

BUILDING

DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

We are dedicated to serving the public by the efficient and effective supervision and regulation of construction activities in Miami Beach by enforcing the Florida Building Code and the City's Code of Ordinances in a fair and efficient manner. We encourage our team to use a customer friendly approach as we work with businesses and residents of Miami Beach to comply with the Florida Building Code, and in turn, safeguard the public health, safety and general welfare of the City's residents and visitors.

DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION

The City of Miami Beach (CMB) Building Department was established in 1925 and had its own Building Code until the 1950s when the City adopted the South Florida Building Code.

The State of Florida first mandated statewide building codes during the 1970s, at the beginning of the modern construction boom. The first law required all municipalities and counties to adopt and enforce one of four state-recognized model codes known as the "state minimum building codes." During the early 1990s, a series of natural disasters, together with the increasing complexity of building construction regulations in vastly changed markets, led to a comprehensive review of the state building code system. The study revealed that building code adoption and enforcement was inconsistent throughout the state and those local codes thought to be the strongest proved inadequate when tested by major hurricane events. Systemic failures of building codes brought financial and personal devastation as well as a statewide property insurance crisis. The response was a reform of the state building construction regulatory system that placed greater emphasis on uniformity and accountability.



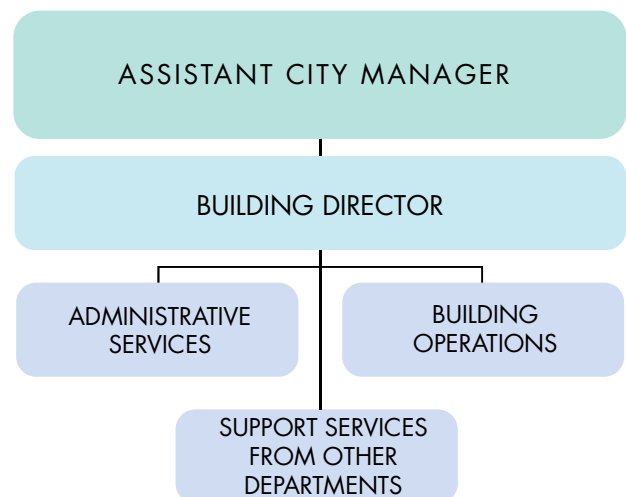
DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION CONT'D

The 1998 Florida Legislature amended Chapter 553, Florida Statutes, titled "Building Construction Standards" to create a single statewide building code that is enforced by all local governments. As of March 1, 2002, the Florida Building Code superseded all local building codes. It was developed and maintained by the Florida Building Commission. The Florida Building Code is updated every three years and may be amended annually to incorporate interpretations and clarifications.

The Building Department is made up of two functional areas: Administrative Services and Operations.

The Administrative Services section provides administrative support to the entire department, including requisitioning goods and services, processing invoices for payables, creating invoices for receivables, maintaining all personnel files, processing payroll, budgeting, providing IT assistance, and managing special projects.

Operations is responsible for administering the various provisions of the Florida Building Code, including accepting permit applications, reviewing and approving construction plans, inspecting construction work to ensure compliance with approved plans, and issuing violations for those projects where construction is not in compliance with approved permits.



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FISCAL ENVIRONMENT

The department collects building permit fees pursuant to the City of Miami Beach Code of Ordinances, which includes the Building Department fee structure and the Florida Building Code. Fees provide for the direct expenditures of the Building Department, including internal service charges and indirect overhead expenditures attributed to departments that provide support to the Building Department. In an effort to improve fiscal transparency, the Building Fund transitioned out of the General Fund into a stand-alone Enterprise Fund which means that revenues into the fund must cover the cost of the expenditures and are held separately to avoid commingling of dollars.

Florida Statutes 553.80 governs the use of the fees collected in the Building department and is restricted to only be used for carrying out the local government's responsibilities in enforcing the Florida Building Code.

The revenues collected in the Building Department fluctuate with the market economy. Revenue projections for budgeting are based on prior year and quarterly trends.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Main Vision Area:

Neighborhoods

Management Objectives:



- **Neighborhoods**
 - Increase compliance with City Code by creating more incentives for compliance vs. penalties, especially North Beach. Implement controls to prevent issues of unpermitted work or work exceeding permits on City projects.
 - Work cooperatively with Miami-Dade County to reduce the possibility of disease outbreaks
- **Environment and Infrastructure**
 - Improve our aging drinking water and sewer infrastructure to protect drinking water quality, public health and fire protection
- **Organizational Innovation**
 - Support all objectives to improve strategic decision making and financial stewardship, making the city more business friendly and user friendly, with an employee culture of problem solving and engagement

Strategic Plan Actions:

- **INCREASE** compliance with the Building Code by streamlining the process and providing continued training to the public and applicants on the process
- **RECERTIFY** City-owned buildings, through cooperative efforts of Building and Facilities and Fleet Management Departments
- **CONTINUE** to streamline the permitting process and help applicants understand the process to prevent issues of unpermitted work citywide
- **PROACTIVELY** monitor the City for mosquito breeding grounds and work cooperatively with Miami-Dade County to reduce the possibility of mosquito-transmitted disease
- **REDUCE** environmental impacts by working with DERM – fats, oil and grease program and Class 1 and 2 permitting
- **CONDUCT** an independent consultant process improvement study for development processes
- **CONTINUE** the expedited plan review permitting program for technical and financial services

Budget Enhancement Actions:

- N/A

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BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The Department is based on a philosophy of public sector transparency and an open-door policy. The Building Department consistently pursues innovative strategies and continues to re-engineer existing procedures and processes with the goal of providing efficient and professional customer service in a safe environment, while contributing to the overall economic well-being and development of the City.

The department is improving responsiveness to the needs of homeowners, business owners, developers, contractors, architects, and engineers by increasing the lines of communications and various training opportunities.

The department operates in a hybrid fashion, together with the other departments that are part of the building permitting process including the Fire Department, Planning Department, Public Works Department, Environment & Sustainability Department, and Parking Department in which customers may communicate and submit construction documents either in-person or online or through a combination of both throughout the permitting process.

It is the department's goal to continually evolve and find new ways to innovate our processes. The efficient issuance of permits, inspections and Certificates of Occupancy or Completion is critical to nurturing the local economy. Further, by streamlining operations, greater compliance with the Florida Building Code will be achieved, making the City's structures safer for the community.

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The department has completed and/or began the following projects/initiatives over the past fiscal year:

- **Cross-Departmental Workshops and outside consultant study:** We organized workshops with stakeholders from various City departments to understand bottlenecks and develop interdepartmental workflows that reduce permit processing times. In addition, an outside consultant was brought in to analyze and provide recommendations for improvements. These recommendations have been presented and approved by the City Commission and are being addressed through the City Manager's office Policy Working Group and Change Control Advisory Group (CCAG) that have been created.
- **Improved Online Navigation:** As of August 29 2023, the CMB website's homepage has been updated to include an easily accessible consolidated permit landing page. This page, as well as its subpages, will be updated on an as-needed basis. Building permit checklists per permit type (175+ in total) have been revised and prepared for the newly formatted template designed by CMB Marketing and Communications Department.

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Assigned a dedicated permit representative to each permit application that will be the customers go-to person throughout the life of their application process to streamline communication and provide applicants with a personalized experience. This will also assist in reducing the calls to the call centers and other areas as this will offer a single point of contact for applicants throughout the permit application process, reducing confusion, and improving overall customer satisfaction.
- Assigned a dedicated staff member to monitor and advance stagnant applications, with a special focus on critical quality of life permits like air conditioning and roofing. Staff proactively engages with applicants to resolve sticking points and expedite the approval process.
- **Dedicated Private Provider Staff:** Individual tasked with managing projects that utilize private providers, ensuring there's consistent oversight and that standards are met across the board
- **County Representative Engagement:** Hosting a county representative monthly to provide direct answers and information about the county's permitting processes, which can help clarify procedures for applicants and reduce confusion and delays
- Effective December 31, 2023 the Building Department transitioned to the Florida Building Code Eighth (2023) Edition. The Florida Building Code is updated every three (3) years.
- **Public Outreach:** We launched a series of outreach programs to educate the public on the permitting process, ensuring higher compliance rates and fewer submission errors and feedback sessions with stakeholders
- **Staff Training and Development:** Our personnel undergo specialized training in their specializations and systems to better understand the technologies and workflows, resulting in a more knowledgeable workforce able to assist applicants effectively. Weekly training has been supplemented by adding different trade chiefs to the training and different departments. International Code Council (ICC) Permit Tech training of 8 hours was provided in October to enhance all of the permit techs knowledge of code.
- Where possible, cross-train inspectors and plan reviewers for greater efficiency and succession planning

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SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Utilizing data analytics and surveys we identified common issues and delays in the permitting process, allowing for targeted improvements. The department carefully reviews feedback from monthly surveys, using it to inform improvements. When the feedback indicates a lack of understanding about the systems or processes, staff follows up with personalized training or guidance, fostering better customer knowledge and smoother processes.
- **Policy and checklists Revisions:** Through continuous review, we updated several policies and checklists to remove outdated requirements and streamline the permitting guidelines



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Potential impacts to revenues as changes in the construction market occur
- Continued evolution of the software systems necessary for the success of the Building Development Enterprise Resource System, online application, and electronic plans reviews
- Recruiting and promptly filling vacancies to meet increasing demands for timely service. It has become increasingly challenging to recruit qualified candidates.
- Continued unified efficiency improvements from all departments involved in the development process reviewing plans, issuing permits, and conducting inspections

FUTURE OUTLOOK

The Building Department is dedicated to providing excellent customer service by consistently communicating with the community and stakeholders to stay informed about their needs and expectations, while also upholding the Building Department's responsibility to enforce the Florida Building Code. The Building Department welcomes suggestions for improvements from the new Commission-appointed Ad Hoc Permitting Process Improvement Advisory Committee. Additionally, through innovation and the adoption of leading technology the Building Department aims to enhance the customer experience including cutting-edge technology of a "Decision Engine" and real-time inspection routes.

Important initiatives for the department in the future include:

- **Expansion of Online Services:** Broadening our digital service offerings to include more permit types and related city services including the "Decision Engine" that will help applicants pinpoint exactly what permit and submission documents they need for their project
- **Real-time inspection route tracking and ETA notifications** sent to customers with scheduled inspections. The department is working with the Information Technology and Procurement Department to acquire a tool that will provide estimated times of arrival for inspectors, allowing applicants to have a better understanding of when to expect inspections to occur. This will enhance planning and reduce waiting times for applicants.
- **Expanding the use of virtual Inspections** where feasible which can save time and resources
- **Extended Public Training Hours:** Recognizing the need for more flexible training and assistance schedules, additional monthly training sessions are being planned. These sessions will not only take place after normal business hours to accommodate varying schedules, but will also be available virtually, expanding accessibility.
- **In collaboration with the Marketing and Communications Department,** the department will launch an advertising campaign to inform the public about the building permitting process
- **Hold meetings with the construction industry** including contractors and design professionals, to ensure they are up to date on Miami Beach development requirements