



American Planning Association
Connecticut Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

COVID-19 Response Survey Results Executive Summary

APRIL 10, 2020



CT_APA



CTPLANNING



Introduction

CCAPA sought to collect information from its members to be shared with the CT Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR).

The intent was to facilitate communications between the State and municipalities in COVID-19 response measures, in addition to sharing best practices within our membership.

The survey was open from March 31, 2020 to April 9, 2020. Following is a summary of results, with more complete responses attached.

Thank you to those who participated.



Survey links were e-mailed to CCAPA membership (which includes regional and state planners, as well as private consultants, attorneys and other affiliated professionals).

A total of **48 responses** were received, representing at least **39 different municipalities** around the State.

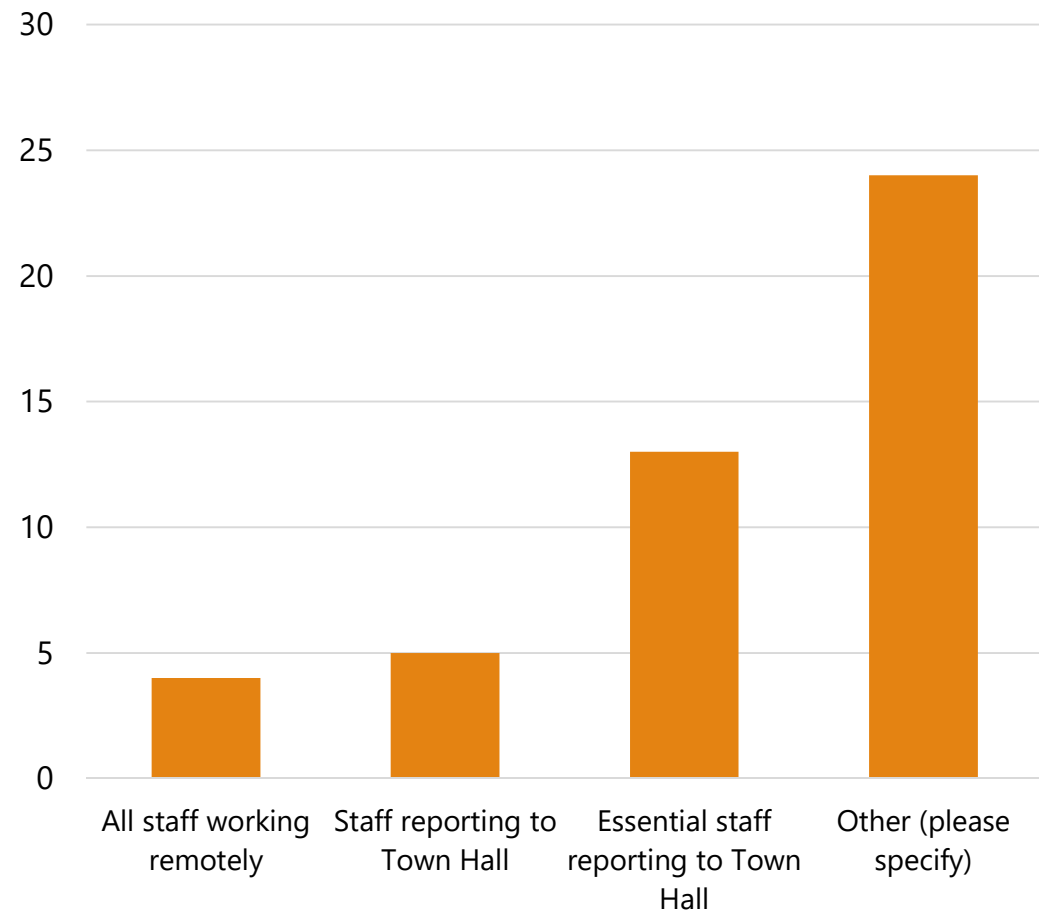
Respondents



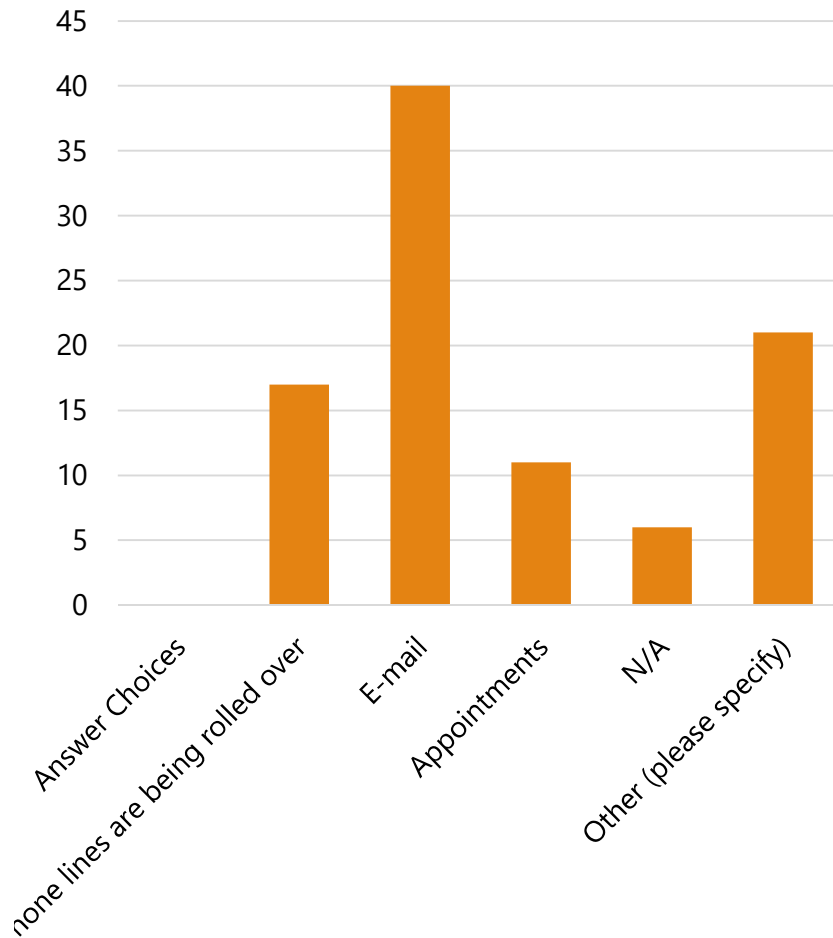
Staffing

- § Just over half of respondents indicated land use staff is either splitting shifts (usually by days in the office) and/or mixing remote workers with in-office workers.
- § Only 4 responses indicated all staff is working remotely.
- § Only 5 indicated that all staff continues to report to Town Hall.

How is Land Use Dept. staffed right now?



If staff is working remotely, how is the public able to access staff?



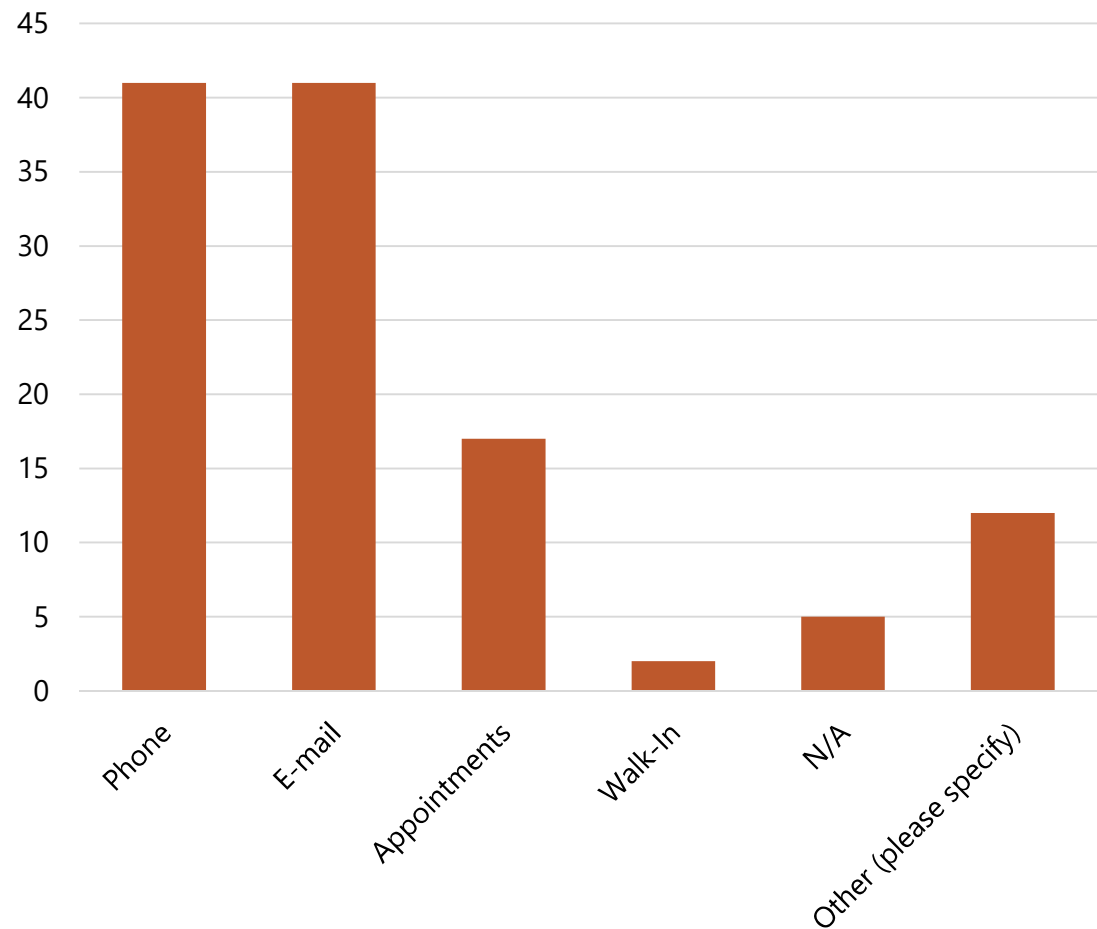
Accessibility of Remote Staff

- § For communities with staff working remotely, the vast majority are relying on e-mail for public communications with staff.
- § Those who answered “other” indicated staff are checking voicemail, voicemails being forwarded by phone or e-mail, or some staff still located in the office
- § 17 responses indicated that phone lines are being rolled over to staff

Accessibility of In-Office Staff

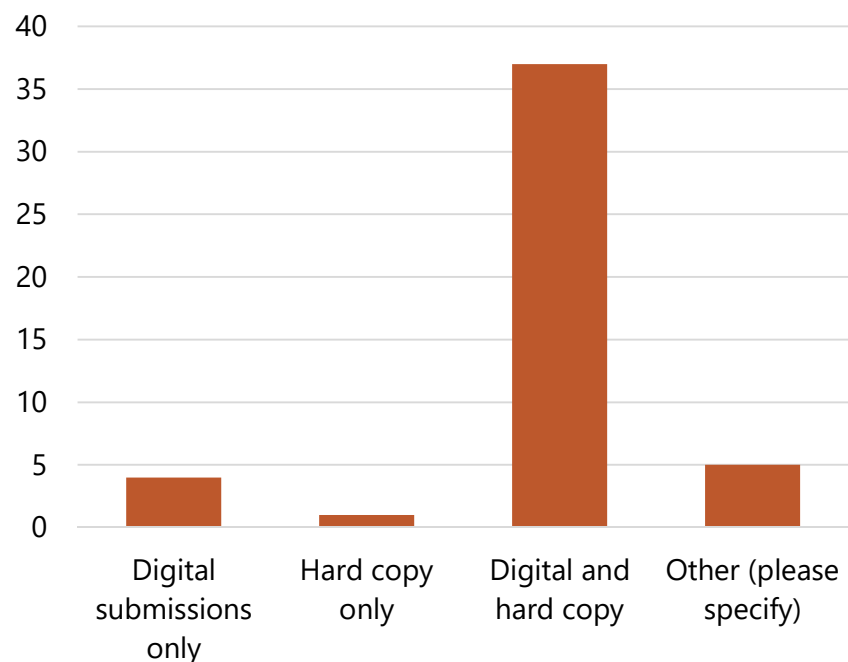
- § Most respondents indicated that staff are relying on phone and e-mail for public communications.
- § Only 2 respondents indicated that public walk-ins are allowed.
- § 17 response that appointments with staff are allowed.
- § “Other” responses included drop-boxes are available for public communications.

If staff is working in Town Hall, how is the public able to access staff?



New Land Use Applications

How are new land use applications being accepted right now?



- § The vast majority of respondents indicated that new applications are accepted in digital and hard copy.
- § Only 1 response indicated that only hard copy applications are accepted.
- § For those communities accepting hard copies, many (19 respondents) are distributing those applications to staff and commissioners digitally.
- § Some are relying on drop boxes at Town Hall or mailing materials to commissioners.

Most communities are posting meeting notices online (a few respondents indicated continued use of newspapers).

Notice locations are posted on main municipal home pages, or commission specific pages. One respondent indicated they're developing a new landing page for meeting notices.

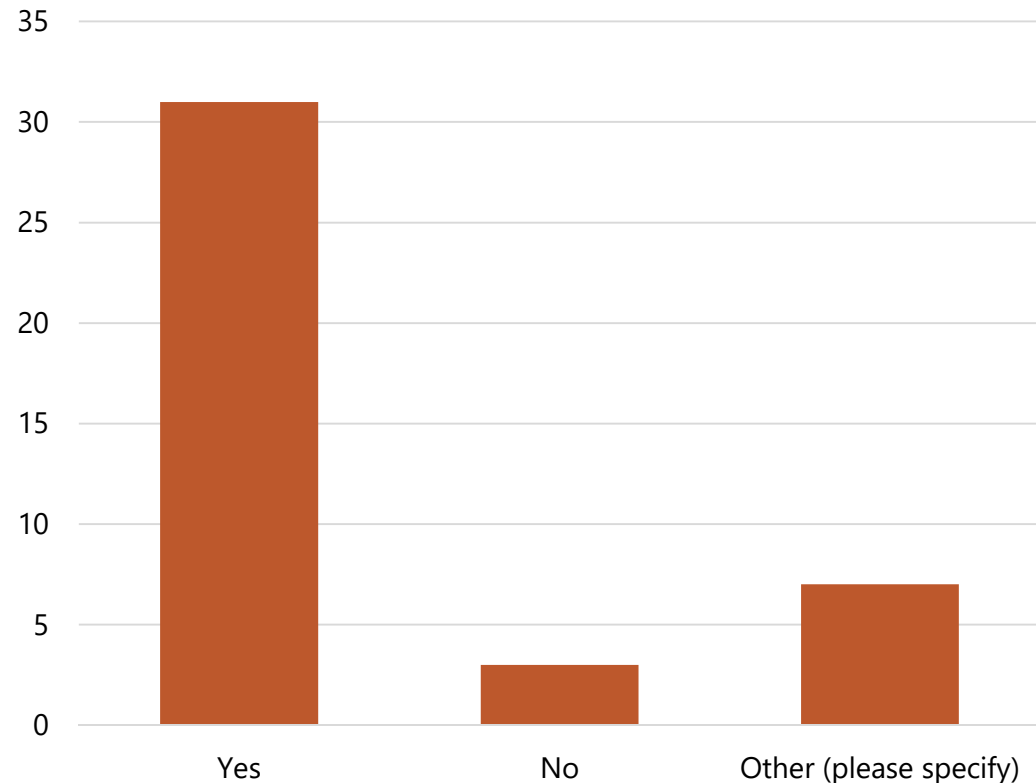
Public Meeting Notices



Land Use Enforcement Activities

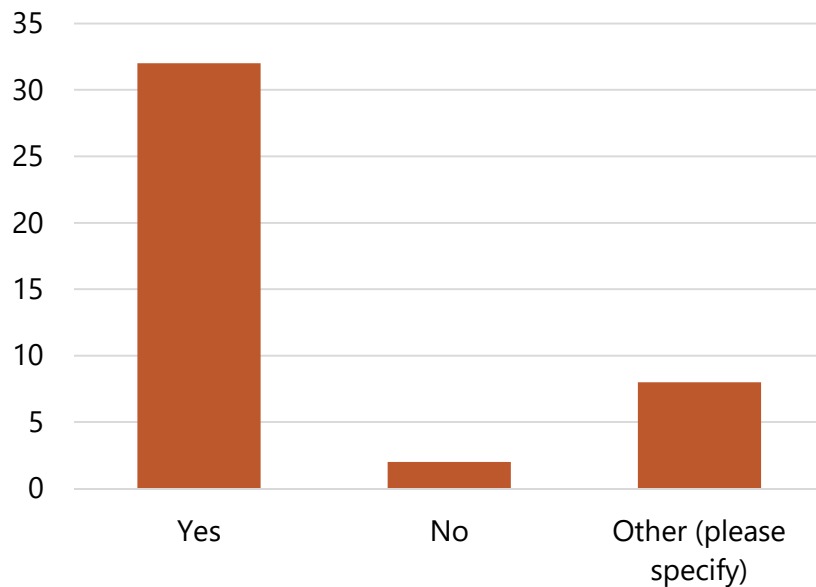
- § Most respondents indicated staff are continuing enforcement activities.
- § Half of these respondents indicated inspections limited to exterior only
- § Majority of those continuing inspections require social distancing
- § A couple of respondents indicated using virtual inspection technology (e.g. facetime, photos)

Are staff currently conducting Wetlands and Zoning inspections?



Building Code Enforcement

Are building officials currently conducting inspections?



- § The vast majority of respondents indicated that building officials continue to perform inspections (a few respondents indicated exterior only).
- § 17 indicated using special technology to conduct inspections, including photos, FaceTime, iPad extensions of Muncipity or other permitting software, Google Duo, or videoconferencing programs
- § Most indicated staff is required to maintain social distancing, some pre-screen prior to inspections

Conclusion

Municipalities are responding in a variety of ways to maintain land use operations- from how they're staffing their departments to the technologies they are employing.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of CCAPA's strategic planning objectives has been to facilitating the digital transition in planning. A common approach across communities in technology adoption, training and implementation could assist communities in preparation for and continued operations during hazards and emergencies, thereby, ensuring the overall resiliency of Connecticut.