

Impact of the Uniform Construction Code in Pennsylvania

Project Description

The **Pennsylvania Housing Research Center** is conducting a survey of all municipalities in Pennsylvania, urban and rural, to determine the impact of the Pennsylvania Construction Code Act of 1999, commonly referred to as the Uniform Construction Code. This survey is the keystone of a project funded by the **Center for Rural Pennsylvania** to study the “Impact of the Uniform Construction Code in Rural Pennsylvania.” **Penn State University** was selected as the research grantee for this project after a competitive review of proposals by staff, a peer review panel, and action taken by the Center’s Board of Directors.

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative service agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Its legislative mandate is to develop and maintain a database on rural trends and conditions, and to sponsor research on issues and opportunities affecting Pennsylvania’s 3.4 million rural residents. Through this research, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania informs the General Assembly on these matters so that it may consider the rural implications on public policy and programs of state government.

While the main emphasis of this project is to assess the impact of the UCC on “rural” Pennsylvania, the survey and the resulting report will fully incorporate information on UCC administration and enforcement for "urban" Pennsylvania as well. Without comparing administration and enforcement of the UCC in both rural and urban settings, it is impossible to understand if the impact is any different in rural areas than in urban areas.

The survey mentioned above has been distributed to every township, borough, city and town in the Commonwealth, via email and postcard notifications to the secretary or chief clerk whose name and contact information is on file with the Governor's Center for Local Government Services. **We have suggested to municipal officials that they should contact their designated Building Code Official for assistance in properly completing the survey, particularly the section on permit fee calculations.**

The more municipalities (third-party agencies / COGs) that participate, the more accurate of a picture we can obtain of how the UCC is being administered and enforced throughout Pennsylvania. Survey participants will be given access to a final copy of the report delivered to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. **The report WILL NOT IDENTIFY a particular municipality, third-party agency or COG. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania and the legislature will not be able to determine what the responses were from your municipality or third-party agency or COG.** Summary information and analysis of data and trends are the intended results of this survey.

What are the benefits of participating in the survey?

The final report will assist municipalities, COGs and third-party agencies to compare their administration and enforcement of the UCC to the state as a whole and to urban and rural areas. You will be able to compare:

- A. Employment status of the designated BCO (municipal employee, third-party employee, COG employee, multiple third-party employees)

B. How much residential plan review is performed by municipal employees and how much is performed by third-party and COG employees.

C. How much residential inspection work is performed by municipal employees and how much is performed by third-party and COG employees.

D. How much commercial plan review is performed by municipal employees and how much is performed by third-party and COG employees.

E. How much commercial inspection work is performed by municipal employees and how much is performed by third-party and COG employees

F. Board of Appeals Fees for commercial and residential appeals.

G. Complete UCC fee charged to applicants (application fee, plan review fee, inspection fees, any administrative fees) for 3 typical residential projects; 2 commercial projects and 1 industrial project.

H. Your municipal amendments of the UCC (if any) with those of other municipalities in your county and region.

This will be the first comprehensive study of the impact of the UCC on Pennsylvania and how it is being administered and enforced. The legislature has demonstrated a great deal of interest in learning "how much uniformity" actually exists (or does not exist). This applies to methods of enforcement, permit fees and municipal amendments of the UCC.

While the purpose for the grant is to ultimately provide data and analysis to the legislature on the impact of the UCC, those who participate in the survey/grant will have be given access to the final report, which we believe will be extremely valuable as a planning tool for municipalities, third-party agencies and COGS as they seek to understand how their administration and enforcement compares with other municipalities throughout the state.

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Turns, the Project Coordinator at the PHRC, at 814-863-0623.