

The Building Inspectors^{10.2} Department

The Building Inspectors^{10.2} Department ~~is involved with responsibilities and functions which bear heavily upon community development. The department~~ administers and enforces the Zoning Ordinance, the Housing and Slum Clearance Code, the Housing Demolition Ordinance, the Georgia Safety Fire Law and the Elevator Ordinance. Its responsibilities generally regulate the private use of private property. The manner in which the department does its job and works with other agencies both in and out of the City government will be reflected in the quality of total community development. Staffing, organization, and records must be so developed as to have flexibility, comprehensiveness, and sensitivity to the needs and requirements of area action. The Building Inspectors^{10.2} Department has been the subject of extensive review and reorganization to better prepare it for the role. Implementation of the reorganization is now in the final stage. ~~This present review, therefore, must be limited to the recent history of the department. It would be inappropriate to attempt to evaluate performance during this period. Nevertheless because of its key role in Community development, a constant method of systematic performance measurement should be developed.~~

In 1964 Public Administration Service prepared a survey report relating to the consolidation of inspection services in the City of Atlanta. This report reviewed and identified all inspectional functions carried out among several departments with the City government. The major attention of the report was focused on the Department of Building Inspections. The findings of the report led to recommendations for an expanded department of Building Inspections to include plumbing inspection (from the Construction Department), electrical inspection (from the Department of Electricity) and housing code inspection (from the Department of Urban Renewal). The City adopted the full report. The Departments of Electricity and Urban Renewal were abolished when their few remaining responsibilities were transferred to other departments and agencies. No one lost his job or was reduced in salary due to the implementation of these recommendations.

Consolidation began in July of 1964. In ~~the beginning~~ little more could be accomplished than to effect a legal change. The various offices were spread from the third floor of City Hall to the thirteenth floor. In late summer 1965, one year later, major office realignments were made at City Hall which resulted in the Building Inspection Department occupying all of the eighth and ninth floors. *Further office assignments were made in 1966.* Physical provisions were made for a central records and statistical unit and the central permits desk. Staffing for the Records Bureau was provided by clerical personnel formerly assigned to each of the inspection divisions.

The present organization differs from the proposed plan in two minor ways. First there is no separate zoning enforcement. Zoning enforcement is carried out by the Building Code Enforcement Division. The building inspectors carry on this dual function. ~~It is reported that zoning enforcement activities could be sufficiently increased.~~ *However,* One aspect of the zoning enforcement and control is in the Planning Department. Street number assignment and zoning certification and applications for rezoning are functions of the Planning Department. It seems logical that the zoning information section of the Planning Department could most logically be assigned to the Building Inspection Department. This would be another important step in consolidating related functions concerning building construction. Another area of responsibility that could properly be assigned to the Building Inspection Department would be the functions now carried out by the Department of City Hall. The Building Department presently supplies the Department of City Hall ~~and all other City buildings~~ with technical assistance and prepares plans and supervises all additions and alterations to the City Hall and all other City buildings. This new division, to be called a Division of City Buildings, would be responsible for the custodial duties at City Hall, supervising alterations to all City buildings, and to provide technical information and assistance to other City departments in the operation and maintenance of their buildings. An Organization Chart indicating the present organization and including the suggested addition of the Division of City Buildings is presented in Chart _____.

Staffing . The Department has a technical staff of 72 and a clerical staff of 16. The technical staff includes the department head (Building Official), an assistant Building Official, two architect engineers, ten plumbing inspectors, 10 electrical inspectors, 2 elevator inspectors, 9 heating and ventilating inspectors and engineers, 16 building inspectors and 15 persons engaged in Housing Code enforcement. Six technicians are either registered engineers or architects. Most of the specialized inspectors are licensed in their trades.

Dual Inspections . There is a decided trend throughout the county towards the use of dual inspectors. By combining inspectional duties one person inspects two or more inspectional fields providing competent inspection in an economical manner. The most common dual inspections are building and zoning, plumbing and heating, and building and housing. The City of Atlanta has only one type of dual inspection - building and zoning. Efforts to extend combined inspections usually meet strong resistance from craft unions. The use of dual inspections might necessarily have to be limited to residential buildings. This will involve the greatest volume of work, but also the most routine from the standpoint of technical difficulty. An expanded program of dual inspections requires a well developed in-training program, cooperation and understanding of the craft unions, and support from the City administration. Atlanta could probably extend its dual inspections to include Housing Code inspections to all its inspectional specialities. Every inspector, then, would be responsible to note and report to the Housing Code Division any violations observed. Follow-up inspections regarding housing code violation would remain the responsibility of the Housing Division. This modification would go far in expanding the ability of the City to identify homes that are developing features that lead to blight.

Work Program Inspectional services are provided to insure the health, safety and general welfare of the community. Building inspections insure that structures will be built, repaired and altered in accordance with accepted standards. Plumbing inspections insure that water and sewer facilities are installed in a manner that will protect the occupants health. Heating and Ventilating inspections assure that heating units are installed properly and includes provisions for smoke abatement in order to reduce

air pollution. Electrical Inspections insure that wiring installations will reduce fire hazards. Housing inspections differ from the above in that the housing code is concerned with buildings that were built under former regulations (usually these required lower standards of safety and sanitation). It is the general purpose of housing inspection to upgrade the standing of living in existing housing. Zoning ordinance enforcement activities support the regulations of land use, control of height and bulk of buildings, establish area requirements for yards and other open spaces.

The volume of work undertaken by the department may be measured by the value and number of building permits issued in the past 10 years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Value of Building</u> (millions of Dollars)	<u>Number of Permits</u>
1955	76	10,613
1956	59	9,682
1957	59	7,791
1958	108	8,327
1959	114	8,728
1960	91	8,311
1961	96	10,158
1962	117	9,357
1963	109	9,168
1964	150	9,142
1965		

Building Codes . The City of Atlanta provides through these various codes a high standard of construction. The National Building Code is basically used for building. In 1965 a ^{revised} ~~revised~~ Code National Electrical/will be issued which will be adopted by the City. Currently the City is using the existing National Electrical Code with some local amendments. The City is a leader in developing a Heating Code. This code has received national acclaim and has been widely adopted by other cities. The Plumbing and the Housing codes are not based after any model code, but do incorporate high standards. Generally, the codes provide for eight inspections to be made during actual construction. A final inspection is made upon completion of all work to assure conformance to land use, type of building, area of lot and other requirements of the zoning and building ordinances and codes. A certificate of occupancy is issued at that time.

Budget and Revue. The department collects in fees enough funds to cover all the expenses of operation. A recent survey of municipal building inspection practices indicated that 72 per cent of 101 cities over 100,000 population receive 75 per cent or more of their operating budget from fees. Thirty-two per cent of these cities receive 100 % or more of their operating budget from fees.

Public Convenience. The consolidation of inspectional service and a central building permits desk serves as a public convenience. A contractor or individual can get all building permits at one location. He must, however, still go to several other locations within City Hall for other basic information and permits. Water permits, water meters and location of water facilities are obtained from the Water Department; Sewer permits, Street Opening permits, sewer assessments, curbcut permits and location of sewer facilities are obtained from the Construction Department. Applications for rezoning and street numbers are provided at the Planning Department. Copies of the Zoning Code are purchased from the City Clerk as are licenses to engage in the construction business. Complete consolidation of these information and permit issuing functions requires considerable study and would effect changes that cross over departmental lines. Departments have a tendency to hold on to functions. Their aim is to increase their sphere of influence not to transfer it. Realignment of functions, as would be required if a central license and permit activity were desired, would require the participation of a central administrative agent who would have authority over all departments. None presently exists.

BUILDING INSPECTIONS
DEPARTMENT

BUILDING OFFICIAL

ASSISTANT BUILDING
OFFICIAL

HOUSING DIVISION

BUILDING AND
ZONING DIVISION

HEATING AND
VENTILATING
DIVISION
AIR POLLUTION

ELECTRICAL
DIVISION

PLUMBING
DIVISION

RECORDS BUREAU
AND
CENTRAL PERMITS

PLANS BUREAU
REVIEW
DIVISION

DIVISION OF
CITY BUILDINGS