

## 2021 Legislative Bills

Below is information on bills from the 2021 Legislative session relating to construction. For more details, please click here:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/BillSummaries/2021/>

### **CS/CS/HB 401 — Florida Building Code**

- Allows a substantially affected person, as defined in the bill, to petition the commission for a non-binding advisory opinion on any local government regulation that the person believes is a technical amendment to the Building Code and was not adopted in accordance with the process for adopting local amendments to the Building Code. The commission must issue the opinion within 30 days of receiving the petition.
- Allows the commission to issue an “errata to the code” to correct demonstrated errors in provisions contained within the Building Code.
- Requires the commission to adopt rules for approving product evaluation entities in addition to the ones already listed and approved in current law and clarifies that the commission may suspend any product evaluation entity.

The bill also:

- Allows local governments to use excess funds generated by building code enforcement fees (i.e., permit fees) for the construction of a building or structure that houses a local government’s building department or provides training programs for building officials, inspectors, or plans examiners.
- Prohibits a local government from requiring a contract between a builder and an owner as a condition to apply for or obtain a building permit.
- Specifies that a local government may not use preliminary maps issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for any law, ordinance, rule, or other measure that has the effect of imposing land use changes or permits.

The bill makes several changes to current law pertaining to licensed individuals providing private building inspection services, known as “private providers.” Current law allows contractors and property owners to hire licensed building code administrators, engineers, and architects to review building plans, perform building inspections, and prepare certificates of completion. The bill makes the following changes to the private provider statute:

- Expressly authorizes private providers to conduct virtual building inspections.
- Allows private providers to submit various inspection forms, records, and reports electronically to local building departments and utilize electronic signatures.
- Allows private providers to conduct “single-trade inspections,” as defined in the bill.
- Authorizes private providers to conduct emergency inspection services.

Additionally, the bill expressly authorizes local governments and school districts to use private providers for public works projects and improvements to any building or structure.

Finally, the bill amends the Community Planning Act to prohibit local governments from adopting land development regulations that regulate specific building design elements (such as exterior color and cladding, ornamentation, styling of windows and doors, etc.) for single- and two-family dwellings. However, certain exceptions are provided that allow local governments to regulate such building design elements when:

- The dwelling is a historic property or located in a historic district, a community redevelopment area, or a planned unit development or master planned community.
- The regulations are adopted in order to implement the National Flood Insurance Program or to ensure protection of coastal wildlife.
- The regulations are adopted in accordance with the procedures for adopting local amendments to the Building Code.
- The dwelling is located within the jurisdiction of a local government with a design review board or architectural review board.

The bill makes various changes to the ways in which local enforcement agencies receive and process building permit applications. Specifically, the bill requires local enforcement agencies to:

- Allow building permit applications, including payments, attachments, drawings, and other documents, to be submitted electronically.
- Post the current status of every building permit application received on its website.
- Post the agency's procedures for reviewing, processing, and approving building permit applications on its website.
- Review additional information for an application for a development permit or development order within a certain time-period.
- Allow building permit applicants 10 business days to correct an application for a single-family residential dwelling that was initially denied by the local enforcement agency.
- Reduce permit fees by specified amounts after failing to meet statutory deadlines for reviewing certain building permit applications.

Finally, the bill prohibits government entities, which enforce the Building Code, from requiring a copy of a contractor's contract with owners, subcontractors, or suppliers in order to obtain a building permit for projects on commercial property.

### **CS/CS/HB 667 — Building Inspections**

The bill requires a building code enforcement agency to refund 10 percent of the permit and inspection fees if:

- The inspector or building official determines the work, which requires the permit, fails an inspection; and
- The inspector or building official fails to provide a reason that is based on compliance with the Building Code, the Florida Fire Prevention Code, or local ordinance, indicating why the work failed the inspection within 5 business days.

### **CS/CS/SB 912 — Land Use and Development**

The State Emergency Management Act provides that the declaration of a state of emergency issued by the Governor for a natural emergency tolls the period remaining for a party to exercise rights under certain permits and other authorizations for the duration of the emergency declaration, plus an additional

six months. In order to have a permit tolled under this provision, the permit holder must follow certain statutory procedures, including providing written notice of the intent to exercise the tolling within 90 days after the termination of the state of emergency. The emergency tolling afforded by this statute currently applies to the expiration of a development order issued by a local government, a building permit, and an environmental resource permit issued pursuant to Ch. 373, part IV, F.S.

The bill specifies additional permits and authorizations that may be tolled during a state of emergency. These include consumptive use permits issued under Ch. 373, part II, F.S., and development permits and development agreements.

The bill applies retroactively to any declaration of a state of emergency issued by the Governor for a natural emergency since March 1, 2020. Under this retroactive application, existing permits and authorizations added by the bill may receive the emergency tolling and extension for the state of emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.