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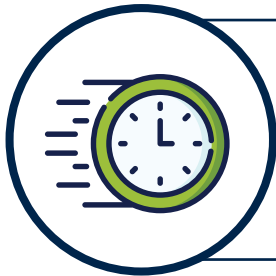
# Fast Track to Success: How Florida Has Streamlined Its Permitting Processes To Cut Red Tape and Expand Housing

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# KEY FINDINGS



NEW HOMES IN FLORIDA ARE THROUGH THE ROOF—**LITERALLY.**



PERMITS FOR NEW HOMES ARE BEING **PROCESSED MORE QUICKLY.**



FLORIDIANS ARE **REALIZING SAVINGS.**

**THE BOTTOM LINE:**

**FLORIDA IS LEADING THE NATION IN MODERNIZING ITS PERMITTING PROCESSES.**

## Overview

Florida has long stood as a model for the nation in economic growth and prosperity. But under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida has become *the* model, with low taxes, minimal red tape, and record surpluses. Throughout 2021, a new start-up was created in Florida every 60 seconds.<sup>1</sup> Unsurprisingly, Florida's growth in real gross domestic product was among the top five highest in the nation in 2021.<sup>2</sup> This is thanks to pro-work, pro-entrepreneurship, and pro-business policies—such as Florida's decision to end participation in the disastrous \$300 weekly unemployment bonus.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, Florida's anti-lockdown and pro-freedom policies have contributed to a wave of new residents. For the fifth consecutive year, Florida was ranked first in the nation for net in-migration.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 1,000 people move to Florida every day—with tax-and-spend states sending the most residents to the Sunshine State.<sup>5-6</sup>



**FLORIDA'S ANTI-LOCKDOWN AND PRO-FREEDOM POLICIES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A WAVE OF NEW RESIDENTS.**

Not only have Gov. DeSantis and Florida legislators created an environment for a thriving economy, but they have turned their attention toward streamlining Florida's regulatory processes to accommodate the state's tremendous growth in population.

## HOW FLORIDA'S STREAMLINED PERMITTING PROCESS WORKS

In 2021, HB 1059 was signed into law by Gov. DeSantis after being spearheaded in the Florida Legislature by Speaker Chris Sprowls.<sup>7</sup> This legislation contains provisions that offer predictability and transparency to Florida residents and businesses.<sup>8</sup> But the most impactful provisions in the new law are related to the processing of local permits.<sup>9</sup>

Under this legislation, Florida's cities and counties have a set number of days to review building permit applications.<sup>10</sup> To enforce minimum timeframes, Florida now requires localities to incrementally refund fees if permits are not addressed in a timely manner.<sup>11</sup> Localities must refund 10 percent of the application fee for every business day until the application is processed.<sup>12</sup> This includes permit applications for the construction of new single-family homes.<sup>13</sup>



**TO ENFORCE MINIMUM TIMEFRAMES, FLORIDA NOW REQUIRES LOCALITIES TO INCREMENTALLY REFUND FEES IF PERMITS ARE NOT ADDRESSED IN A TIMELY MANNER.**

Additionally, if an application for a single-family home is deemed incomplete by a locality—and the applicant addresses the issues—the locality has 10 business days to approve or deny the permit.<sup>14</sup> If it fails to do so, the applicant receives a 20 percent permit application fee discount for the first business day the locality is late, and an additional 10 percent discount for each subsequent day—up to a maximum of five business days.<sup>15</sup>

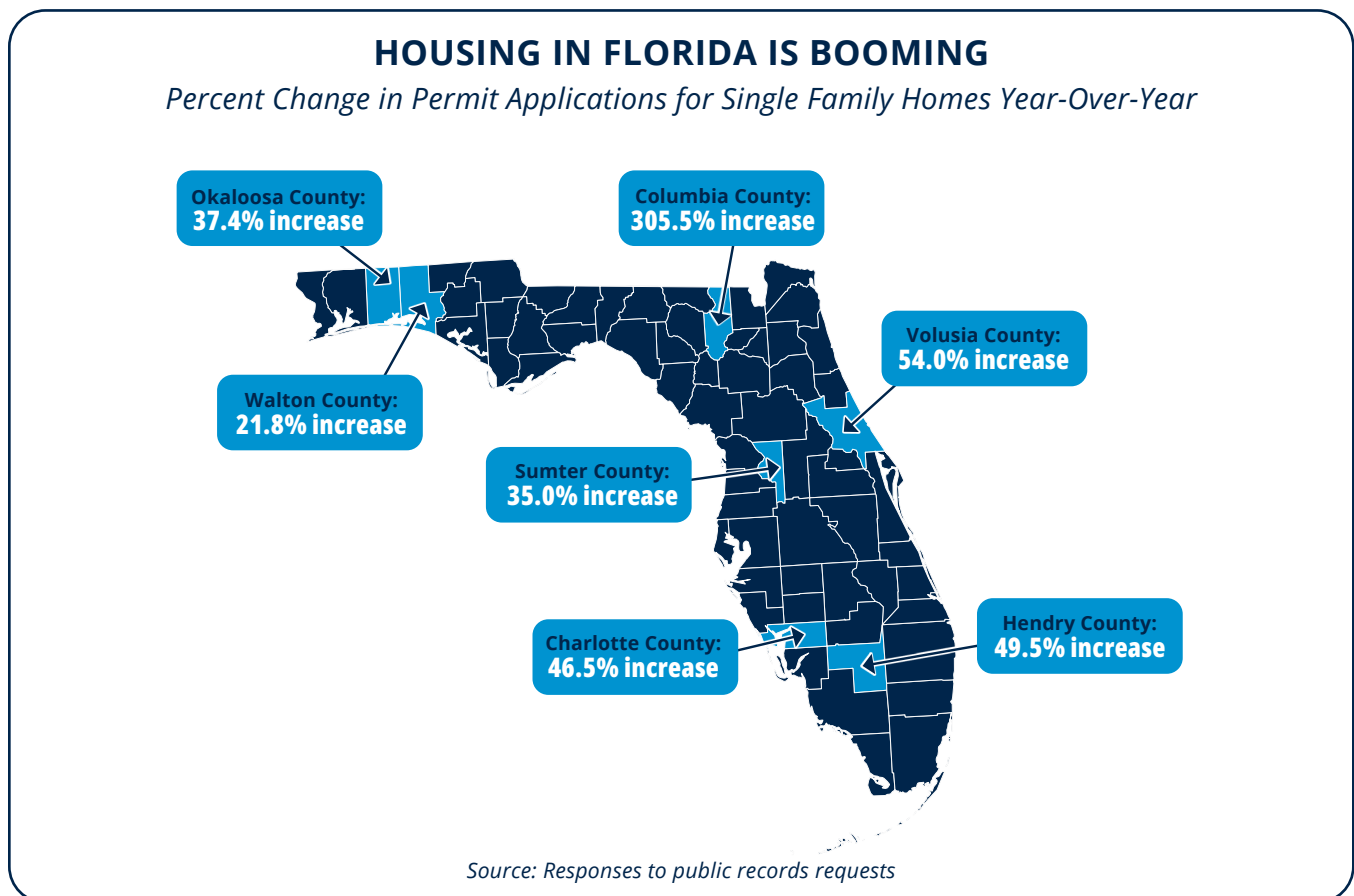
To promote transparency, Florida also requires localities to post the permit application, review processes and procedures, and post the status of every submitted application on their website.<sup>16</sup> This provides clarity and promotes efficiency in the permit application process.<sup>17</sup>

This creative framework is designed to encourage localities to speed up the processing of permits, particularly for new single-family homes being built. Responses to public records requests made to the most populous counties and cities in the state show that not only are more new homes being built in Florida, but permits are being approved more quickly—with a portion of the permit fees from any delays passed back to the applicant.

## New homes in Florida are through the roof—literally

Statewide, **more than 213,000 building permits for housing units were issued in Florida in 2021—an astonishing 30 percent increase over 2020.**<sup>18</sup> That is close to double the national average growth rate in new authorized housing units.<sup>19</sup> This is in no small part driven by the construction of new single-family homes, which are through the roof.

From the Panhandle to Southwest Florida, new permit applications for single-family homes are sky-high.



# Permits for new homes are being processed more quickly

Not only have more permit applications for single-family homes been filed, but thanks to Florida's new streamlined process these permits are being processed more quickly. Responses to public records requests comparing the period from October 1, 2020 (the effective date of the new law) through January 31, 2021 to the period from October 1, 2021 through January 31, 2022 demonstrate more expeditious permit processing for single-family homes across the Sunshine State following the implementation of the new law.

## PERMITTING PROCESS PROFILE: SANTA ROSA COUNTY SPEEDS UP REVIEWS

In late 2020 and early 2021—prior to the enactment of Florida's new law—Santa Rosa County was lagging behind in processing permit applications for single-family homes.<sup>20</sup> In fact, less than 50 percent of permit applications were processed in 30 business days or fewer.

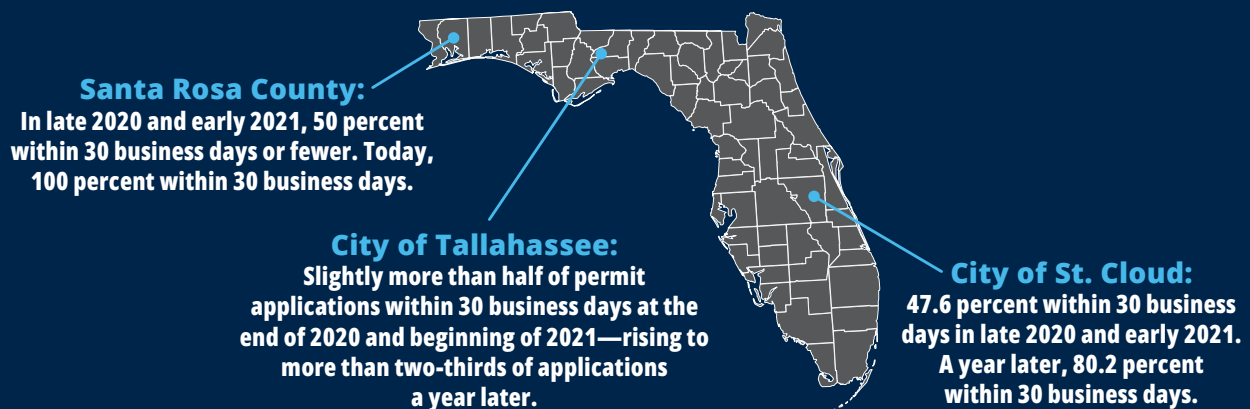
However, after the law took effect, Santa Rosa County sped up their processing significantly. Today, 100 percent of permit applications for single-family homes are being reviewed within 30 business days.<sup>21</sup> This improvement in processing time is directly attributable to the new law, as the county prepared in advance of the law's implementation to separate out reviews by the Planning and Zoning Department from the building inspection stage.<sup>22</sup> Now, all permit applications for single-family homes are processed in fewer than four weeks.<sup>23</sup>

Other jurisdictions have seen similar success. In the City of St. Cloud, just 47.6 percent of permit applications for single-family homes were processed within 30 business days in late 2020 and early 2021.<sup>24</sup> A year later, 80.2 percent were processed within 30 business days.<sup>25</sup>

And in Florida's capitol city of Tallahassee, slightly more than half of permit applications for single-family homes were processed within 30 business days at the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021—rising to more than two-thirds of applications a year later.<sup>26</sup>

### PERMIT APPLICATIONS FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES ARE BEING ISSUED MORE QUICKLY

*Duration of Permit Issuance Timeframes for Single Family Homes by Selected Periods*



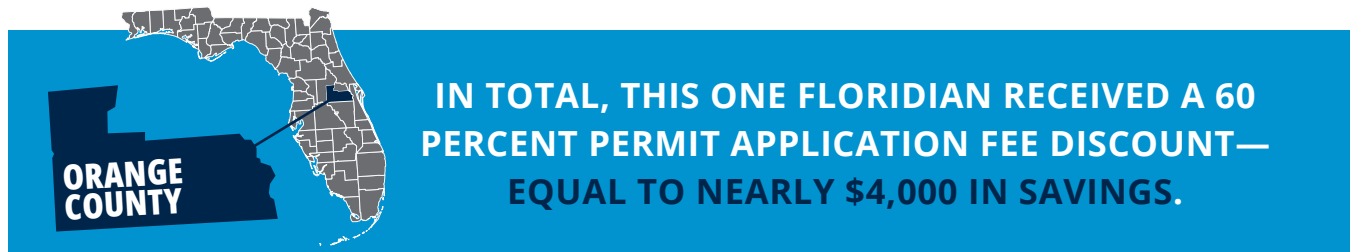
Source: Responses to public records requests

## Floridians are realizing savings

Reforms to Florida's permitting process have helped speed up processing times so that new homes can be built more quickly. However, in the cases in which localities continue to be delayed, Floridians have reaped the benefits in the form of significant permit fee reductions.

### COST SAVINGS PROFILE: ORANGE COUNTY RETURNS SAVINGS

One Orange County resident seeking to build a new home in the Orlando area received his permit application back with corrections requested by the county.<sup>27</sup> The applicant made the corrections quickly, giving the county 10 business days to approve or deny the permit. However, the county was delayed beyond the 10-day timeframe. As a result, the applicant received a 20 percent permit application fee discount for the first delayed business day, plus a 10 percent discount for each of the next four business days.<sup>28</sup> In total, this one Floridian received a 60 percent permit application fee discount—equal to nearly \$4,000 in savings.<sup>29</sup>



Similar stories have occurred elsewhere in the state. For example, in Nassau County, delays in permit processing for single-family home applications over a three-month period resulted in seven applicants receiving partial refunds that totaled up to thousands of dollars.<sup>30</sup>

When localities cannot act quickly, Floridians should not be forced to eat the costs. Thanks to permitting reform, they no longer have to.

## THE BOTTOM LINE: Florida is leading the nation in modernizing its permitting processes.

To foster its incredible economic growth and population boom, Florida's leaders have taken decisive action to speed up the processing of permits—particularly for single-family homes—by giving localities minimum timelines to act within. When they fail to do so, Floridians are given a break. Up and down the state, these reforms have proven effective at streamlining permitting and accommodating the construction of new homes.

Other states should emulate Florida's approach to streamline permitting processes, hold localities accountable, and put more money in the hands of homeowners.

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