictions**

RINKER-CR-2018-102

## **Final Report**

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## Executive Summary

This study of permitting and code enforcement in the State of Florida was conducted by the University of Florida's Center for Advanced Construction Information Modelling (CACIM) in partnership with Building a Safer Florida (BASf). The study consisted of a survey distributed to a list of building officials from all counties. A similar survey was previously distributed in two rounds. Because the findings of the original study were not conclusive, multiple changes were made to this study in an attempt to get more accurate results. Firstly, the survey was edited to include more skip-logic and survey flow conditions in order to address the questions to the appropriate building official. Secondly, the survey was distributed to a more comprehensive list and retired officials were not allowed to take the survey. Multiple email reminders were sent out throughout the duration of the study. In addition, phone calls were made to building officials from all 67 counties to encourage them to take the survey.

The first question of the survey determined the eligibility of the participant to take the survey. Only officials employed by building departments were allowed to answer all the questions of the survey. The respondents, based on their license type, were presented with an appropriate set of questions. A demographics set of questions was common to all respondents. The survey consisted of five main sections, demographic questions, general jurisdictional and departmental questions, questions relating to training, questions relating to permitting and associated fee structures, and questions relating to code enforcement and associated fee structures. The survey questionnaire was shared for input with various stakeholders before the survey was administered.

The findings of the study are summarized in this report. Briefly, permitting and code enforcement in the State of Florida are not uniform among different counties. Many variations exist in departmental organization, roles and responsibilities, and pricing structures. To validate these findings, responses from all counties should be collected. Moreover, it is suggested that future studies should focus on personal interviews of department heads from each county and major jurisdiction in order to achieve more accurate, thorough, and complete participation across the board.

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## Background

This analysis is based on survey responses collected by the University of Florida's Center for Advanced Construction Information Modeling in partnership with Building a Safer Florida (BASf). The survey (See Appendix A) was developed to assess the current state of code enforcement and permitting across the State of Florida. Only currently licensed officials or those employed by a municipality or an official agency of the state of Florida were asked to complete the survey. This eligibility status was determined from the response to the first question of the survey (Q 0.0). Following this question, the respondents were asked to select their license(s) type from a list of valid options (Q 0.0.1). Based on their response to this question, the respondents were directed to a specific set of questions. All the eligible respondents were asked to answer demographic questions, questions about general jurisdictional and departmental information and then questions regarding training and information relating to interpretations. In addition to those aforementioned questions, respondents who held a 5001- Standard Inspector license were asked to answer questions related to code enforcement and associated fee structures. Questions about permitting and associated fee structures were administered to respondents with a 5002-Standard Plans Examiner license. Participants who selected both 5001 – Standard Inspector and 5002-Standard Plans Examiner, or 5003-Building Code Administrator were asked to answer all questions related to permitting and code enforcement. This logic is summarized in Table 2. The study received Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval from the University of Florida and the survey was administered through the online survey platform Qualtrics. The survey was distributed to a list of 5001, 5002 and 5003 license holders provided by DBPR. The survey was open for 5 months and 654 responses were collected. Out of those 654 respondents, 538 were employed and practicing licensees and were consequently allowed to complete the rest of the survey. However, only 119 respondents fully completed the survey. Hence, in the analysis of the data, each question has a different number of responses associated with it. The number of responses obtained from each county is summarized in Table 1.

The presented results are solely based on the average of the collected responses and rely on the accuracy and thoroughness of each of the individual respondents. While every effort was made to solicit results from across the state, full participation from every county would be required for a more holistic view of the current state of code enforcement and permitting in the state of Florida.

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Table 1. Summary of responses by county

| Responses from currently licensed officials who completed the survey |                     | Responses from officials who started the survey but did not finish it |                     |
|--|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| County   | Number of Responses | County  | Number of Responses |
| Alachua County   | 4                   | Alachua County  | 3                   |
| Bay County   | 5                   | Bay County  | 2                   |
| Broward County   | 12                  | Brevard County  | 8                   |
| Calhoun County   | 1                   | Broward County  | 31                  |
| Charlotte County   | 3                   | Charlotte County  | 3                   |
| Citrus County  | 2                   | Collier County  | 5                   |
| Clay County  | 1                   | Duval County  | 7                   |
| Collier County   | 7                   | Escambia County   | 2                   |
| Columbia County  | 1                   | Flagler County  | 3                   |
| Duval County   | 10                  | Highlands County  | 1                   |
| Escambia County  | 1                   | Hillsborough County   | 15                  |
| Flagler County   | 2                   | Indian River County   | 2                   |
| Hendry County  | 2                   | Lake County   | 4                   |
| Hernando County  | 1                   | Lee County  | 2                   |
| Highlands  | 1                   | Leon County   | 3                   |
| Hillsborough County  | 4                   | Manatee County  | 4                   |
| Indian River   | 1                   | Marion County   | 2                   |
| Lake County  | 4                   | Miami-Dade County   | 23                  |
| Lee County   | 3                   | Monroe County   | 1                   |
| Leon County  | 2                   | Nassau County   | 2                   |
| Liberty County   | 1                   | Okeechobee County   | 1                   |
| Manatee County   | 1                   | Osceola County  | 2                   |
| Marion County  | 3                   | Orange County   | 11                  |
| Miami-Dade County  | 8                   | Palm Beach County   | 19                  |
| Monroe   | 1                   | Pasco County  | 11                  |
| Nassau County  | 2                   | Pinellas County   | 12                  |
| Orange County  | 8                   | Polk County   | 1                   |
| Osceola County   | 1                   | Putnam County   | 1                   |
| Palm Beach County  | 1                   | St. Johns County  | 8                   |
| Pasco County   | 6                   | St. Lucie County  | 1                   |
| Pinellas County  | 6                   | Sarasota County   | 4                   |
| Polk County  | 2                   | Seminole County   | 3                   |
| Putnam   | 1                   | Suwannee County   | 1                   |
| Sarasota County  | 3                   | Volusia County  | 4                   |
| Seminole County  | 1                   | (blanks)  | 217                 |
| St. Johns  | 1                   |   |                     |
| Sumter County  | 2                   |   |                     |
| Suwannee County  | 1                   |   |                     |
| Volusia County   | 2                   |   |                     |
| Walton County  | 1                   |   |                     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>119</b>          | <b>Total</b>  | <b>419</b>          |



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Table 2. Organization of the Survey

| License Type                              | Questions to Answer  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | General  | License Specific   |
| <b>5001 - Standard Inspector</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic Questions</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>D. Code Enforcement and Associated Fee Structures</li> </ul>  |
| <b>5002 - Standard Plans Examiner</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Jurisdictional and Departmental Data</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C. Permitting and Associated Fee Structures</li> </ul>  |
| <b>5003 - Building Code Administrator</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training and Information Relating to Interpretations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C. Permitting and Associated Fee Structures</li> <li>D. Code Enforcement and Associated Fee Structures</li> </ul> |

## Survey Results

### Demographic Questions

The demographic questions asked in this survey focused on the roles, certifications, and gender of the professional being surveyed, as well as the geographical and population information for their jurisdiction. This section of the survey has seven questions out of which four questions (Q 0.1- Q 0.4) are related the definition of the jurisdictional area of the respondent. The remaining three questions (Q 0.5 – Q 0.7) are related to the licenses, roles, and gender of the respondent. Ninety-Five percent (95%) of the respondents who answered this questions were male and the remaining 5% were female.

Of the 67 counties in the State of Florida, responses were received from 43 counties. Complete responses were received from 40 counties. Figure 1 shows a map of the counties represented by complete responses, as well as the number of responses received within each county. The reported jurisdictions varied from the entire county (42%) to a city (39%) to some other types (19%). Those other types include

description of towns, school districts, or universities.

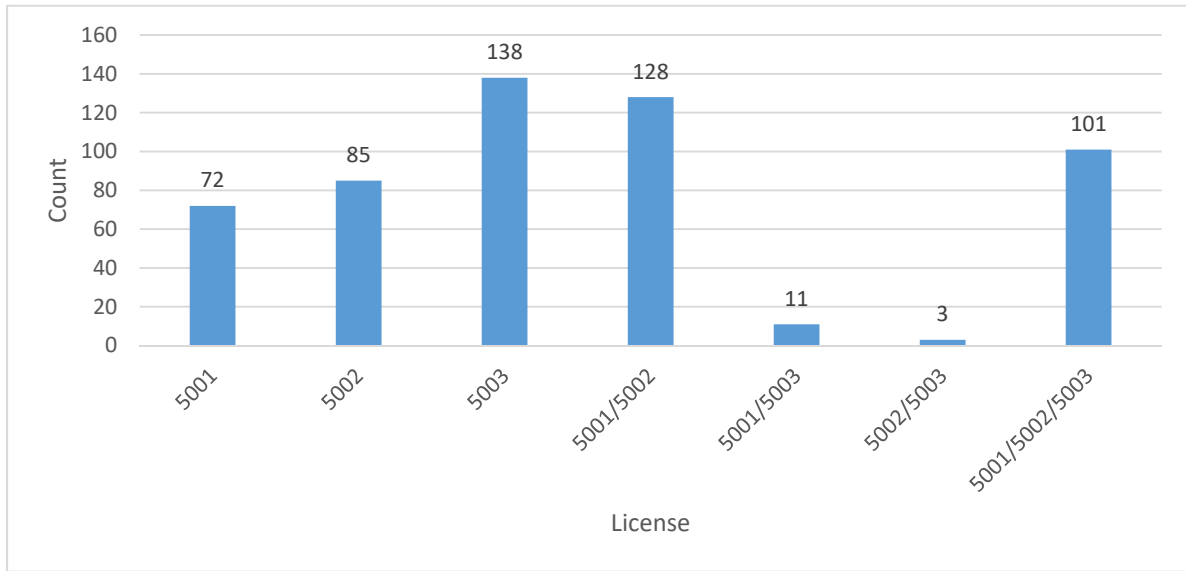


Figure 2 shows the distribution of the license types among respondents. As mentioned previously, the answer to this question determined the questions the set of questions that the respondents had to answer.

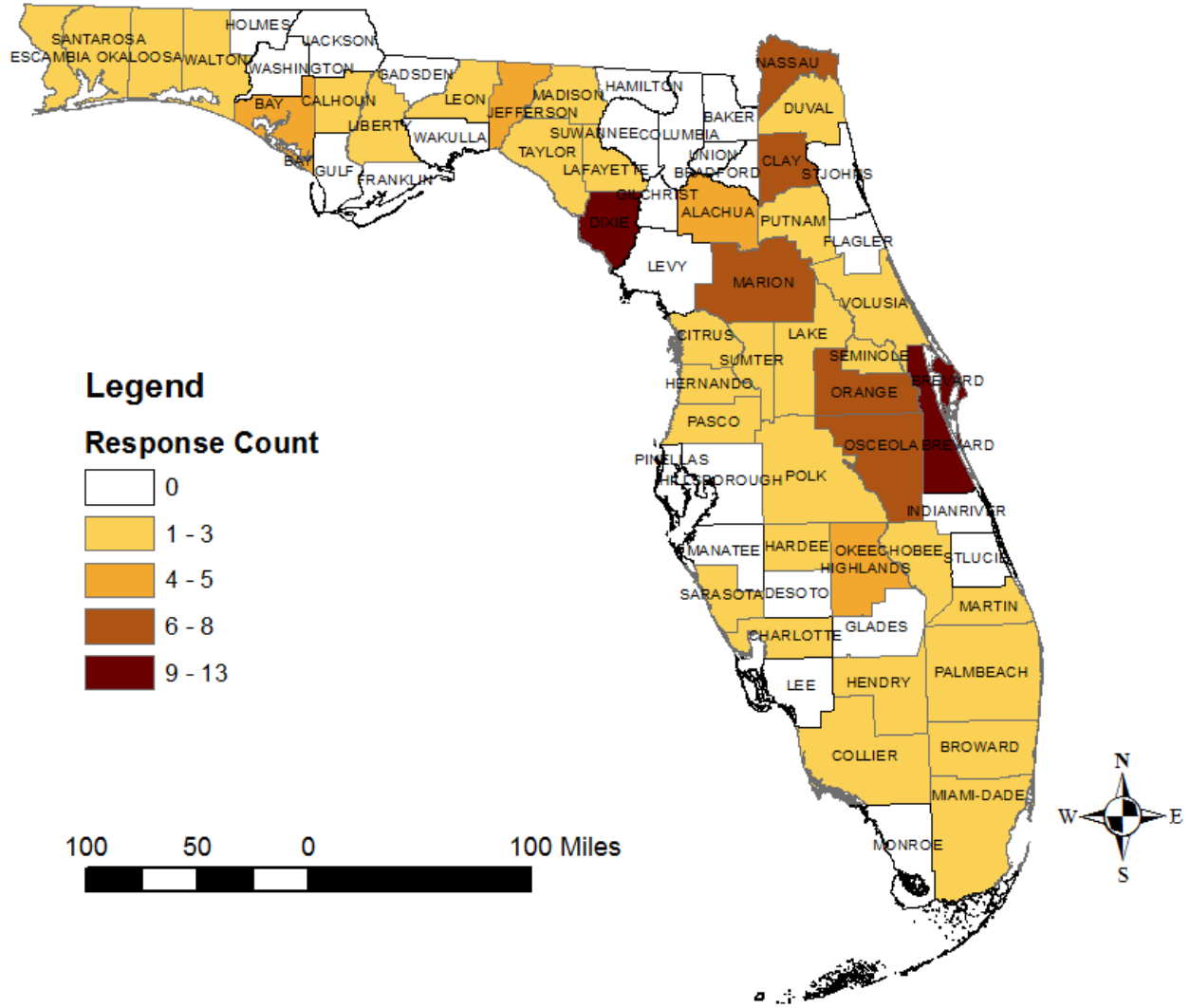


Figure 1. Survey Response Count by County

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The participants were asked to define their official job title and a total of 44 distinct titles were reported, with “Building Inspector” being the most frequent job title (23%). Table 3 summarizes the reported job titles. Finally, participants were asked to indicate which disciplines they were certified in. Figure 3 shows the responses grouped by discipline certifications. The most reported discipline certification was Building Commercial. Seven respondents indicate that they had no discipline certification. Of the 350 responses to this questions, 65 respondents chose other. The descriptions provided under “Other” included, engineered unit masonry, fire, LEED, coastal, floodplain, modular, medical gas, 1 & 2 family, and roofing.

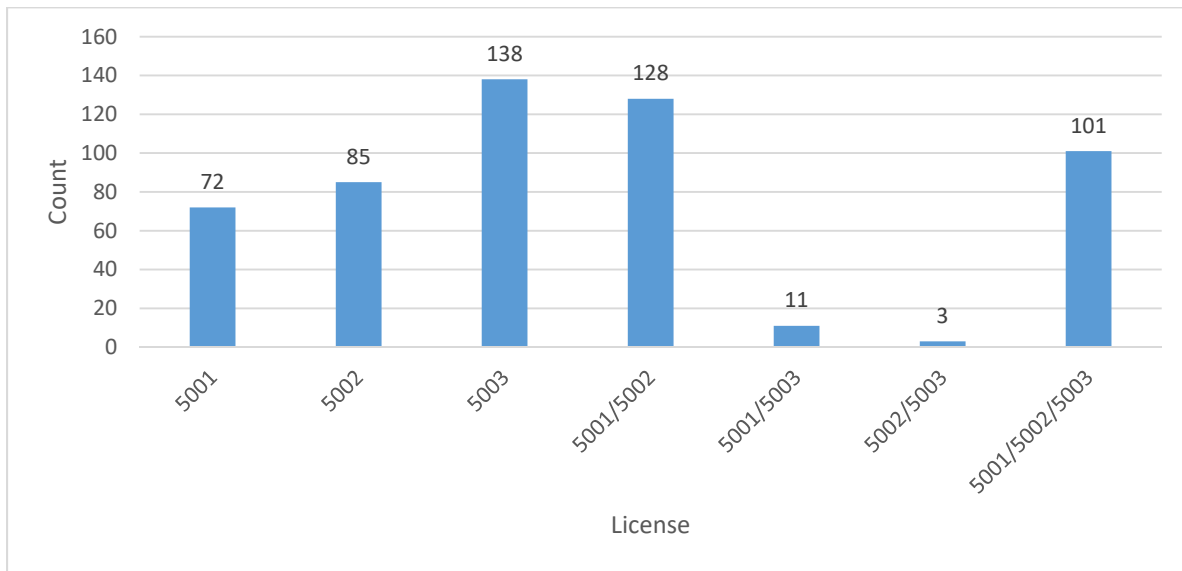


Figure 2. Reported License Types (n=538)

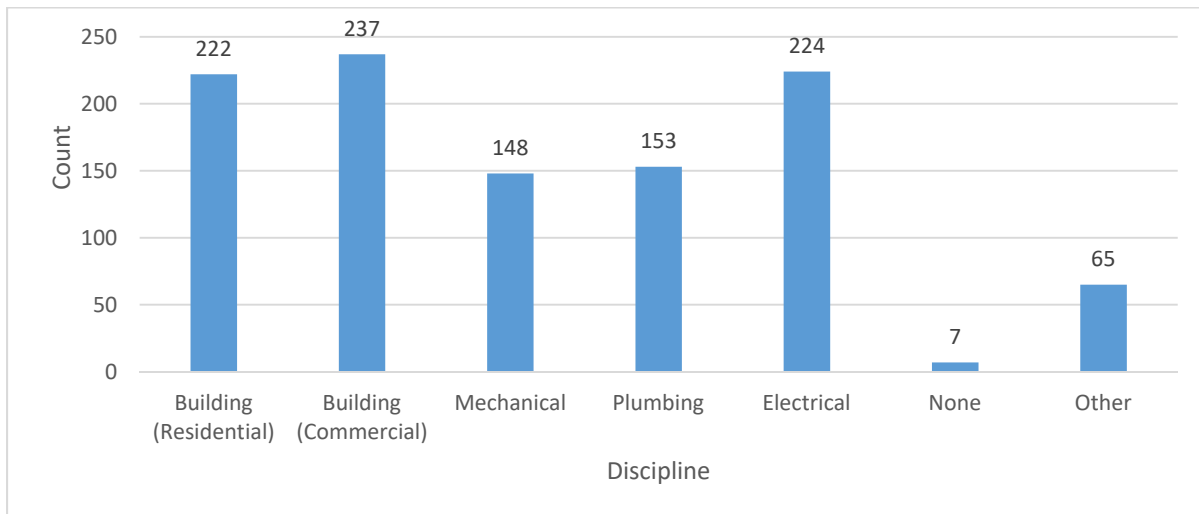


Figure 3. Certified Inspection Disciplines of Respondents (n=350, multiple responses allowed)

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Table 3. Reported Job Titles (n=350)

| Official Job Title                                   | Count      | Percentage  |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Assistant Building Official                          | 8          | 2%          |
| Building Official                                    | 65         | 19%         |
| Building Code Administrator                          | 6          | 2%          |
| Building Code Inspector                              | 7          | 2%          |
| Building Code Officer                                | 8          | 2%          |
| Building Inspector                                   | 81         | 23%         |
| Building System Coordinator                          | 2          | 1%          |
| CBO  | 6          | 2%          |
| Chief Building Inspector                             | 2          | 1%          |
| Chief Building Official                              | 8          | 2%          |
| Chief Electrical Inspector                           | 3          | 1%          |
| Chief Plans Examiner                                 | 2          | 1%          |
| Chief Plumbing Code Compliance Officer               | 1          | 0%          |
| Chief plumbing inspector                             | 2          | 1%          |
| Chief Plumbing Code Compliance Officer               | 1          | 0%          |
| Chief Structural Inspector                           | 2          | 1%          |
| Chief, Building Inspection Division                  | 3          | 1%          |
| Code Analyst   | 3          | 1%          |
| Code compliance inspector                            | 1          | 0%          |
| Code Enforcement Officer                             | 4          | 1%          |
| Combination Inspector                                | 1          | 0%          |
| Construction Inspector                               | 3          | 1%          |
| Commercial Plans Examiner                            | 3          | 1%          |
| Deputy Building Official                             | 5          | 1%          |
| Deputy Chief   | 1          | 0%          |
| Electrical Inspector                                 | 16         | 5%          |
| Engineer Inspector                                   | 3          | 1%          |
| Field Inspector                                      | 5          | 1%          |
| Managing Partner                                     | 1          | 0%          |
| Mechanical Inspector                                 | 9          | 3%          |
| Mechanical Plans Examiner                            | 2          | 1%          |
| Mechanical Supervisor                                | 2          | 1%          |
| Owner  | 1          | 0%          |
| Permit Technician                                    | 2          | 1%          |
| Permits & Licensing Director chief building official | 1          | 0%          |
| Plans Examiner                                       | 40         | 11%         |
| Plans Examiner Supervisor                            | 3          | 1%          |
| Plumbing Inspector                                   | 2          | 1%          |
| Plumbing Plans Examiner                              | 5          | 1%          |
| Project Manager                                      | 16         | 5%          |
| Structural Building Inspector                        | 5          | 1%          |
| Structural Plans Reviewer                            | 6          | 2%          |
| Supervisor of Inspections                            | 2          | 1%          |
| VP Engineering                                       | 1          | 0%          |
|  |            |             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>350</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## General Jurisdictional and Departmental Data

Respondents were asked to provide information about the jurisdiction and department they operate in. Questions ranged from the title of the department to the breakdown of employees within their department. The intent of this section of the survey was to establish the way departments are labeled and organized throughout the State of Florida. This section was answered by all participants regardless of their license types. It included seven questions (Q1.1 – Q1.7). The first three questions were related to the respondent’s department and the distribution of the employees among job titles. Responses to Question 1.4 provided insights on the annual permit volume with a department based on residential versus commercial and new construction versus existing building. The remaining three questions (Q1.5 – Q1.7) were centered on decision making responsibilities in their department.

Among the most frequent department names reported were Building Division, Building Services, and Community Development. Table 4 shows the distribution of employees among jobs. The highest number of employees reported to be working under one department is 300. It is important to note that all departments have inspectors even when some respondents stated that their departments have no code administrators or plan reviewers. Also from Table 4, on average, the number of inspectors is the highest within a department, whereas the number of code administrators is the smallest.

*Table 4. Distribution of Employees within a Department (n=178)*

| <b>Distribution of Employees Among Job Titles</b> |                            |                                |                           |                   |              |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
|   | <b>Total<br/>Employees</b> | <b>Code<br/>Administrators</b> | <b>Plan<br/>Reviewers</b> | <b>Inspectors</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| <b>Mean</b>                                       | 41.6                       | 18.7%                          | 29.9%                     | 59.2%             | 27.5%        |
| <b>Standard Deviation</b>                         | 52.3                       | 23.6%                          | 27.5%                     | 53.6%             | 58.7%        |

Table 5 summarizes the reported annual permit volume. On average and according to this table, the highest volume of permits is for new construction of commercial projects, whereas the lowest volume of annual permits is issued for existing residential buildings. The reported annual permit volume ranges from \$ 110,000,000 for new residential buildings to \$ 261,000,000 for new commercial buildings.

Table 5. Annual Permit Volume in Dollars (n=178)

|                           | New Construction |            | Existing Buildings |            |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
|                           | Residential      | Commercial | Residential        | Commercial |
| <b>Mean</b>               | 1,174,467        | 2,049,380  | 1,114,830          | 1,355,230  |
| <b>Standard Deviation</b> | 10,182,956       | 21,685,528 | 12,066,765         | 12,759,600 |

For the questions regarding the decision making responsibilities in the department, 33% of the respondents indicated that permitting and code enforcement responsibilities resided with the same person within their department. Moreover, 82% of respondents perceived that their department has a rigid chain of command with one person ultimately responsible for decision making and protocols. The participants were then asked to rate the level of support they received from their supervisors whenever those respondents made a decision in regards to code enforcement and permitting. On a 1-10 scale (with 1 being not supported and 10 being always supported), an average score of 8.2 was given to the level of support.

### Training and Information Relating to Interpretations

The third section of the survey was presented to all participants regardless of their license types. It was related to training, certification, and code interpretive processes (see Appendix A). A total of eight questions were presented to the respondents, with five related to certifications (Q2.1 – Q2.5) and three (Q2.6 – Q2.8) related to interpretative processes within the respondents jurisdiction. The primary goal of this section was to determine the access to and level of training received by code enforcement and permitting professionals in the state of Florida. Also, it provided basic insights into the overarching interpretative processes followed throughout the state.

Based on Table 6, the most reported frequency of training in permitting and code enforcement is multiple times a year (33.7% and 36% respectively). It is important to note as well that 24.2% of respondents never received training in permitting, and 15.2% never received training in code enforcement. Furthermore, 90% of respondents indicated that they were provided opportunities to earn certifications in additional disciplines. Out of these 80%, around 89% (128 out of 160) perceived that their supervisor(s) adequately supported them in obtaining additional certifications, and that financial support is provided by their department, for required courses and certification exams, as they work to earn new certifications or recertify in existing disciplines. The respondents that indicated that they were not provided opportunities

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to earn certifications (20%) believed that the main reasons behind the lack of opportunities were heavy workload, low funding, or because their department did not value professional development or advancement since these might lead to a higher salary.

*Table 6. Training Frequency*

|                                 | Permitting |            | Code Enforcement |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------------|------------|
|                                 | Count      | Percentage | Count            | Percentage |
| <b>Less than once a year</b>    | 43         | 24.2%      | 27               | 15.2%      |
| <b>Yearly</b>                   | 38         | 21.3%      | 35               | 19.7%      |
| <b>Multiple times per year</b>  | 60         | 33.7%      | 64               | 36.0%      |
| <b>Monthly</b>                  | 10         | 5.6%       | 11               | 6.2%       |
| <b>Multiple times per month</b> | 2          | 1.1%       | 8                | 4.5%       |
| <b>Weekly</b>                   | 4          | 2.2%       | 3                | 1.7%       |
| <b>Multiple times per week</b>  | 1          | 0.6%       | 1                | 0.6%       |
| <b>Daily</b>                    | 1          | 0.6%       | 1                | 0.6%       |
| <b>Never</b>                    | 19         | 10.7%      | 28               | 15.7%      |
| <b>Total</b>                    | 178        | 100%       | 178              | 100%       |

In the second part of this section, participants were asked whether their jurisdiction provided "formal" interpretive processes for practitioners beyond application and enforcement of the Code (e.g. written building department policy, local rule, local ordinance, local amendment to the Code, verbal policy, etc.). Interpretive processes were found to be provided to 68% of respondents (121 out of 178). Moreover, 74% (132 out of 178) perceived that the staff in their jurisdiction was familiar with statewide interpretive processes. The results of these two questions are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5. However, as shown in Figure 6, 8% of the respondents stated that ICC Code Commentary is never used in their jurisdiction's day-to-day operations.







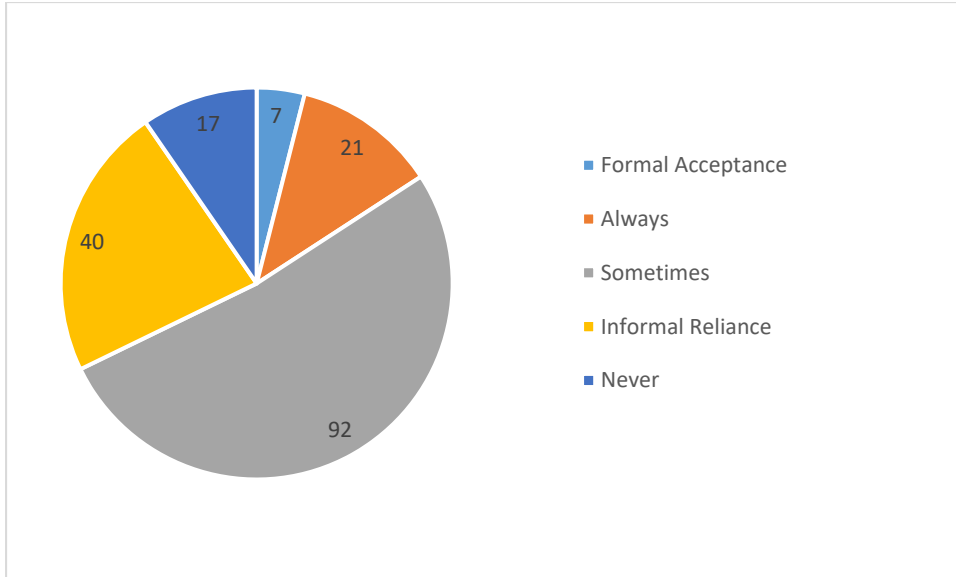


Figure 6. Use of ICC Code Commentary in day-to-day-operations

### Permitting and Associated Fee Structures

This section of the survey was administered only to those who selected 5002-Standard Plans Examiner or 5003 - Building Code Administrator as their license type. Eight questions were asked (Q3.1 – Q3.6 in Appendix A) related to permitting processes and fee structures within the respondent’s jurisdiction. On average, the typical turnaround time for a permit application was found to be 12.3 business days for residential permits and 19.5 business days for commercial projects. Over 89% (101 out of 113) of the respondents indicated that their jurisdiction provided plan review services for residential permits; 96% (108 out of 113) of the respondents indicated that such services were provided for commercial permits. When asked about the standard fee for building permits, some respondents stated that the fee was a percentage of the project’s value ranging from 1% to 4%, or that it was based on the project square footage. Based on the values provided by the rest of the respondents, the average standard fee was \$658 for residential permits and \$1,450 for commercial projects. Table 7 summarizes the questions discussed so far in this section, and also shows that 90% of the respondents indicated that their department provided plan review services for residential projects, and 97% indicated that such services were provided for commercial projects.

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*Table 7. Summary of Permit Questions Based on Project Type*

|                    | Turnaround Time | Plan Review services |     | Standard Fee |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----|--------------|
|                    |                 | YES                  | NO  |              |
| <b>Residential</b> | 11.7 days       | 90%                  | 10% | \$652        |
| <b>Commercial</b>  | 19.2 days       | 97%                  | 3%  | \$1,439      |

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to assign percentages for plans approved without comments, and for plans requiring more than one resubmittal. The percentage of plans approved without comment ranged from 0 % to 99 %, and the percentage of plans requiring more than one resubmittal ranged from 1% to 95 %. As shown in Table 8, an average of 42% of plans were approved without any comment whereas an average of 40% of plans required more than one resubmittal to be accepted.

*Table 8. Percentages of plans approved without comment and those requiring another submittal*

|                           | Percentage of plans approved without comment | Percentages of plans requiring more than one resubmittal |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Mean</b>               | 42   | 40   |
| <b>Standard Deviation</b> | 28.9   | 28.5   |

Forty-two percent 42% of the respondents (47 out of 113) reported that their department charged a re-submission fee averaging around \$45. Some of these respondents indicated that the resubmission fee was based on the time it took an employee to do all the necessary work. The reported values of this hourly rate ranged from \$25 to \$45 per hour. One respondent indicated that the resubmission fee was around 4% of the original permit fee. On the other hand, 56% of respondents (63 out of 113) indicated that their department charged additional fees above and beyond the permit amount. A list of these fees and some of their associated values are shown in Table 9. Finally, 90% of respondents (102 out of 113) indicated that their department provided permitting support during the application process.

Table 9. Additional Fees

| Fee Description     | Value              | Fee Description                    | Value                              |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Administrative fees | 1% of permit cost  | Unlicensed Contractor and DBPR Fee | N/A                                |
| Impact fees         | N/A                | State Surcharge                    | 1% of permit cost                  |
| Inspection fees     | \$50               | Local Board Charges                | \$0.58 per thousand of permit cost |
| Plan review         | 25% of permit cost | Training Fee                       | 1.5% of permit cost                |
| Re-inspection fee   | N/A                | Local public art fee               | 1% of permit cost                  |
| Site fee            | N/A                | Education fee                      | \$0.3 per thousand                 |
| Technology fee      | \$25               |                                    |                                    |

### Code Enforcement and Associated Fee Structures

This section of the survey was administered to the respondents who stated they held a 5001 - Standard Inspector or 5003 - Building Code Administrator license. Respondents who selected both 5001 – Standard Inspector and 5002- Standard Plans Examiner were given administered all sections of this survey. The goal of this section of the survey was to provide baseline information from across the State of Florida for how code enforcement is conducted, regulated and priced. A total of 13 questions (Q4.1 – Q4.13 in Appendix A) were presented in this part with some questions having two parts.

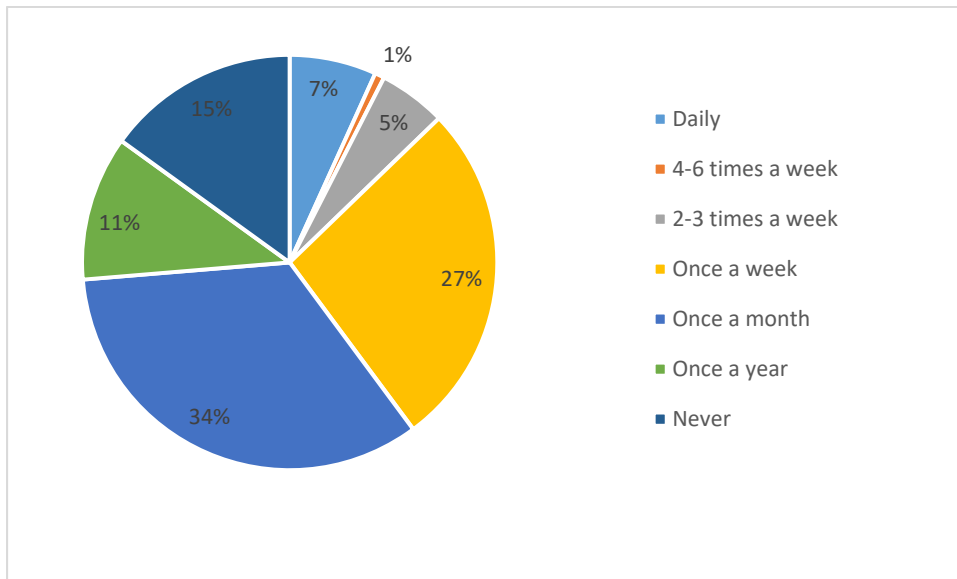


Figure 7. Frequency of Code Enforcement Meetings

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Participants were asked how frequently their department had meetings related to code enforcement policies and development. The results of this question are shown in Figure 7. The highest percentage of respondents (34 % or 45 out of 133) indicated that their department held monthly meetings. Furthermore, 15% of the respondents (20 out of 133) reported that their department held no meetings related to code enforcement. The next question in this section inquired about how much deviation there was in the way codes were enforced between different members of a department. On a 1-10 scale (with 1 being none at all and 10 being a great deal of deviation), the average score on this question was 3.7 which reflects a little deviation between department members. Table 10 lists a sample of the common positive and negative reasons, in no particular order of frequency or importance, provided for the selected deviation ranking.

*Table 10. Description of reasons for perceived code enforcement deviations*

| <b>Reasons for a High Deviation</b>                   | <b>Reasons for a Low Deviation</b>         |
|---|--|
| Differences in training and development               | Consistency through constant communication |
| Political problems                                    | Excellent training and consistency         |
| Inadequate training                                   | Daily discussions within department        |
| Different interpretations of some codes               | Teamwork and interoffice communication     |
| Inspectors attitudes                                  |  |
| Over enforcement from a lack of real world knowledge. |  |
| No meetings or internal education and support         |  |
| Incompetent management and lack of communication.     |  |
| Personality differences                               |  |
| Political correctness to deviate from the codes       |  |

The following series of questions gathered information related to the inspection process duration, associated fees and decision-making procedure. The wait time for an inspection was averaged to be around 2.1 business days. 74% of respondents (98 out of 133) indicated that their jurisdictional area had different people who conducted inspections for each building discipline (e.g. structural, plumbing mechanical, etc.). A similar percentage of respondents reported that all inspectors in their jurisdictional area reported to one head inspector who was ultimately responsible for decisions on code enforcement policies. Participants were also asked to rate the supervisory involvement in their jurisdictional area

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related to code enforcement on a 1-10 scale (with 1 being none at all and 10 being a great deal of involvement). The average response score was 4.8 which reflects a moderate involvement from supervisors. Table 11 summarizes the distribution of work based on the required number of inspections needed. The percentage of work approved on first inspection ranged from 1% to 96% with an average of 69 %. Moreover, the percentage of work which requires more than one inspection ranged from 4% to 100% with an average of 41%.

*Table 11. Percentage of work approved based on number of inspections*

|                           | <b>Percentage of work approved on first inspection</b> | <b>Percentage of work which requires more than one inspection</b> |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Mean</b>               | 69   | 41  |
| <b>Standard Deviation</b> | 18.5   | 27.1  |

Inspection fees were the subject of the next group of questions. Out of 133 respondents, 117 (89%) indicated that initial inspection fees were included in the cost of a permit, and 37 (28 %) indicated that cost of an inspection varies based on the system/discipline being inspected. The average inspection fee per discipline is shown in Table 12. In addition, the average cost for a building inspection was reported as \$91 with a range from \$25 - \$1,000.

*Table 12. Average Inspection Fee per Discipline*

| <b>Discipline</b> | <b>Average Fee (\$)</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Building</b>   | 114                     |
| <b>Mechanical</b> | 61                      |
| <b>Plumbing</b>   | 63                      |
| <b>Electrical</b> | 57                      |
| <b>Structural</b> | 70                      |
| <b>Site</b>       | 68                      |

Out of 130 respondents, 101 (77%) stated that their jurisdiction charged an average re-inspection fee of \$57. Finally, 58% of respondents (74 out of 128) indicated that their jurisdiction had a local board of adjustment and appeal that reviewed permitting and enforcement decisions. The average annual number of decisions reviewed by the local board of adjustment and appeal in a jurisdiction was 57.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicated that there exists a lack of uniformity in the way permitting and code enforcement is organized and conducted in the State of Florida. Responses from 43 counties out of 67 were received. Forty-four distinct job titles were reported with “Building Inspector” being the most frequent job title. Based on the license type they possessed, respondents were directed to respond to different sections of the survey.

Based on general jurisdictional and departmental data, different departmental names were referenced. All the respondents indicated that their departments had inspectors; however, some departments did not have code administrators or plan reviewers. Under these departments, the mean annual permit volume ranged from \$1,114,830 to \$ 2,049,380. It is important to note that 33% of the respondents indicated that permitting and code enforcement responsibilities resided with the same person within their department. However, 82% of respondents perceived that their department had a rigid chain of command with one person ultimately responsible for decision making and protocols. Questions in regard to training and information relating to interpretations showed that 24% of respondents never received training in permitting, and 15% never received training in code enforcement. Moreover, many respondents mentioned that opportunities for training were not offered by their department because of heavy work overloads, low funding or political reasons.

The survey showed that the average standard fee was \$658 for residential permits and \$1,450 for commercial projects. However, 56% of the respondents mentioned that their department charged additional fees above and beyond the permit amount. These additional fees were not uniform among counties, and they ranged from \$0.3 per thousand of permit cost to 25% of permit cost. The resubmission fee was also found to be non-uniform among counties. Furthermore, there was some indication of high deviation in the way codes were enforced between different members of a department. Inadequate training, different interpretations of some codes, and personality differences were among the most cited reasons for such deviations. The fee structure for inspections is also non-uniform among counties. The average cost for a building inspection was reported as \$91. However, 89% of respondents stated that the inspection fees were included in the cost of a permit, and 28% indicated that cost of an inspection varied based on the system/ discipline being inspected (\$57 to \$114 on average).

Overall, permitting and code enforcement in the State of Florida appears to vary between jurisdictions in many ways including departmental organization, roles and responsibilities, and pricing structures. For



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more accurate and precise results, responses from all 67 counties would be desirable. This can be achieved by conducting individual interviews in different jurisdictions in all counties to gather more detailed data or at a minimum by conducting individual interviews in a representative sample of jurisdictions. Because of the non-uniformity of the results, it is important to meet or interview department heads to validate the obtained results. The findings of this study provide a foundation from which further research should be conducted in order to develop a complete understanding of potential areas of concern or interest.

## Appendix A: Hard Copy Format of the Survey

### Analysis of Code Enforcement and Implementation in the State of Florida

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#### Start of Block: Survey Introduction

Intro Code Enforcement and Permitting Professionals,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy days to complete this survey. Your input is extremely valuable and greatly appreciated by the research team and the State of Florida. This survey has been designed as part of an analysis of code enforcement and permitting implementation, requirements, fees, training and education in the State of Florida. The goal is to gain participation from individuals currently survey in the State of Florida as code enforcement and/or permitting professionals. This survey should take you approximately 10 to 15 minutes and all data is recorded anonymously. The survey will ask basic demographic questions and then a series of questions related to your experiences as a code enforcement and/or permitting professional. Please answer all questions to the best of your knowledge and be as thorough as possible with open response questions. This data is a vital first step in analyzing the state of code enforcement and permitting in all aspects in the State of Florida. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you may choose to stop the survey at any time. We thank you for your time, shared expertise and valuable responses.

Should you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Raymond Issa at [raymond-issa@ufl.edu](mailto:raymond-issa@ufl.edu).

Regards,

<<<The research team>>>

**IRB201700552**

End of Block: Survey Introduction

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## Start of Block: Survey Eligibility

0.0 Are you currently licensed or employed by a municipality or an official agency in the state of Florida?

- Yes *(Answer 0.0.1)*
- No *(Do not take the survey)*

0.0.1 Please select the license(s) you have from the list below: (Check all that apply)

- 5001 - Standard Inspector *(Answer Demographic, A, B, and D questions)*
- 5002 - Standard Plans Examiner *(Answer Demographic, A, B, and C questions)*
- 5003 - Building Code Administrator *(Answer Demographic, A, B, C, and D questions)*

## End of Block: Survey Eligibility

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## Start of Block: Demographic Questions

0.1 In which County are you a code enforcement or permitting professional in the state of Florida?

\_\_\_\_\_

0.2 Which of the following is your jurisdictional area defined by?

County

City

Neighborhood

Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

0.3 What is your jurisdiction number? (Example: St. Johns 651000, Duval 261300)

\_\_\_\_\_

0.4 What is the name of your jurisdictional area?

\_\_\_\_\_

0.5 What is your official job title? (Please type it as it would appear on a business card)

\_\_\_\_\_

0.6 In which of the following inspection disciplines are you certified? (Select all that apply)

Building (Residential)

Building (Commercial)

Mechanical

Plumbing

Electrical

None

Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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0.7 With which gender do you identify?

Male

Female

Other

**End of Block: Demographic Questions**

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**Start of Block: A. General Jurisdictional and Departmental Data**

1.1 What is the official name of your department? (Please enter the name as it would appear on a business card)

\_\_\_\_\_

1.2 To the best of your knowledge, approximately how many code enforcement/ permitting professionals does your DEPARTMENT employ?

\_\_\_\_\_

1.3 Please allocate the number of employees in your department, as you specified in the previous questions, into their position as accurately as possible:

Code Administrators \_\_\_\_\_

Plan Reviewers \_\_\_\_\_

Inspectors \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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1.4 To the best of your knowledge, what is the annual permit volume within your department for each of the following two categories? (Please enter the quantity of permits for each category)

|                    | Residential | Commercial |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| New Construction   |             |            |
| Existing Buildings |             |            |

---

1.5 Do permitting and code enforcement responsibilities reside with the same person within your department?

Yes

No

---

1.6 Does your department have a rigid chain of command with one person ultimately responsible for decision making and protocols?

Yes

No

---

1.7 On a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being not supported and 10 being always supported), how do you feel your supervisor(s) support the decisions you make in regards to code enforcement and permitting?

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**End of Block: A. General Jurisdictional and Departmental Data**

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Start of Block: B. Training and Information Relating to Interpretations

2.1 How frequently do you receive training related to each of the following in the state of Florida?

|                  | Less than once a year | Yearly                | Multiple times per year | Monthly               | Multiple times per month | Weekly                | Multiple times per week | Daily                 | Never                 |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Permitting       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Code Enforcement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

2.2 Do you feel that you have access to training materials and resources which are necessary to do your job?

- Yes
- No

2.3 Are you provided opportunities to earn certification in additional disciplines?

- Yes
- No *(Skip to 2.4)*

2.3.1 Do you feel that your supervisor(s) adequately support you in obtaining additional certifications?

- Yes
- No



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2.3.2 Is financial support provided by your department, for required courses and certification exams, as you work to earn new certification or recertify in current disciplines?

Yes *(Skip to 2.5)*

No

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2.4 To the best of your knowledge, please elaborate on why you said that you are not provided opportunities to earn additional certifications? (Remember, all responses are anonymous and your honesty is appreciated)

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2.5 Are you encouraged to participate in continuing education beyond the licensing requirements as it relates to your areas of expertise?

Yes

No

---

2.6 Does your jurisdiction provide "formal" interpretive processes for practitioners beyond application and enforcement of the Code? (e.g. Written building department policy, local rule, local ordinance, local amendment to the Code, verbal policy, etc.)

Yes

No

2.7 Does your jurisdiction use the ICC code commentary in its day-to-day operations?

- Formal Acceptance
- Always
- Sometimes
- Informal Reliance
- Never

---

2.8 To the best of your knowledge, is the staff in your jurisdiction familiar with statewide interpretive processes? (i.e. ever participated by requesting a Non-Binding Interpretations by Building Officials of Florida or Declaratory Statements by the Commission or Binding Interpretations by the Commission)

- Yes
- No

**End of Block: B. Training and Information Relating to Interpretations**

---

**Start of Block: C. Permitting and Associated Fee Structures**

3.1 On average, what is the typical turnaround time (in business days) for a permit application in your jurisdiction?

|             | Business Days |
|-------------|---------------|
| Residential |               |
| Commercial  |               |

3.2 Does your jurisdiction provide plan review services for the following permits?

|             | Yes                   | No                    |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Residential | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Commercial  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

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3.3 To the best of your knowledge, please assign percentages to the following categories related to plan approvals in your jurisdiction for the calendar year 2016:

|  | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| % of plans approved without comment            |            |
| % of plans requiring more than one resubmittal |            |

3.4 What is the standard fee for the following building permit in your jurisdiction? (US Dollars)

|             | Standard Fee (USD) |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Residential |                    |
| Commercial  |                    |

3.5 Does your DEPARTMENT charge a re-submission fee for a permit? (If yes please specify the amount in US Dollars)

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No

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3.6 Does your DEPARTMENT charge any additional fees above and beyond the permit amount? (If yes, please specify and include the amount in US Dollars)

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No

---

3.7 Does your DEPARTMENT provide permitting support during the application process?

Yes

No

**End of Block: C. Permitting and Associated Fee Structures**

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**Start of Block: D. Code Enforcement and Associated Fee Structures**

4.1 How frequently does your department have meetings related to code enforcement policies and development?

- Daily
- 4-6 times a week
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Once a year
- Never

---

4.2 On a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being none at all and 10 being a great deal of deviation), how much deviation is there in the way codes are enforced between different members of your department?

|      |            |          |       |         |
|------|------------|----------|-------|---------|
| None | atA little | A        | A lot | A great |
| all  |            | moderate |       | deal    |
|      |            | amount   |       |         |

|                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Deviation in code enforcement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

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4.3 Please explain what you feel contributes to the level of deviation you specified in the previous question.

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4.4 To the best of your knowledge, what is the average wait time (in business days) for an inspection in your jurisdictional area? (From request to inspection)

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4.5 Does your jurisdictional area have different people who conduct inspections for each building discipline? (e.g. structural, plumbing mechanical, etc.)

Yes

No

4.6 Do all inspectors in your jurisdictional area report to one head inspector who is ultimately responsible for decisions on code enforcement policies?

Yes

No

4.7 On a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being none at all and 10 being a great deal of involvement), how much supervisory involvement is there in your jurisdictional area related to code enforcement?

|                                  | A great deal | A lot | A moderate amount | A little | None at all |   |   |   |    |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------|---|---|---|----|
| Level of supervisory involvement | 1            | 2     | 3                 | 4        | 5           | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

4.8 In your department, are initial inspection fees included in the cost of a permit?

Yes

No

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4.9 Does the cost of an inspection vary based on the system/ discipline being inspected?

- Yes
- No *(Skip to 4.10)*

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4.9.1 What is the average cost (US Dollars) for a building inspection in your jurisdiction for each of the following disciplines? (Select each discipline with a separate cost and identify the cost)

- Building \_\_\_\_\_
- Mechanical \_\_\_\_\_
- Plumbing \_\_\_\_\_
- Electrical \_\_\_\_\_
- Structural \_\_\_\_\_
- Site \_\_\_\_\_

---

4.10 What is the average cost (US Dollars) for a building inspection in your jurisdiction?

\_\_\_\_\_

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4.11 Does your department charge a re-inspection fee?

- Yes
- No *(Skip to 4.12)*



4.11.1 What is the re-inspection fee? (US Dollars)

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4.12 To the best of your knowledge, please assign percentages to the following categories related to approve work in your jurisdiction for the calendar year 2016:

|   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |
|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| % of work approved on first inspection            | 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| % of work which requires more than one inspection | 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |

4.13 Does your jurisdiction have a local board of adjustment and appeal that reviews permitting and enforcement decisions?

- Yes *(Answer 4.13.1)*
- No *(Do not answer 4.13.1)*

4.13.1 To the best of your knowledge, what is the average annual number of decisions reviewed by the local board of adjustment and appeal in your jurisdiction?

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**End of Block: D. Code Enforcement and Associated Fee Structures**

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