
Preserving Housing: A Best Practices Review

SURVEY OF CITIES THAT HAD NOT ADOPTED THE STATE BUILDING CODE

Similar to the questionnaire of cities that had adopted the State Building Code, this questionnaire contained a subset of the questions about the availability and use of property maintenance codes, programs to register rental dwellings, programs to inspect housing at the time-of-sale, and methods of communicating housing information. No questions related to the administration of the State Building Code were included.

This questionnaire was mailed to 118 city administrators or building officials, 100 of whom responded (for an 84 percent response rate). [Click here to see the results.](#) A table listing the cities that received the questionnaire, and those that responded, is also available at:
www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2003/pe0305.htm.

***PRESERVING EXISTING HOUSING STOCK:
A BEST PRACTICES REVIEW***

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON LOCAL
MAINTENANCE CODES AND OTHER
HOUSING ACTIVITIES**



Please return your completed survey
in the enclosed postage-paid envelope to:

**Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor
Best Practices Reviews**

Room 140, Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

651-296-4708
(Fax) 651-296-4712

«City_Served»
I.D. Number «ID»

Thank you for answering this questionnaire on your city's involvement with property or housing maintenance codes and other housing activities. Cities not involved with housing activities need answer only the first question.

This questionnaire focuses on existing residential structures—both single-family and multi-family—but not on construction of new housing. Please respond for calendar year 2001.

For your information, *Minnesota Statutes* (2000) §3.978, subd. 2 gives our office authority to collect this information from public officials and requires them to respond. We will report results from the questionnaire only in the aggregate, not by individual respondent. Upon completion of this project in spring of 2003, however, all information, including questionnaire responses, will be public data (as defined by *Minnesota Statutes* (2000) §13.03, subd. 1) and available to the public upon request.

Please return by **October 11, 2002**. If you have any questions, please contact Carrie Meyerhoff at 651/297-3499, or e-mail her at carrie.meyerhoff@state.mn.us.

Your name (Please print): _____

Your title: _____

Phone number: _____

- 1. Is your city involved with activities to help maintain or preserve housing, such as adopting housing or property maintenance codes, registering rental properties, conducting time-of-sale inspections, or offering housing maintenance information?** (N=100)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
9	9.0%	Yes (Go to Question 2.)
91	91.0	No (You may stop here and return the questionnaire.)

If you answered "no" to Question 1, please **STOP** here. Please return the questionnaire by faxing it to 651-296-4712, or returning it in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for responding.

- 2. Based on your observations, how would you describe the general condition of existing housing units in your community?** (Circle one response for each type of housing.)

	Generally Good Condition, Well Maintained		Mostly Good, With Some Having Maintenance Needs Visible		Many Have Maintenance Needs Visible		Generally Poor Condition		Don't Know	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
a. Owner-occupied housing (single- or multi-family) (N=8)	1	12.5%	7	87.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
b. Rental housing units (N=9)	1	11.1	7	77.8	0	0.0	1	11.1	0	0.0

This first set of questions focuses on local housing or property maintenance codes your city may have adopted. Questions specific to rental housing programs and time-of-sale transactions are included in later sections of the questionnaire.

3. Has your city adopted any local codes for the purpose of helping to preserve the existing housing stock? (N=9)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
3	33.3%	Yes
5	55.6	No (Skip to Question 7.)
1	11.1	Don't know (Skip to Question 7.)

4. Which codes has your jurisdiction adopted for the purpose of helping to preserve the existing housing stock? (Check all that apply.) (N=3)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
0	0.0%	a. Model property maintenance code (which one? _____)
1	33.3	b. Model housing code (which one? _____)
0	0.0	c. Model code for abatement of hazardous or unsafe buildings (which one? _____)
2	66.7	d. Locally developed property maintenance or housing code
0	0.0	e. Other (Specify: _____)

5. Which of the following issues are covered by the codes you indicated above? (Please check all that apply.) (N=3)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
2	66.7%	a. Condition of exterior surfaces (e.g., wood, paint, masonry)
3	100.0	b. Roofs
2	66.7	c. Water-tightness of structure
1	33.3	d. Adequacy of drainage
3	100.0	e. Foundation walls
2	66.7	f. Maintenance and capacity of structural members
0	0.0	g. Condition of interior surfaces (e.g., peeling paint, loose plaster, holes)
1	33.3	h. Plumbing
1	33.3	i. Heating or ventilation systems
1	33.3	j. Electrical system
0	0.0	k. None of the above (Skip to Question 7.)

6. Please estimate the following with respect to the enforcement of your local property or housing maintenance codes for the year 2001. Do not include inspection requirements that are part of a rental licensing or registration program or that are required when housing units change ownership or occupancy. Rental inspections and time-of-sale inspections are covered in later sections of this questionnaire.

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Median</u>
a. How many housing units are in your jurisdiction? (N=3)	2,036 units	500
b. How many of the housing units did your jurisdiction inspect for local code compliance in 2001? (N=3)	0 units	0
c. As of January 1, 2001, how many housing units had open violations from previous years? (N=3)	139 units	0
d. How many housing units were cited with violations in 2001? (N=3)	0 units	0
e. Of housing units with violations (both those cited in 2001 and those outstanding from previous years), for approximately what percentage were violations resolved by December 31, 2001?	* %	
f. Of housing units with violations resolved (your answer in "e" above), please estimate the percentage for which owners or tenants voluntarily resolved the violation after they were made aware of it (i.e. before fines were levied or more aggressive enforcement action was taken).	* %	

6. Please estimate the following with respect to the enforcement of your local property or housing maintenance codes for the year 2001. (continued)

- g. Please estimate the average number of days that passed between the receipt of a housing complaint and an inspection of the unit. Total
* days
- h. Please estimate the average number of days that passed between when a violation was cited and when it was resolved. *(Exclude those cases in which weather was the primary delaying factor.)* * days

*Only one city reported violations. In 2001, the city focused on outstanding violations from prior years and, therefore, its answers to these questions were generally atypical of property inspection programs.

The next questions focus on rental inspection, licensing, certification, and registration programs. Questions specific to time-of-sale transactions come later.

7. Does your jurisdiction require any of the following?

	<u>Yes— All Rental Properties</u>		<u>Yes— Multi-Family Properties Only (Over Two Units)</u>		<u>Yes— One- or Two- Unit Properties Only</u>		<u>Other</u>		<u>No</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
a. Rental property registration (N=8)	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	87.5%	0	0.0%
b. Rental property licensing or certification (N=9)	2	22.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	77.8	0	0.0

(If you answered “no” to both of the above, please skip to Question 10.)

NOTE: The three affirmative responses represent 2 cities.

8. Please indicate the situations under which your jurisdiction conducts inspections as part of its rental program, by housing type as indicated.

	<u>Mandatory Inspections Only (e.g., every 3 years)</u>		<u>Inspections in Response to Complaints Only</u>		<u>Mandatory Inspections and in Response to Complaints</u>		<u>No Inspections</u>		<u>Other</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
a. One- and two-family dwellings (N=2)	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
b. Multi-family properties (over two units) (N=2)	1	50.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
c. Other <i>(Specify: _____)</i> (N=1)	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

(If your jurisdiction does not conduct inspections as part of its rental program, skip to Question 10.)

9. Please indicate the following regarding rental properties and inspections in 2001: (N=2)

- a. How many rental units in your jurisdiction are subject to rental registration, certification, or licensing? Min.
4 units Max.
21
- b. What percentage of your rental housing units (your answer to “a” above) did your jurisdiction inspect (either as a result of mandatory inspections or complaints) as part of its rental program in 2001? 0% 100
- c. Of units inspected in 2001, for approximately what percentage were correction orders issued? 0% 50
- d. Of rental units with correction orders (your answer to “c” above), for approximately what percentage did the responsible parties voluntarily comply with the order (i.e., before more aggressive enforcement action was taken)? 0% 100

The following questions apply to requirements that housing be inspected before it can be sold. Such programs go by various names, such as "time-of-sale," "point-of-sale," "truth-in-housing," and others.

10. Does your jurisdiction require inspections of 1- or 2-family housing units before they can be sold? (N=9)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
0	0.0%	Yes
9	100.0	No (Skip to Question 13.)
0	0.0	Don't know (Skip to Question 13.)

NOTE: No cities had time-of-sale programs, so none answered questions 11 and 12.

11. Please indicate the following regarding your time-of-sale program for 2001:

- a. Number of housing units inspected through the time-of-sale program _____ units
- b. Number of units with code violations or problems identified _____ units

12. If violations or problems are found, please indicate to what degree they must be resolved before the house can be sold.

- ☐ a. All problems must be resolved
- ☐ b. Selected problems must be resolved (e.g., violations that pose imminent hazards)
- ☐ c. No problems must be resolved

Information on Housing Maintenance and Preservation

13. Please indicate whether your jurisdiction offered or financially supported housing maintenance and preservation information through any of the following means in 2001. (Please check all that apply, even if your specific department was not directly involved.) (N=8)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
0	0.0%	a. Housing improvement or remodeling fair
0	0.0	b. General housing maintenance courses for homeowners
0	0.0	c. General housing maintenance courses for landlords
0	0.0	d. Workshops on specific projects (e.g., caulking windows) or building systems (e.g., plumbing or electrical)
0	0.0	e. Presentations to civic groups
0	0.0	f. Housing maintenance manuals
0	0.0	g. Manuals indicating acceptable rehabilitation options for homes with historic designation or in historic districts
0	0.0	h. Plan books suggesting remodeling alternatives for different types of homes
1	12.5	i. Published information on sources of rehabilitation financing or other types of home-repair assistance
1	12.5	j. Other (Specify: _____)
5	62.5	k. None of the above (Skip to Question 15.)
1	12.5	l. Don't know (Skip to Question 15.)

14. In what ways, if any, did your jurisdiction attempt to determine the effectiveness of housing information or educational opportunities it offered or supported financially? (Check all that apply.) (N=2)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
0	0.0%	a. Formal surveys of participants or recipients
0	0.0	b. Informal follow-up phone calls to participants or recipients
0	0.0	c. Anecdotal information from participants or recipients
0	0.0	d. Other (Specify:_____)
2	100.0	e. None
0	0.0	f. Don't know

15. To the best of your knowledge, through what avenues is housing maintenance and preservation information available in your jurisdiction? (Please check all that apply.) (N=8)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
2	25.0%	a. Nonprofit organizations
0	0.0	b. Educational institutions
3	37.5	c. Hardware or home improvement stores
0	0.0	d. Landlord or apartment associations
1	12.5	e. Other (Specify:_____)
4	50.0	f. I am unaware of other sources of information.

16. What methods has your jurisdiction found to be particularly effective in applying local maintenance codes, rental inspection programs, or time-of-sale programs, or providing housing maintenance information?

17. If you would like to make any comments about the subjects covered, please use the rest of this page or attach additional pages.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

Please send the completed questionnaire in the pre-addressed envelope
or fax it to 651-296-4712 by **October 11, 2002.**