

Board of County Commissioners  
Development Department

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INSPECTION OPERATIONS FOLLOW-UP AUDIT  
(PHASE II)  
April 6, 2004

**HERNANDO COUNTY CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT**

**AUDIT SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Grant Tolbert, Director, Development Department

VIA: Karen Nicolai, CPA, Clerk of Circuit Court

FROM: Peggy Prentice, CIA, CISA, Audit Services Manager

DATE: April 6, 2004

SUBJECT: Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)

The Audit Services Department's (ASD) Audit Projects Schedule included a follow-up to the Development Department's Inspection Operations Audit, issued January 18, 2002. Based upon management's response and corrective action, the ASD has produced the attached follow-up report for your review. The attached report contains a summary of the initial recommendation, management's response, and follow-up recommendation, as applicable, for each of the original report comments. The follow-up to Phase I, Cash Receipts & Permitting Operations, is currently being reviewed.

Although we exercised due professional care in the performance of this follow-up audit, this should not be construed to mean that unreported noncompliance or irregularities do not exist. The deterrence of fraud and/or employee abuse is the responsibility of management. Audit procedures alone, even when carried out with professional care, do not guarantee that fraud/abuse will be detected. Specific areas for improvement are addressed later in this report.

The purpose of the follow-up audit report is to furnish management independent, objective analyses, recommendations, counsel, and information concerning the activities reviewed. The audit report is a tool to help management discern and implement specific improvements. The audit report is not an appraisal or rating of management.

A copy of the report has been forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners as an agenda "correspondence to note" item.

If you have any questions, concerns, or need additional information in regard to the above or the attached report, please do not hesitate to contact me at (352)540-6235 or just stop by my office in Room 201.

## **ATTACHMENT**

### **copy: BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSION:**

Commissioner Mary Aiken  
Commissioner Thomas Mylander  
Commissioner Hannah "Nancy" M. Robinson  
Commissioner Diane Rowden  
Commissioner Robert C. Schenck  
Richard "Dick" Radacky, County Administrator  
Frank McDowell, Interim Deputy County Administrator  
Kurt Hitzemann, Senior Assistant County Attorney  
Larry Jennings, Growth and Development Director  
George Zoettlein, Office of Management and Budget Director

### **Clerk of Circuit Court:**

Amy Gillis, CPA, Finance Director

### **OTHER:**

Chip Jones, KPMG  
Hernando Today  
St. Petersburg Times - Hernando Edition  
WWJB Radio Station  
Hernando County Public Library

**Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Other minor findings, not included in this report, have been communicated to management and/or corrected during fieldwork. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation.

Fieldwork was performed by:

Peggy Prentice, CIA, CISA, Audit Services Manager  
Barbara Fichter, Internal Auditor

The management response was provided by:

Grant Tolbert, Director, Development Department

This report was reviewed and authorized by Karen Nicolai, CPA, Clerk of Circuit Court, on April 6, 2004.

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**Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

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**PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

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## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

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### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

#### PURPOSE:

Address management's corrective action in response to audit recommendations reported in the Development Department Inspection Operations Audit, issued January 18, 2002.

#### SCOPE:

This audit follow-up ascertained whether management implemented corrective actions that effectively addressed the ASD's original findings and recommendations. The ASD addressed the Department's corrective actions, and determined if the corrective actions, implemented partially or fully, were implemented timely and as stated in management's responses. The corrective actions, or lack of the same, were evaluated under current conditions. The ASD then made a determination whether further corrective action, if any, was needed for each recommendation within the original report.

**BACKGROUND**

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## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

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### **BACKGROUND**

The Development Department is organized into four divisions: zoning, contractor licensing, permitting, and inspections. Permits for residential and commercial building construction are processed through its Permit Division. Once permits are approved, the Inspections Division performs physical inspections at construction sites to ensure that the construction is compliant with Florida Building Codes.

The Department has two locations, one on Providence Boulevard in Brooksville and a second on Forest Oaks Boulevard in Spring Hill (also called the Westside Office). Most inspection staff are housed at the Westside Office. Inspectors are scheduled to work in the office for one-half hour twice daily (A.M. and P.M.). When Inspectors are not in the office, they are working in the field performing inspections.

The Development Department is managed by the Department Director, who also serves as the County Building Official. In the Inspections Division, the Department Director is assisted by a Building Inspections Manager (who is also the Deputy Building Official). The Department currently employs 15 Inspectors. In recent months, inspection staff has performed on average more than 6,000 inspections per month. As a result of this increasingly greater demand for building inspections, the Inspections Division is currently undergoing organizational staffing changes. Per management, in lieu of the vacant Inspection Supervisor position, Senior Inspector positions will be created for each of the major building trades. Management cited that it anticipates enhancing the Inspections Division's operations through this staff adjustment.

### **INSPECTION SCHEDULING**

Department Plan Examiners determine which inspections are required at each phase of construction prior to the approval of a building permit. Once the permit application is approved, construction is authorized to begin. The permit card and a list of the required inspections, by building trade, are forwarded to the customer, e.g., builder, owner, etc. As each phase of construction is completed, the builder is required to schedule inspections accordingly. Inspections may be scheduled by any of three means:

1. Inspection scheduling Website (through the Internet);
2. Automated telephone system; or
3. Manually through a Permit Representative.

Per management, once an inspection is scheduled, building codes regulate that Inspectors have a maximum of three workdays to perform the inspection. Inspections are generally scheduled for the business day after they are requested.

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**Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

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Each morning, inspection tickets for that day's scheduled inspections are printed from LION. Tickets are sorted by inspection type and assigned to an Inspector based upon trade and predetermined districts of responsibility (routing).

**INSPECTION PROCESS**

Inspectors must have a license for the inspection types performed. Trades include building (structural), electrical, plumbing, and mechanical. Trade licenses are also specialized by commercial and residential construction types. Some Inspectors are licensed in more than one trade. Inspectors authorized to perform inspections of one and two family dwellings are licensed to perform inspections on all phases of residential construction. Addressing Inspector licensing was not within the scope of this audit project.

Inspections are performed to ensure that builders and their construction activities are in compliance with various building standards and requirements. An Inspector records the outcome of an inspection on the inspection ticket. If, upon performing an inspection, an Inspector determines that construction is not consistent with the applicable standards and requirements, s/he notifies the customer in writing, via a "red tag" that indicates the reason(s) for the failure. A copy of the form is attached to the permit card located at the construction site. Inspection tickets and "red tags" are scanned into an imaging system that can be accessed by Department staff. The Department utilizes this imaging system to reference inspection tickets and "red tags" when communicating with customers. With the exception of final inspections, Inspectors enter their own inspection results into the Lion data base. Final inspections are entered by Permit Representatives.

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION /ONE-STOP SHOPPING**

As part of the original audit, the ASD surveyed a sample of the Department's commercial and residential customers who had applied for a permit to determine the level of customer satisfaction with the permitting and inspection operations. In March 2003, management implemented a random survey procedure in which customers are surveyed in person and through the mail. Survey results indicate that builders and homeowners would like "one-stop-shopping" whereby customers could transact all building-related business from one of the Development Department's offices.

**DISCUSSION POINTS,  
MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE, AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**DISCUSSION POINTS, MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**INSPECTION SCHEDULING PROCESS**

**Original Comment - January 2002:** The Department has several systems designed to provide authorized building contractors with the flexibility to achieve his/her goal of scheduling inspections. Inspections may be scheduled by three means: Internet Website, automated telephone system, or manually through a Permit Representative. A test of the manual scheduling system was not performed.

To schedule inspections on the Internet or on the automated telephone system, the user must be a licensed contractor. The Internet Website is versatile, providing the user with access to inspection dates, messages, verifications and historical reviews. The automated telephone system is less sophisticated and allows only the scheduling of next day inspections. These systems allow users access both during and after working hours. The third means of scheduling an inspection is through a Permit Representative in person or by the general telephone system. When customers' calls are placed on hold, they may experience a dead time with no music or voice recording to ensure them that they are still connected. During fieldwork, management cited that the current telephone system is not capable of supporting a music or voice recording.

These systems allow the contractor to schedule any type of building inspection in any order; therefore, there is a risk that the contractor may schedule an inconsistent or untimely inspection. If this occurs, the Inspector is authorized to fine the builder, to offset the Department's administration costs.

Further, these systems allow the scheduling of an inspection that has already been performed and completed. This may result in an Inspector unnecessarily driving to a construction site to perform this inspection again. This control weakness allows for an environment of duplication of efforts. Management indicated that duplicate scheduling is permitted so that partial inspections on the same stage of work can be scheduled for large construction projects.

Once an inspection is scheduled through the Internet Website or telephone automation, the contractor cannot delete the inspection using these systems. For the contractor to unschedule an inspection, s/he must contact a Permit Representative who has the ability to manually delete the inspection.

Any inspection can be scheduled through automation; however, the Department's internal software controls are designed to prevent the scheduling of final inspections before all fines, fees and red tags are addressed. This minimizes the risk of construction projects being completed prior to addressing open issues.

## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

**Recommendation A - January 2002:** Consideration should be given to addressing the “on hold” function when the new telephone system is implemented, anticipated in FY 2001/02.

**Management’s Response to Recommendation A - January 2002:** We have discussed with Technology Services the concern of “no music on hold” in both the Brooksville and west side offices. The current system does not have the capability for this enhancement; however, the Department has budgeted for a new phone system for both offices in the FY 2001/02 budget. Installation of the new telephone system will provide a solution to the “on hold” concern. Our west side office is scheduled for installation of the new phone system in FY 2001/02. Once fiber optic cable is installed in the area of the Brooksville office, the new phone system can be installed there. The target date for installation in the Brooksville office will probably be sometime in FY 2002/03.

**Management’s Response to Recommendation A - February 2004:** The Development Department has been connected to the new phone system since December 2002, which has addressed the “on hold” concern.

**Follow-Up Comment A - March 2004:** The ASD conducted a test of the new phone system’s on-hold feature and found that callers hear music while their call is on-hold. The original concern has been cleared.

**Recommendation B - January 2002:** To minimize the possibility of duplication of efforts, consideration should be given to:

1. determining if the scheduling of duplicate inspections is a material concern and, if so, take corrective action as applicable; and
2. enhancing the automated systems to allow the user to delete inspections scheduled in error.

**Management’s Response to Recommendation B - January 2002:**

1. The inspection system is currently set up so that it will not schedule a duplicate inspection if there are inspection results outstanding. However, once the results are entered, another inspection of the same type can be scheduled. The main reason duplicate inspections of the same type are scheduled is to allow for partial inspections. Staff will discuss creating specific inspection types for partials; however, we will need to take into consideration that large projects will require more than one “partial” inspection of the same type (example: frame, lintel). We will also consider adding fields to the inspection record to indicate if the inspection is a partial inspection along with a note field specific to the partial field to clarify the percentage of the inspection completed. Although some of the Inspectors may have the opinion that they do have repetitive, nonproductive inspection requests, management staff does not feel that the number of these duplicate inspection errors significantly or materially affects the inspection department. Other than the partials, duplicate inspections are not very frequent, and are more than likely requested in error. Notwithstanding this opinion, we will continue to solicit inspector input on this issue and discuss with Technology Services modifications to reduce this problem.

## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

2. The Internet Inspection system is fairly new, and adding the capability to delete an inspection is one of the enhancements planned for the Internet system. Although the automated phone system does not give the caller the ability to delete an inspection scheduled in error, the system does require the caller to confirm the permit number and the inspection type before the inspection is scheduled. If entered incorrectly, the entry can be re-done. However, we do feel the ability to delete or cancel a scheduled inspection via the automated phone system would be a worthwhile addition to the system. We will discuss this with Technology Services staff to see if it can be implemented on the existing automated inspection system. As stated earlier, the Department is also reviewing other software programs for inspection scheduling and results. The problem in the past has been the inability to have these “off the shelf” programs integrate with our main frame data base. We will continue to work with Technology Services on these issues as management recognizes the benefits of automating these processes.

**Management’s Response to Recommendation B - February 2004:** During prior discussions about enhancements to the automated inspection system, staff was informed that the system was outdated, and could not be updated. The recent conversion to the new Lion software forced us to obtain new software for the automated inspection system as well. According to the Technology Services Department, the new software will allow for enhancements such as deleting or canceling inspections.

**Follow-Up Comment B - March 2004:** Based upon communications with management and staff, it appears that the scheduling of duplicate inspections is not a material concern. Management has assigned permitting staff to verify that proper codes were assigned to permits which, per management, have significantly reduced duplicate inspection schedules.

As of the conclusion of fieldwork, a deletion/cancellation feature was not added to the phone or Internet Website. Customers are required to phone into the Department and speak with a Permit Representative in order to delete or cancel a previously-scheduled inspection. Staff and management cited that the delay has been due to the Department’s recent software interface conversion from DSI to Lion. Per management, plans to include a “delete” feature on the phone system and Internet Website remains a priority, but no specific target date has been set.

**Follow-Up Recommendation B - March 2004:** Consideration should be given to monitoring circumstances that may trigger scheduling of duplicate inspections. In addition, as enhancements are made to the Department’s Internet Website, consideration should be given to exploring a means of limiting users’ ability to schedule duplicate inspections.

The ASD recognizes that, prior to converting to a new software interface, Lion, the Department was unable to enhance the Internet Website to include an inspection deletion/cancellation feature. Now that the conversion is complete, consideration should be given to incorporating a deletion/cancellation feature into the phone system. By implementing this option, the Department

## Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)

will enhance its efficiency and effectiveness through improved customer service. In addition, calls taken by Permit Representatives to cancel or delete an inspection can be minimized, and thus, allow Permit Representatives to handle calls that require personal assistance.

### **INSPECTION PROCESS**

**Original Comment - January 2002:** Based on test results, inspection practices, Inspector workload distribution, and timeliness of inspection turnaround are generally adequate. No material concerns were identified with the accuracy and completeness of the electronic inspection records. No material inspection process authority, decision point, or operational control concerns were identified during testing. Test results indicate that Inspectors are performing the types of inspections authorized by management.

There are two areas which could be made more efficient and/or effective: revising the inspection ticket and modifying the electronic processing of inspection results.

#### ***Automated Inspection Tickets***

Automated inspection tickets are used to record scheduled inspections, provide the Inspector with a list of steps to perform when performing an inspection walk through, and document inspection results. Based on discussions with staff and observations of work performance, it appears that generally, electronic inspection tickets are adequate. However, there are three areas of concern that were identified during testing, as follows:

1. Permit Representatives indicated that the note section does not have adequate space for the data entry of all needed information;
2. The inspection results section does not adequately support an efficient means of documenting building code deficiencies identified by the Inspector in the field; and
3. The inspection checklist section does not adequately reflect the actual work performed when performing some construction trade inspections.

#### ***Tracking Inspection Results***

During fieldwork, management cited that, to enhance efficiency, they are training Inspectors to data input their own inspection results, beginning with the one and two family home Inspectors. Per management, these Inspectors have computer skills and, because they are authorized to perform inspections for all four (4) construction trades, they will be able to support the other Inspectors during the learning curve. To support this new process, the Department recently purchased three (3) computers for the Inspector work area. Once these computers are installed and become fully operational, the Inspector work area will have four (4) computers available for their use.

Per management, the Inspectors do not currently use nor have they used hand held computer devices or laptop computers in the field because the cost of these electronic devices outweighed the benefit that would be derived from implementing them. However, management indicated that the Department continues to explore electronic data device options. Management indicated that they

## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

anticipate that by implementing electronic devices in the field, it will eliminate the need for paper inspection tickets. They also indicated that these devices could support real-time inspection results. In addition to Inspector computer training and purchasing computers, management cited that they are in the process of exploring software options that may reduce or eliminate some of the automated concerns identified during this audit project.

### ***Performance Measurements***

Our test results indicate that generally, inspections are performed one workday after they are scheduled and that the timeliness of inspection turnaround is consistent with the Department's FY 2000/01 performance measurement of making inspection results available one workday after the completion of the inspection.

Based on test results, the average number of inspections performed per Inspector per day is 18 which is consistent with the Department's FY 2000/01 performance measurement of 16 inspections. At least once per year, during the budget process, the Department calculates the number of inspections performed per Inspector per day to ensure that it is meeting its performance measurement.

**Recommendation A - January 2002:** To enhance efficiency and effectiveness, consideration should be given to modifying the inspection tickets to suit the Department's needs.

**Management's Response to Recommendation A - January 2002:** The system currently supplies two separate sections for notes on the inspection tickets. We will review the inspection ticket with the permit representatives to be sure they are aware of the notes sections, and adjust the inspection ticket if necessary. Management has reviewed the note sections and found that the spaces that are available are not being fully utilized. Additional training of staff should improve the use of the note sections, and if additional space is needed it will be added.

**Management's Response to Recommendation A - February 2004:** The Department is considering an automated field inspection system for the inspectors, which will eliminate the paper inspection ticket. All information that is on the paper ticket such as checklist items, violation codes, inspection history, etc., will be available to the inspector through the automated system. The Department anticipates partial implementation of an automated system this fiscal year, with full implementation during FY 2004/2005.

**Follow-Up Comment A - March 2004:** No significant modifications to the Inspection Request Form were identified and per staff, updates to the inspection results section of the Form have not yet been addressed by management or staff. Per management, an automated field inspection system is in the planning stage whereby each Inspector will be assigned a laptop computer and enter all his/her own inspection results directly into Lion. Full implementation is anticipated in FY2004/2005. The automated system should eliminate a need for paper inspection forms, and therefore, some enhancements to the Form are unnecessary.

## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

Per staff, revision of the inspection checklist began in December 2003 and is continuing. Staff cited that inspections staff have been reviewing codes used on the checklists and comparing them against building codes to ensure that the checklists are up-to-date.

**Follow-Up Recommendation A - March 2004:** Consideration should be given to enhancing the adequacy and/or efficiency of the Inspection Request Form, i.e., the inspection checklist and inspection results sections. Until such time that an automated inspection system is fully operational and paper inspection forms are no longer necessary, the ASD recommends that management:

1. continue its process of updating the inspection checklists in a timely manner; and
2. address modifications/enhancements of the inspection results section so that inspection results are adequately documented.

**Recommendation B - January 2002:** Management should follow through with its commitment to train Inspectors on data inputting their own inspection results. For quality purposes, throughout the training process and periodically thereafter, management should test a sample of electronic data input for accuracy and completeness.

**Management's Response to Recommendation B - January 2002:** The Department has committed to training the inspectors on input of their own inspection results. Currently the inspectors are required to return to the office in the afternoon by 4:00 p.m. to turn in their inspection results for input by the clerical staff. We have felt for some time that this time period could be used to not only take phone calls, but to allow the inspectors to input their results. In this regard, the Department has budgeted for additional computers and will have them set-up in the inspection office. Although we only have four computers at this time, if the trial works as planned additional computers will be purchased. The four computers are now operational and training of the inspectors is scheduled to begin this month. The inspectors are looking forward to this additional duty. Also, by the inspectors inputting their own results we expect to have more accuracy in the inputting of the results. Input by the inspectors will be verified periodically to insure accuracy.

**Management's Response to Recommendation B - February 2004:** The inspectors have been trained on the current computer system, and are inputting inspection results accurately and timely.

**Follow-Up Comment B - March 2004:** Per staff, Inspectors input all inspection results except for the final results. Final results are input by Permit Representatives. Management cited that this procedure provides a check-and-balance to ensure that Inspectors have input all results prior to the close-out of a permit. Weekly inspections staff meetings are also conducted as a means of providing additional training regarding inspection results data entry. Per staff, there is no ongoing procedure whereby Inspectors' data input is randomly monitored for accuracy. However, a report is generated daily to monitor the timeliness of Inspectors' data entry and to verify that the inspection result for each scheduled inspection has been data input. Management's implementation of these procedures has cleared the original concern.

## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

**Recommendation C - January 2002:** Consideration should be given to calculating the number of inspections performed per Inspector per day on a periodic basis (i.e., quarterly). This will allow management to more frequently determine if the Department and individual employees are meeting the performance measurement and allow the opportunity to correct any issues, if deficiencies are found.

**Management's Response to Recommendation C - January 2002:** The inspection checklist section reflects the 10 most common checklist items per inspection. This section is different for each inspection type. With the adoption of new codes, this section needs to be reviewed by staff and updated as necessary. The Department produces a statistical report on a monthly basis which includes the number of inspections completed, so we are able to monitor the number of inspections being completed in each trade. We will begin checking the number of inspections completed per inspector on a quarterly basis as recommended. In addition, the Department will evaluate development of a point system to the various inspection types to determine an approximate (average) time that it takes to complete a specific type of inspection including travel time. This can then be used to manage the average number of inspections that can be expected to be completed in a work day. Although there are many variables that must be taken into account, this is expected to provide a better management tool than just relying on the number of inspections. These averages can then be monitored and adjusted as appropriate. The limiting factor may be the current capability of the computer system, which can be coordinated with Technology Services. Evaluation of this process will be conducted in Fiscal Year 2001/02 with possible implementation in Fiscal Year 2002/03.

**Management's Response to Recommendation C - February 2004:** Management continuously checks the number of inspections completed per inspector as recommended. Creation and implementation of a point system for inspection types is still outstanding. Staff is still evaluating this type of system.

**Follow-Up Comment C - March 2004:** Per management, the "Inspection Recap Report Summary" is utilized to monitor the number of inspections completed per inspector and provides summary totals by the inspection type. However, per staff, this report is only generated when management believes there may be a potential concern with the number of inspections performed by a specific inspector.

Based upon staff interviews, it appears that management's and acting senior inspector staff's perspectives differ regarding the responsibility for oversight and/or supervision of inspection staff. This may potentially need to be addressed by management.

**Follow-Up Recommendation C - March 2004:** Consideration should be given to establishing a procedure whereby inspector production reports are generated and reviewed on a consistent periodic basis (i.e., weekly, monthly, etc.). This will allow management to monitor Inspectors' performance on an ongoing basis and to timely correct any identified deficiencies.

## Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)

The ASD recognizes that the Department has undergone a number of recent managerial staffing changes within the Inspections Division. However, consideration should be given to establishing clear lines of managerial/supervisory responsibility over inspections staff.

### CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

**Original Comment - January 2002:** Commercial and residential builders' satisfaction with the current permitting and inspection operations was addressed through a customer survey. Survey respondents indicated that generally their contact with the Department is for permits, inspections, plan/Development Review Committee (DRC) review, or emergency (electric) releases. Sixty-one percent (61%) of communications are related to contractor licensing.

In addition, most respondents indicated that they communicate with the Department in person and by telephone; very few communicate by United States mail, e-mail or the Internet. However, it is important to note that, at the time respondents were surveyed, the Internet Website was not fully functional (for example, the scheduling of inspections as discussed earlier in this report).

When asked to rate specific elements within the Department, respondents generally indicated that they have good to excellent experiences in all categories surveyed. However, 37% indicated that the reasons for the issuance of red tags (identified deficiencies) are not clearly stated. If deficiencies are not clearly stated, the builder may misinterpret the correction required or may have to contact the Inspector for clarification.

The following are a few of the suggestions for improvement provided by the respondents:

- C process all types of permits at Forest Oaks;
- C improve Inspector and Plans Examiner communications with builders;
- C add an inspection delete button on the computer Internet screen;
- C have Inspectors contact the homeowners to schedule inspection times;
- C automated inspection line gets full on weekends, enhancements needed to add capacity;
- C have ability to obtain Notice of Commencement at both offices rather than having to go to the courthouse then to the Development Department (one-stop shopping);
- C have applications go through the plans examination stage more quickly and efficiently; and
- C have occupational licensing information electronically sent to the Development Department so that the builder does not have to go to the courthouse then the Department (one-stop shopping).

The survey responses were discussed with management during fieldwork.

## **Development Department Inspection Operations Follow-Up Audit (Phase II)**

### **Recommendation A - January 2002:**

Consideration should be given to:

1. providing Inspectors with training regarding the clear statement of deficiencies as identified during inspections; and
2. addressing the respondents' suggestions and taking corrective action, as appropriate.

**Management's Response to Recommendation A - January 2002:** Training with inspectors on providing clear and concise statements on construction deficiencies is an ongoing process. Recently the Department implemented a multi-part form for recording deficiencies which allows a copy to be filed with the permit record. Inspectors are encouraged regularly to indicate not only the stated deficiency, but also make appropriate references to the specific code section that they have identified. As part of the weekly inspection staff meeting, this will be addressed. Further, the Deputy Building Official will be assigned to randomly and regularly review the deficiencies written by the inspectors. The Department is committed to excellent customer service, which is reflected in the high level of satisfaction shown in the survey responses. However, we agree that listening to our customers is the best way to achieve continual improvement. Many of the suggestions offered in the survey responses can be utilized and implemented. Others are limited due to cost considerations. The response asking for all permit types to be issued at both offices would be cost prohibitive since the Brooksville office is fully staffed with commercial development and zoning staff, whereas the Westside office is not. We will evaluate using the Westside office as a drop-off point for some commercial permits. Senior Management staff will review the survey responses over the next 60 days and implement those that will reasonably result in better service for our customers.

**Management's Response to Recommendation A - February 2004:** Both items listed above (in the recommendation) continue to be an on-going part of the Department's operations with weekly staff meetings for management personnel, office staff, and inspectors.

**Follow-Up Comment A - March 2004:** Based upon interviews and minutes of staff meetings, it appears that Inspector training on clear communication of inspection deficiencies has been addressed on an as-needed basis. Staff cited that the department attends Hernando Builders' Association (HBA) meetings and solicits feedback from customers on how well inspection deficiencies are communicated. It also appears that the Department's recent implementation of imaging inspection results has enhanced the Department's ability to communicate with customers and clarify inspection deficiencies. Inspection results are available on the Internet Website. However, the imaged inspection tickets and red tags are not available to the public. Management's actions have cleared the original concern.

**Follow-Up Recommendation A - March 2004:** Using the cost benefit approach, the Department should follow through on its commitment to adding imaged inspection results to the Internet

Website. Additional software licensing may be required to implement this feature.

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**Follow-Up Comment B - March 2004:** Management appears to utilize customer feedback as a means of enhancing Department operations. The ASD attempted to compare recent customer satisfaction survey results obtained by the Department to customer satisfaction survey results included in the January 18, 2002, audit report however, there were not enough responses to draw a conclusion. It appears that management has considered the 2002 survey results and has taken corrective action, as applicable.

Staff cited that current surveying methods may not be as effective as the Department had anticipated when it implemented its customer satisfaction survey procedures in March 2003. The Department has distributed the surveys by mail and in person. Per staff, the response rate has been poor, and procedures have not been implemented to track the number of surveys given out against the number of surveys returned.

**Follow-Up Recommendation B - March 2004:** Consideration should be given to exploring alternative means of surveying customers (i.e., a larger group of customers once per year). In addition, implementing a process to track and report survey results would enhance survey effectiveness.