

## CHAPTER 5

### LOCAL AGENCY POWER OVER DECISION-MAKING FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ACROSS MUNICIPALITIES OF FLORIDA

Florida's municipalities were surveyed to investigate the extent of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning. The survey questionnaire was designed based on measures proposed by the Delphi study, and expected to vary across municipalities (see Chapter Three). Florida statutes influence the extent of many variables proposed by the Delphi study to measure local agency legal authority, relative autonomy, and the degree of control over decision-making for comprehensive planning, which implies their uniformity across municipalities. Therefore, in this particular case, the survey of municipal planning agencies focused on measures, which are not addressed by Florida statutes and expected to vary across municipalities.

The Delphi study, described in Chapter Four, suggests measures of each dimension of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning. Statutes shape the extent of the power dimensions in Florida. This chapter displays the findings of the survey investigating the extent of agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning across municipalities of Florida. It explains how indices summarizing major power dimensions are constructed. It also proposes an overall index of agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning in Florida.

The legal authority given to local planning agencies by statutes reflects the

advisory role of these agencies in providing recommendations to the governing body. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Regional Planning Councils (RPCs), other state agencies are directly involved in processes of comprehensive planning. Because the statutes address issues influencing local planning agency authority, autonomy, and control, many of the measures proposed by the Delphi study are uniform across Florida's municipalities, which is explained as follows:

*a) Florida Statutes and Agency Legal Authority to Make Planning Decisions.*

The Florida statutes affect the extent of legal authority given to a local planning agency. A local planning agency is responsible for: 1) preparing the comprehensive plan or plan amendment, 2) making recommendations to the governing body concerning the amendment or adoption of the comprehensive plan, 3) holding public hearings regarding proposed plans or plan amendments, 4) monitoring the comprehensive plan and making recommendations to the governing body changes in that plan as required, 5) reviewing proposed land development regulations, land development codes, or amendments, and reporting to the governing body issues related to consistency with adopted comprehensive plans, when the agency is required to do so (s.163.3171, F.S.), and 6) preparing and recommending to the governing body reports related to the evaluation and appraisal of comprehensive plans (s.163.3191, F.S.). If a local government has not prepared all elements required for the comprehensive plan or plan amendment, the RPC in charge of the region where that locality is located will prepare the plan/ plan amendment (s.163.3167, F.S.).

*b) Florida Statutes and Agency Relative Autonomy over Decision-Making.*

The Florida statutes reduce the magnitude of relative autonomy of a local planning

agency. First of all, the statutes make the DCA, RPCs, and state agencies involved directly in comprehensive planning processes (s.163.3204, F.S.). The DCA reviews or delegates the responsibility to RPCs to: 1) review proposed comprehensive plans or plan amendments (s. 163.3184, F.S.) and 2) prepare reports of evaluation and appraisal of comprehensive plans (s.163.3191, F.S.) to ensure that they meet requirements determined by statutes. Second, Water Management Districts, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Transportation review and recommend to the DCA on proposed comprehensive plans and plan amendments. Third, final orders issued by the DCA or the Administration Commission indicating that amendments are in compliance with state requirements are essential to adopt plan amendments (s.163.3189, F.S.). Fourth, statutes specify sanctions in cases of local non-compliance with State requirements (s. 163.3191, F.S.). Sanctions include deprivation from funds to improve infrastructure capacity and/or grants administered by the Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program, the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, and Revenue Sharing program (s.163.3184, F.S.).

Moreover, Florida statutes provide many conditions reducing the autonomy of a local planning agency over decision-making, which are: 1) the existence of oversight agencies able to veto municipal planning agency decisions, 2) the review of comprehensive plans by the DCA or other agencies, 3) the need for approval from the DCA prior to the adoption of comprehensive plans or plan amendments, and 4) the ability of the DCA to withhold funds in cases of inconsistency.

*c) Florida Statutes and Agency Control over Local Planning Actions.*

Florida statutes provide many conditions reducing the extent of local agency

control over planning actions. The existence of areas of critical state concern in a local unit increases the involvement of the DCA in local planning processes. A final order indicating that a plan or plan amendment is in compliance with state requirements is a condition for the adoption of that plan or plan amendment in designated areas of critical state concern (s.163.3184, F.S.). In addition, the statutes establish minimum requirements for information included in reports of evaluation and appraisal of a comprehensive plan (s.163.3191, F.S.), specify required and optional elements of comprehensive plans (s.163.3177, F.S.), and determine two times at maximum for plan amendments during a calendar year, except for cases of emergency (s.163.3187, F.S.).

*d) Florida Statutes and Agency Capacity to Make Planning Decisions.*

Statutes do not address directly the extent of technical, fiscal, institutional, and enforcement capacity of a local planning agency to make decisions. Therefore, the extent of these sub-dimensions of capacity is expected to vary across municipalities of Florida according to factors such as population size, area, and economic activities.

Indices were constructed to summarize the extent of each dimension of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning. Variables are dropped from an index if they:

- 1) Have high rates of missing values. Variables dropped are:
  - Additional consistency (existence of additional requirements for consistency set by upper level agencies) is dropped from the autonomy index, because of 11% missing cases.
  - Resource sufficiency (sufficiency of fiscal resources provided for enforcement actions) is dropped from the fiscal capacity index due to 34% missing cases.

2) Do not vary across planning agencies within Florida's municipalities. Variables dropped are:

- Hiring consultants (the adequacy of funds to hire consulting services) is dropped from technical capacity index (95% of agencies hired consulting services in the last five years).

- Continuing planning education (availability of continuing planning education and training in evolving technologies) is dropped from the technical capacity index since 93.3% of agencies provide opportunities for professional planners to continue their education.

- Annexation review (agency reviews and recommends annexation requests) is dropped from the autonomy index because over 94% of planning agencies do not have the authority for annexation reviews.

3) Are strongly associated (measures of associations  $> .85$ ) with a variable included in an index. The variable "Software use" (ability of professional planners to use technical software programs) is dropped from the technical capacity index, because of its very strong correlation with "years of experience" (number of years of the experience of planning staff).

Indices were constructed to summarize the extent of power dimensions, which are: legal authority, relative autonomy, control over local actions, and capacity to make planning decisions. Then, an overall power index was created to reflect power levels across municipalities of Florida. Table (5.1) shows variables included in indices summarizing major dimensions of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning, which are agency legal authority, relative autonomy, control over local planning actions, and capacity to make planning decisions.

Table (5.1): Adopted Measures of Local Agency Power over Decision-Making.

Variable Description	Variable Name	Coding
<p><u>1<sup>st</sup> Dimension: Agency Legal Authority</u></p> <p>Additional authority given to a local planning agency by ordinances, agreements, special acts, or charters</p>	Additional Authority	Continuous (Mean= .634)
<p><u>2<sup>nd</sup> Dimension: Relative Autonomy</u></p> <p>High frequency that DCA approves local plan amendments recommended by the local planning agencies.</p> <p>Absence of upper level agencies other than the DCA with authority to veto decisions of planning agencies.</p>	<p>DCA plan approving</p> <p>Upper Agencies veto</p>	<p>0= Never 1= Rarely 2= Frequently 3= Always</p> <p>1= Yes 0= No</p>
<p><u>3<sup>rd</sup> Dimension: Control over Local Planning Actions</u></p> <p>Frequency of the municipal governing body involvement in processes of approving or denying development applications.</p> <p>Frequency of the municipal council agreeing with recommendations on zoning or land use proposals.</p> <p>Existence of a board of adjustments or a zoning hearing examiner within the planning agency.</p>	<p>Governing body involvement</p> <p>Council agreeing</p> <p>Boards of Adjustments</p>	<p>0= Always 1= Frequently 2= Rarely 3= Never</p> <p>0= Never 1= Rarely 2= Frequently 3= Always</p> <p>1= Yes 0= No</p>
<p><u>4<sup>th</sup> Dimension: Capacity to Make Planning Decisions</u></p> <p><u>4A. Technical Capacity</u></p> <p>Percentage of professional planners having a degree in planning</p> <p>Number of years of planning experience of agency staff.</p> <p>Availability of computer software programs in an agency.</p>	<p>Staff with planning degrees</p> <p>Years of experience</p> <p>Software availability</p>	<p>Continuous (Mean= 34)</p> <p>Continuous (Mean= 16.67)</p> <p>Continuous (Mean= 2.94)</p>

Table (5.1) Continued.

Variable Description	Variable Name	Coding
<p><u>4B. Fiscal Capacity</u></p> <p>Agency had to cut staff and/or planning activities in the last two years for budgetary reasons.</p> <p>Rate of professional planners left the agency for any reason in the last two years.</p>	<p>Staff cut</p> <p>Planner turnover</p>	<p>0= Yes 1= No</p> <p>Continuous (Mean= 26.42)</p>
<p><u>4C. Institutional Capacity</u></p> <p>Professional planner participation in planning activities with the regional planning council in the last two years.</p> <p>Number of other local governmental agencies with which the agency interacted at least once a month last year.</p> <p>Participation of agencies in boards or committees of other local governmental agencies last year.</p> <p>Number of meetings with citizen groups or special interest held by the planning agency last year.</p> <p>Number of public hearings held by the planning agency last year.</p>	<p>Participation in RPCs</p> <p>Agencies contacted</p> <p>Participation in boards</p> <p>Citizen group meetings</p> <p>Public hearings</p>	<p>0= No 1= Yes</p> <p>0= None 1= 1-3 2= 4-6 3= 7 or more</p> <p>0= No 1= Yes</p> <p>0= None 1= 1-12 2= 13-52 3= 53 or more</p> <p>0= None 1= 1-12 2= 13-52 3= 53 or more</p>
<p><u>4D. Enforcement Capacity</u></p> <p>Agency responsibility to impose fines for violation of development regulations.</p> <p>Agency responsibility to approve or deny development applications.</p>	<p>Imposing fines</p> <p>Development applications</p>	<p>0= No 1= Yes</p> <p>0= No 1= Yes</p>

## 5.1 Agency Legal Authority to Make Planning Decisions

The Delphi study proposes four measures of agency legal authority to make planning decisions, which are:

- 1) The scope of authority given to the agency by Florida statutes, special acts, and/ or charters to revise a comprehensive plan.
- 2) The scope of authority given to the agency by Florida statutes, special acts, and/ or charters to propose revisions to land development regulations.
- 3) The exercise of a municipal planning agency of final authority over important planning decisions
- 4) Degree that decisions of other agencies are bound by decisions of the municipal planning agency.

The Florida statutes specify the scope and type of legal authority given to local planning agencies to revise a comprehensive plan and propose revisions to land development regulations (s.163.3171, F.S.). The agency does not exercise final authority over important planning decisions. Consistency requirements entail that decisions of other agencies must be bound by the adopted comprehensive plan. Capital improvements and land use regulations must be consistent with the plan (Burby et. al., 1997). Therefore, the four measures of agency legal authority that are proposed by the Delphi study do not vary across Florida's municipalities. However, variation in the extent of legal agency authority can only be found if an agency has additional authority given by special acts or charters. Additional authority given to planning agencies are related to: 1) land

development regulations<sup>23</sup>, 2) review of annexation proposals, 3) architectural review, 4) historical preservation, 5) other forms of plan implementation, and 6) management of federally proposed projects. Additional authority given a local planning agency is adopted as an indicator of agency legal authority for this group of municipalities as shown by figure (5.1). An equal weight was given for each type of additional authority given to a local planning agency. Scores of agency additional authority range from zero to two.

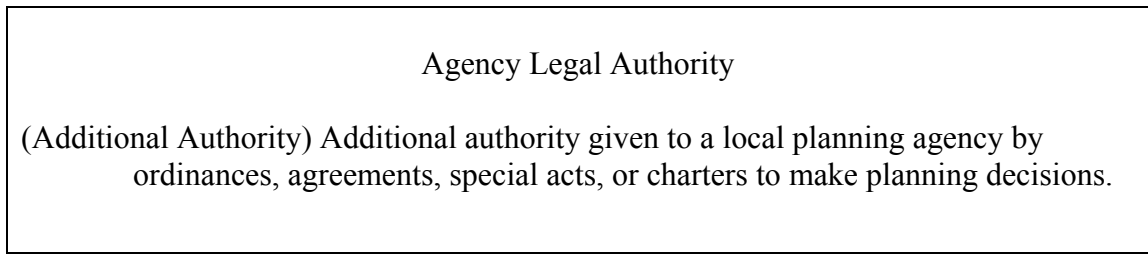


Figure (5.1): Proposed Index of Agency Legal Authority.

The analysis indicates that over 47% of planning agencies in municipalities of Florida do not have authority additional to that given by Florida statutes, while approximately 53% of agencies have additional authority. Large municipalities (25,000 or more inhabitants) have additional authority more than small communities (less than 25,000 people). Tables (5.2) shows that on average large municipalities have more additional authority than small communities (the mean= .760 and .5185, while the median= 1 and < .001, respectively). In addition, 38% of planning agencies in large

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<sup>23</sup> Land development regulations include subdivision regulations, land use, use of water and potable water, environmental protection, public facilities, zoning, review of appeals, permits, and code enforcement.

municipalities, but more than 55% of agencies in small communities do not have additional authority. However, the percentage of planning agencies with a high score of authority in large municipalities is almost double that percentage of small communities.

Table (5.2): Levels of Authority Given to Planning Agencies by Municipal Group

Levels of Authority	Group A (< 25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	30	55.6	19	38
Moderate*	20	37	24	48
High*	4	7.4	7	14
Mean	.5185		.7600	
Median	< .001		1.000	

- \* Low authority = The agency performs authority given by statutes. No additional authority is given.
- \* Moderate= The agency has one additional authority to that given by statutes.
- \* High= The agency has two additional authority to that given by statutes.

In general, planning agencies in large municipalities are given additional authority more than their counterparts in small communities. Table (5.3) illustrates the distribution of types of additional authority given to planning agencies by municipal groups. It compares types of additional authority given to planning agencies to make planning decisions in small and large municipalities. More than half of planning agencies in large municipalities have additional authority related to land development regulations, but 44.4% of agencies in small communities have this authority. In addition, few planning agencies within large municipalities, but none in small communities, have additional authority related to historical preservation, managing federally proposed projects, and other forms of plan implementation.

Table (5.3): Additional Authority Given to Planning Agencies by Municipal Group

Types of Additional Authority*	Group A (< 25,000 inhabitants)		Group B (≥ 25,000 inhabitants)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Land development regulations	24	44.4	26	52
Review of annexation proposals	3	5.6	3	6
Architectural review	1	1.9	1	2
Historical preservation	0	0	3	6
Other forms of plan implementation	0	0	2	4
Managing federally proposed projects	0	0	3	6

\* An agency may have more than one type of additional authority.

The percentages of planning agencies with authority to review annexation proposals or architectural review are almost equal for large and small municipalities. Therefore, types of additional authority given to planning agencies within large municipalities have more variation than those given to agencies within small communities.

## 5.2 Agency Relative Autonomy over Planning Decision-Making

The Delphi study suggests four measures of relative autonomy of a municipal planning agency over decision-making for comprehensive planning, which are:

- 1) High frequency that the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) approves local plan amendments recommended by the local planning agency (High frequency DCA plan approving),
- 2) Absence of additional requirements for consistency set by upper level agencies or special acts or charters (additional consistency),

- 3) Absence of upper level agencies other than the DCA with authority to veto decisions of a local planning agency (Absence of upper agencies veto), and
- 4) The agency reviews and recommends annexation requests (annexation reviews).

Two variables proposed by the Delphi study were dropped from the analysis.

The first variable dropped is “additional consistency,” because of its high rate of missing values.<sup>24</sup> The other variable dropped is “annexation reviews,” because of its uniformity across Florida’s municipalities. Over 94% of planning agencies do not have authority for annexation. Therefore, two variables: “absence of upper agencies veto” and “high frequency DCA plan approving” were analyzed. These variables are concerned with the relationship between the agency and institutions with different governmental levels. The variable “high frequency DCA plan approving” illustrates the relationship between the agency and the DCA, while the variable “absence of upper agencies veto” focuses on the relationship between the agency and county and regional planning agencies. The DCA approves local plan amendments based on the feedback of regional planning councils (RPCs) and other state agencies. The DCA delegates the review of plans and plan amendments to (RPCs), which report to the DCA incidents of inconsistency.

Approximately 88% of municipal planning agencies have upper level agencies authorized to veto their decisions and they report that county planning agencies are the major agencies able to veto municipal planning decisions, while about 10% of them have RPCs to veto their decisions. Therefore, most vetos of municipal agency decisions come from county planning agencies. To reflect the relationship between the local planning agency and the DCA and regional, and county planning agencies, the proposed index of agency

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<sup>24</sup> Approximately 11% of cases have missing values for additional requirements for consistency.

relative autonomy was constructed to include two variables: “absence of upper agencies veto” and “high frequency DCA plan approving,” as shown by figure (5.2).

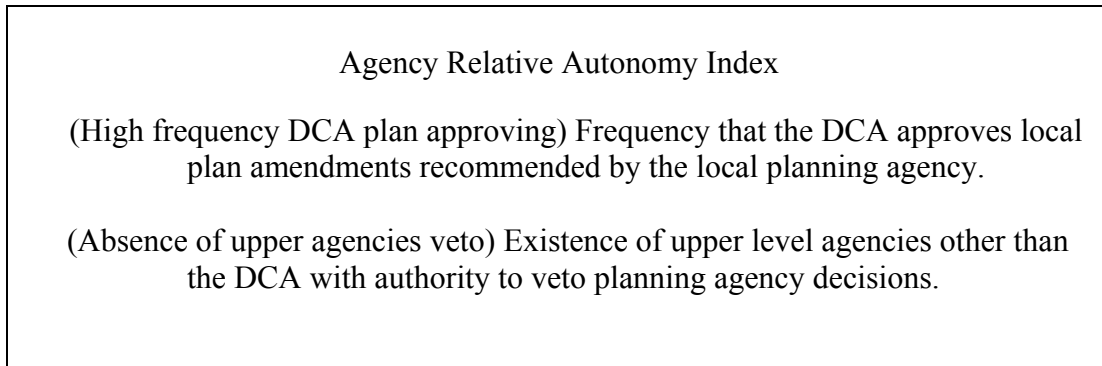


Figure (5.2): Proposed Index of Agency Relative Autonomy.

Levels of municipal planning agency autonomy in Florida were coded to range from low to high. Table (5.4) compares levels of agency relative autonomy between municipal groups. It shows the variation in the levels of planning agency autonomy by municipal group. The mean of autonomy levels of local planning agencies within small municipalities (3.0227) is very close to that of agencies within large communities (3.0426), while the median is equal. In addition, percentages of planning agencies having a low level of autonomy in large communities are more than these in small communities (26% and 18.5% respectively). However, 30% of planning agencies within large municipalities, but 20.4% of agencies in small communities have high levels of autonomy. The growth management program has shaped the power map in Florida. The DCA has a dominant role in the process of local comprehensive planning. RPCs do not have power over decision-making despite their roles as technical assistants, facilitators, and negotiators.

Table (5.4): Levels of Agency Relative Autonomy by Municipal Group

Levels of Relative Autonomy	Group A (< 25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	10	18.5	13	26
Moderate*	23	42.6	19	38
High*	11	20.4	15	30
Total	44	81.5	47	94
Missing	10	18.5	3	6
Total Agencies	54	100	50	100
Mean	3.0227		3.0426	
Median	3.000		3.000	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). Since the Mean= 3.033 and the St.= .737; then, Low autonomy (< 2.296), Moderate autonomy (2.296 to 3.770), and High autonomy (>3.77). The Maximum = 4.00, while the minimum= 2.00 of agency relative autonomy.

County-planning agencies may have supervisory roles driven from local charters or special acts. Local governments are required to comply with state requirements. Therefore, the growth management program of Florida influences the extent of local agency autonomy to make decisions for comprehensive planning.

### 5.3 Agency Control over Local Planning Actions

The Delphi study proposes three measures of agency control over local planning actions, which are:

- 1) Frequency of the planning board agreeing with planning staff recommendations on zoning or land use proposals (Board agreeing),
- 2) Existence of a board of adjustments or a zoning hearing examiner within the

planning agency (Boards of Adjustments), and

- 3) Frequency of the municipal governing body involvement in the processes of approving or denying applications for development (Governing body involvement).

The proposed variables are concerned with different aspects of agency control over local planning actions. The variables: “governing body involvement” and “boards of adjustments” are concerned with the ability of the planning agency to control local planning processes, while “board agreeing” focuses on the agency control of its internal operation. The variable “board agreeing” indicates the frequency of the municipal board agreeing with planning staff recommendations on zoning or land use proposals, which indicates the extent of influence or persuasive power a local planning agency has. The more influence the agency has, the more likely the municipal board agrees with planning staff recommendations on zoning or land use proposals. However, it is possible that planners consider potential reactions of the planning board when making recommendations, which increase the likelihood of “board agreeing.” The extent of agency influence on the planning board neither affects the degree of the governing body involvement in development processes nor determines whether an agency has a board of adjustments or a zoning hearing examiner. Consequently, the three proposed variables should be included in an index summarizing the different sub-dimensions of agency control over local planning actions. Figure (5.3) demonstrates components of the proposed index of agency control over local planning actions. Based on the proposed index, levels of agency control over planning actions were coded from low to high across municipalities of Florida.

Agency Control Index
(Board agreeing) Frequency of the planning board agreeing with planning staff recommendations on zoning or land use proposals.
(Adjustment boards) Existence of a board of adjustments or zoning hearing examiner within the planning agency.
(Governing body involvement) Frequency of the municipal governing body involvement in the process of approving or denying development applications.

Figure (5.3): Proposed Index of Agency Control over Local Planning Actions.

Statutes give advisory roles to local planning agencies through transferred responsibilities and enable the governing body to intervene in decisions of local planning agencies. Therefore, agency control over local planning actions is a matter of degree in Florida. It is not possible to find an agency with no control at all over local planning decisions, because it will not be able to perform its major functions. On the other hand, it is unlikely to have an agency with complete control over local planning actions since agencies have advisory roles. Table (5.5) compares levels of agency control over local planning actions for small (< 25,000 populations) and large (>= 25,000 inhabitants) municipalities.

Table (5.5) implies that, in general, planning agencies in small municipalities have similar levels of control over local planning actions to their counterparts in large communities, because the median scores of agency control are equal for both groups. However, the mean scores of agency control over local planning actions for small municipalities is higher than that of large communities, because of outliers.

Table (5.5) Levels of Agency Control over Local Planning Actions by Municipal Group

Levels of Agency Control	Group A (<25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	2	3.7	10	20
Moderate*	41	75.9	30	60
High*	8	14.8	9	18
Total	51	94.4	49	98
Missing	3	5.6	1	2
Total Agencies	50	100	50	100
Mean	3.764		3.55	
Median	4.000		4.000	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). Because the Mean of local agency control is 3.66, while St. is .98; then, low control (< 2.67), Moderate control (2.67-4.65), and high control (> 4.65). The maximum score of agency control= 6.00, while the minimum= 2.00

As shown by table (5.5) approximately 15% of agencies within small communities, but 18% of their counterparts in large municipalities, have high levels of local control. In addition, large municipalities have a higher proportion of planning agencies with low levels of control than what small communities have (20% and 3.7%, respectively). In average, agencies within small communities have equal control over local planning actions to agencies in large municipalities. Two possible scenarios can describe planning practices. The first is that planning agencies in small municipalities deal with less complicated and less controversial planning issues, which make the governing body and the planning board less involved in planning processes. Therefore, the larger the municipality, the more diverse planning issues faced, the more involvement of the governing body in development processes, and the less control of agencies over local planning actions. The other scenario is that planners in small communities are

influenced by the non-decision power of the governing body and planning boards, which make them consider possible reactions of the governing body and the board when making planning recommendations. The practice of non-decision power produces planner recommendations, which are more likely to be approved. The proposed index is appropriate to measure agency control based on the first scenario. If the second scenario is true, then measuring agency control without investigating effects of practices of non-decision power on decision-making is misleading. Further research is needed to investigate which scenario is more likely to explain the differences between small and large municipalities in the extent of their control over planning actions in Florida.

#### **5.4 Agency Capacity to Make Planning Decisions**

The Delphi study suggests measures of sub-dimensions of agency technical, fiscal, institutional, and enforcement capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning. These measures are expected to vary across planning agencies within municipalities of Florida, because the statutes do not directly address them. Indices were constructed to reflect the four sub-dimensions of agency capacity. Then, an overall index of agency capacity to make planning decisions was constructed based on proposed indices of technical, fiscal, institutional, and enforcement capacity. The overall capacity index is included in the general power index (see 5.5).

##### **5.4.1 Agency Technical Capacity**

Measures of agency technical capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning are identified by the Delphi study. These measures are:

- 1) Percentage of professional planners having a graduate degree in planning (Staff with planning degrees).<sup>25</sup>
- 2) Availability of continuing planner education and training in evolving technologies (Continuing planning education).
- 3) Number of years of planning experience of agency staff (Years of experience).<sup>26</sup>
- 4) Availability of computer software (Software availability).<sup>27</sup>
- 5) Ability of professional planners to use technical software programs such as GIS, database, and statistical packages (Software use).<sup>28</sup>

Because the proposed variables are assumed to measure technical capacity, statistical analyses were conducted to investigate which of these variables form an index of technical capacity. Approximately 93% of municipal planning agencies in Florida provide opportunity to their planning staff to continue planning education. Therefore, the variable “Continuing planning education” does not vary across Florida’s municipalities and was dropped from the statistical analysis as a result. The continuous variables “staff with planning degrees,” “years of experience”, “software availability”, and “software use” are included in the Pearson Correlation analysis to identify variables forming an index of agency technical capacity to make planning decisions.

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<sup>25</sup> Staff with planning degrees= Number of planners with degree in planning/ Total professional planners.

<sup>26</sup> Scores of “years of experience” = (Number of professionals with <2 years of planning experience \* 1)+ (Number of professionals with 2-5 years of planning experience\*2)+ (Number of professionals with 6-9 years of planning experience\*3) + (Number of professionals with 10-13 years of planning experience\* 4)+ (Number of professionals with 14 or more years of planning experience\* 5)

<sup>27</sup> “Software availability” is calculated by giving equal weight to each software program available in an agency. Software availability= (GIS\* 1) + (Statistical Package\* 1) + (Spreadsheet\* 1) + (Database\* 1) + others \*1

<sup>28</sup> “Software use” is estimated by calculating agency scores in the number of agency professional planners know how to use major software programs. Software availability= (GIS\* 1)+ (Statistical packages\* 1) + (Spreadsheet\* 1).

Table (5.6): Pearson Correlations among Measures of Agency Technical Capacity

Bivariate Relationship	Groups	
	B (< 25,000)	C (>= 25,000)
Staff with planning degrees& Years of experience.	.116	-.137
Staff with planning degrees& Software availability.	<b>.376*</b>	.091
Staff with planning degrees& Software use.	.218	-.118
Years of experience& Software availability.	.221	<b>.375*</b>
Years of experience& Software use.	<b>.477*</b>	<b>.916*<sup>c</sup></b>
Software availability& Software use.	<b>.620*</b>	<b>.369*</b>

\* Statistically significant at .05 alpha level.

<sup>c</sup> Very strong correlation (Pearson Correlation > .850)

Table (5.6) demonstrates the findings of the statistical analyses. The correlations are statistically significant between “software availability” and “staff with planning degrees” for small municipalities; “years of experience” for large communities; and “software use” for both groups. The positive correlations indicate that higher availability of computer software programs is associated with a higher percentage of professionals with planning degrees, more years of planning experience, and greater planner ability to use software programs.

The insignificant correlation between “staff with planning degrees” and “years of education” is explained by the fact that staff members with years of experience in planning do not necessarily have graduate degrees in planning. Approximately, 47% of planning agencies have professionals with graduate degrees in non-planning fields. In addition, the insignificant correlation between “staff with planning degrees” and “software use” reflect that the ability of the planning staff to use technical software (software use) is not determined by having a graduate degree in planning. For example,

personnel with a degree in geography may be able to use Geographic Information System (GIS), while someone with a degree in planning may not.

In addition, the correlation between “years of experience” and “software use” is very strong (Pearson correlation  $> .850$ ) for large communities, which suggests dropping either “years of experience” or “software use” from a proposed index of technical capacity. It was decided to include the variable “years of experience” in the technical capacity index, while dropping “software use,” because participants in the Delphi survey consider it an important measure of agency technical capacity and it implies planner’s ability to use computer software programs. Therefore, the technical capacity index includes the variables: “staff with planning degrees,” “software availability,” and “years of experience” as it is shown in figure (5.4).

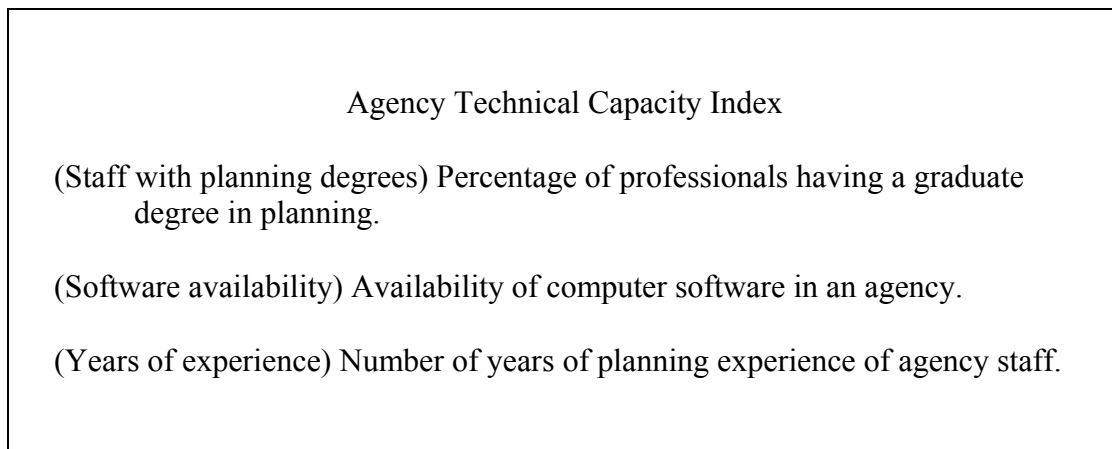


Figure (5.4): Proposed Index of Agency Technical Capacity.

Based on the proposed index demonstrated in figure (5.4), levels of agency technical capacity within municipalities of Florida were coded from low to high. Table (5.7) compares agency levels of technical capacity for small and large municipalities.

Table (5.7) Levels of Agency Technical Capacity by Municipal Group

Levels of Technical Capacity	Group A (< 25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	12	22.5	3	6
Moderate*	33	61.1	36	72
High*	4	7.4	10	20
Total	49	90.7	49	98
Missing	5	9.3	1	2
Total Cases	54	100	50	100
Mean	6.429		7.510	
Median	6.00		8.00	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). The Mean of agency technical capacity is 6.96, while the St. is 2.245. Consequently, Low technical capacity (< 4.715), Moderate technical capacity (4.715- 9.205), and High technical capacity (> 9.205). The maximum score of agency technical capacity = 11.00, while the minimum= 2.00

Table (5.7) illustrates that planning agencies in large municipalities have higher levels of technical capacity than agencies within small communities (the mean= 7.510 and 6.43, while the median = 8.00 and 6.00, respectively). The percentage of planning agencies with a high level of technical capacity in large municipalities is almost triple that of small communities. Only 6% of agencies in large communities versus 22.5% of agencies within small municipalities have low levels of capacity. Therefore, planning agencies in large municipalities have higher levels of technical capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning than their counterparts in small communities.

#### 5.4.2 Agency Fiscal Capacity

The Delphi study proposed three measures of agency fiscal capacity to make planning decisions, which are:

- 1) The adequacy of funds to hire consulting services (Hiring consultants).

- 2) Agency had to cut staff and/or planning activities in the last two years for budgetary reasons (Staff cut).
- 3) The rate of professional planner turnover in the last two years (Planner turnover).<sup>29</sup>

The proposed variables are assumed to reflect agency fiscal capacity. Therefore, statistical analyses were conducted to determine which variables could be included in an index summarizing agency fiscal capacity. The variable, “Hiring consultants,” is not included in the analysis, because it does not vary across this group of municipalities at this time. More than 95% of municipal planning agencies hired consulting services in the last five years. The statistical analysis of Compare Means and ANOVA are used to investigate bivariate associations between “Budget adequacy” (a nominal variable) and “Planner turnover” (a continuous variable) as shown by table (5.8).

Table (5.8): Comparing Means between Measures of Fiscal Capacity

Bivariate Relationships	Groups	
	A (< 25,000)	B (≥ 25,000)
Staff cut& Planner turnover.	23.849	<b>29.355*</b>

\* Based on ANOVA analyses, the association is statistically significant at .05 alpha levels.

Table (5.8) indicates that the association between “budget adequacy” and “planner turnover” is statistically significant for large communities. The insignificant association between the two variables for small municipalities is due to the small number of municipalities and the lack of much variation in the extent of “budget adequacy” for

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<sup>29</sup> Planner turnover= Number of planners left/ Number of full time positions.

planning agencies within this group. Approximately 89% of the planning agencies within small municipalities did not cut staff or planning activities for budgetary reasons in the last two years. Theoretically, the two variables are associated. The more adequate the budget of an agency is, the less its rate of planner turnover. Therefore, an index of agency fiscal capacity includes the variables “budget adequacy” and “planner turnover” as demonstrated by figure (5.5).

Agency Fiscal Capacity Index
(Planner turnover) Rate of planners left the agency for any reason in the last two years*.
(Staff cut) Agency cuts staff and/ or planning activities in the last two years for budgetary reasons.

The variable “planner turnover” was recoded (3= Less than 33.33% of planners left, 2= More than 33.34, but less than 66.66% of planners left, and 1= 66.67% or more of planners left.)

Figure (5.5): Proposed Index of Agency Fiscal Capacity.

Based on the proposed index of fiscal capacity to make planning decisions, levels of fiscal capacity of municipal planning agencies in Florida were estimated. The extent of agency fiscal capacity in Florida was coded from low to high. No municipal planning agency has a high level of fiscal capacity. Table (5.9) compares levels of agency fiscal capacity between small and large municipalities. The percentage of agencies with low level of fiscal capacity for small communities is higher than that of large communities (18.5% and 16% respectively).

Table (5.9): Levels of Agency Fiscal Capacity by Municipal Group

Levels of agency fiscal capacity	Group A (< 25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	10	18.5	8	16
Moderate*	10	18.5	12	24
High*	31	57.4	28	56
Total	51	94.4	48	96
Missing	3	5.6	2	4
Total	54	100	50	100
Mean	3.3922		3.333	
Median	4.00		4.00	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). The Mean of agency fiscal capacity is 3.3636 and St. is .8973. Because of the high variability and discrete data, Low fiscal capacity (< 3.00), Moderate fiscal capacity (3.00), and High fiscal capacity (> 3.00). The maximum score of agency fiscal capacity= 4.00, while the minimum= 1.00

As shown by table (5.9), the mean of agency fiscal capacity for small communities is slightly higher than that of large municipalities (3.392 and 3.333, respectively), but the median is equal for both groups. The percentage of planning agencies in small municipalities with low levels of fiscal capacity is higher than that of large communities (18.5% and 16%, respectively). More than 57% agencies in small municipalities, but 56% within large communities have high levels of fiscal capacity. This large proportion of municipalities with high levels of fiscal capacity is explained by the fact that most planning agencies within Florida’s municipalities did not face serious problems with budget cut or planner turnover in the last two years. In general, over 39% of agencies did not experience planner turnover in the last two years. Agencies experiencing planner turnover in the last two years provide different reasons for this

phenomenon. About 58% of agencies indicate that planners left an agency to seek another job with a higher salary, 6% of them report that planners who left the agency were not satisfied with the workload. Moreover, 18% of agencies state that planners left the agency because of their unsatisfactory performance, while the remaining 18% of the agencies mention personal and other reasons for planner turnover. These findings imply the fiscal capability of most municipal planning agencies to perform planning activities. Agencies with low fiscal capacity may need technical assistance from the state or regional planning agencies to help them generate more funds supporting municipal planning activities and providing incentives reducing planner turnover.

### **5.4.3 Institutional Capacity**

Five measures of agency institutional capacity to make planning decisions are suggested by the Delphi study, as illustrated by figure (5.6).

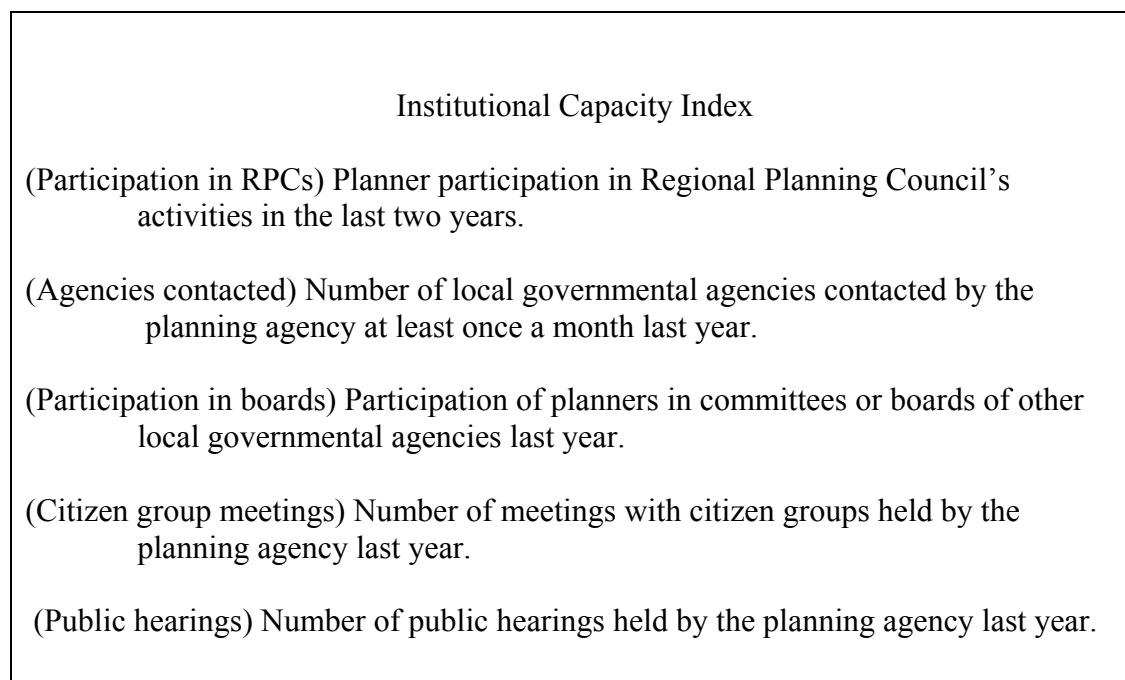


Figure (5.6): Proposed Index of Institutional Capacity.

Because the proposed measures reflect the various sub-dimensions of institutional capacity, they are included in an index summarizing that capacity. These measures are concerned with planning agency linkages with institutions at different governmental levels. At the regional level, “participation in RPCs” indicates the ability of the agency to participate in activities of regional planning councils. At the local level (county and/or municipality), “agencies contacted” and “participation in boards” capture the linkages between the planning agency and other local governmental agencies. At the municipal level, “citizen group meetings” and “public hearings” reflect the ability of the agency to link with citizens and to promote public participation. Together, these measures reflect the capacity of an agency to link with other institutions at the municipal, local, and regional levels. Therefore, the institutional capacity index includes the variables “participation in RPCs,” “agencies contacted,” “participation in boards,” “citizen group meetings,” and “public hearings.”

Analyses of  $\chi^2$  and Gamma were conducted to investigate bivariate associations among proposed measures of institutional capacity to make planning decisions and determine which items perform an index of institutional capacity. Analyses of  $\chi^2$  were used with the nominal variables: “participation in RPCs” and “participation in boards.” In addition, Gamma analyses were used to indicate statistical associations among ordinal variables: “citizen group meeting,” “public hearings,” and “agencies contacted.” Table (5.10) shows the findings of the analyses. The variable, “agencies contacted” is statistically associated with “citizen group meetings” for large communities, and with “public hearings” for small ones. In addition, the variable “public hearings” is associated with the variables “citizen group meetings” and “participation in

boards” for large communities. The variables “Participation in RPCs” and “participation in boards” are associated for small and large municipalities.

Table (5.10): Bivariate Associations among Measures of Institutional Capacity

Bivariate Relationship	Measures of Associations	Groups	
		A (< 25,000)	B (≥ 25,000)
Agencies contacted& Participation in RPCs	Gamma	.151	.217
Agencies contacted& Citizen group meetings	Gamma	.402	<b>.475*</b>
Agencies contacted& Public hearings	Gamma	<b>.381*</b>	.134
Agencies contacted& Participation in boards	Gamma	.311	-.304
Participation in RPCs& Citizen group meetings	Gamma	.350	.032
Participation in RPCs& Public hearings	Gamma	.095	.333
Participation in RPCs& Participation in boards	Chi <sup>2</sup>	<b>5.505*</b>	<b>7.034*</b>
Citizen group meetings& Public hearings	Gamma	.477	<b>.756*</b>
Citizen group meetings& Participation in boards	Gamma	.159	.235
Public hearings& Participation in boards	Gamma	.307	<b>.610*</b>

\* Statistically significant at .05 alpha level.

Table (5.10) indicates that there is no association between “agencies contacted” and “participation in RPCs.” The variables, “agencies contacted” and “participation in RPCs” are concerned with the relationship between the agency and different groups of agencies: local and regional. “Agencies contacted” focuses on the relationship between the planning agency and other local governmental agencies, while “participation in RPCs” deals with the relationship between the agency and regional planning councils (RPCs). Therefore, “agencies contacted” reflects the capacity of an agency to link with other agencies at the local level, while “Participation in RPCs” shows its capacity to link with agencies at the regional level.

Furthermore, planner participation in activities of regional planning councils (RPCs) is not statistically associated with either the number of meetings with citizen groups or with the number of public hearings held by the planning agency last year. Activities of RPCs focus on planning activities influencing a region or several municipalities, while meetings held with citizen groups and public hearings are mainly municipal activities. In addition, “agencies contacted” and “participation in boards” are not statistically associated. Contacting local government agencies does not necessarily mean that planning staff participates in committees or boards of these agencies (Participation in boards). Therefore, to ensure the comprehensiveness of the proposed institutional capacity index, it is constructed to include variables expressing agency networking with institutions at the regional, county, and municipal levels (see table 5.11).

Table (5.11) Levels of Institutional Capacity by Municipal Group

Levels of Institutional Capacity	Group A (<25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	11	20.4	3	6
Moderate*	36	66.7	29	58
High*	3	5.6	15	30
Total	50	92.6	47	94
Missing	4	7.4	3	6
Total Cases	54	100	50	100
Mean	5.120		6.192	
Median	5.00		6.00	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). The Mean of institutional capacity is 5.64, while the St. is 2.03. Consequently, Low institutional capacity (< 3.61), Moderate institutional capacity (3.61- 7.68), and High institutional capacity (> 7.68). The maximum score of institutional capacity= 10.00, while the minimum= 1.00

As indicated by table (5.11), levels of institutional capacity were coded from low to high across municipal agencies. Planning agencies in large municipalities have higher levels of institutional capacity than their counterparts in small communities. The mean and median of the level of institutional capacity for planning agencies in large municipalities is higher than that of the small ones. (The mean = 6.192 and 5.120, while the median = 6 and 5, respectively). In addition, over 20% of planning agencies within small communities, but only 6% of agencies in large communities, have low levels of institutional capacity. On the other hand, about 6% of agencies in small communities, but 30% of agencies within large municipalities have high levels of institutional capacity. These findings demonstrate that planning agencies in large communities have higher levels of institutional capacity than their counterparts in small municipalities, which agrees with the findings of the analysis of agency technical capacity.

#### **5.4.4 Agency Enforcement Capacity**

The Delphi study proposes three measures of enforcement capacity of a local agency to make planning decisions, which are:

- 1) Sufficiency of fiscal resources provided for enforcement actions (Resource sufficiency),
- 2) Agency responsibility to impose fines for violation of planning regulations (Imposing fines), and
- 3) Agency responsibility to approve or deny development applications (Development applications).

Statistical analyses were used to construct an index summarizing agency enforcement capacity. The variable, “resource sufficiency,” is not included in the

statistical analysis because of its high rate of missing values.<sup>30</sup> The analysis of Chi<sup>2</sup> are conducted to investigate bivariate associations between the nominal variables “imposing fines” and “development applications” in order to construct an index reflecting the extent of the enforcement capacity of a municipal planning agency in Florida. Table (5.12) shows findings of the statistical analysis.

Table (5.12): The Chi<sup>2</sup> Analyses between Measures of Enforcement Capacity

Bivariate Relationships	Groups	
	A (< 25,000)	B (≥ 25,000)
Development applications& Imposing fines	2.895	<b>5.120*</b>

\* Statistically significant at .05 alpha levels.

Table (5.12) demonstrates that the association between the variables “development applications” and “imposing fines” is statistically significant for large municipalities. Planning agencies having responsibilities to approve or deny development applications are more likely to have authority for imposing fines for development violations. The insignificant statistical association between these variables for small communities is due to the lack of much variation in “development applications” for this group of municipalities at this time. Approximately 87% of planning agencies within small municipalities have responsibilities to approve or deny development applications. Therefore an index of agency enforcement capacity includes development applications and imposing fines as indicated by figure (5.7).

<sup>30</sup> The variable “resource sufficiency” has 34% of missing values.

Based on the proposed index, levels of planning agency capacity for enforcement were coded from low to high across municipalities of Florida. Table (5.13) compares levels of agency capacity for enforcement for small and large municipalities.

<p>Enforcement Capacity Index</p> <p>(Imposing fines) Agency responsibility to impose fines for violation of development regulations.</p> <p>(Development applications) Agency responsibility to approve or deny development applications.</p>
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Figure (5.7): Proposed Index of Enforcement Capacity.

Table (5.13) illustrates that the mean of enforcement capacity for planning agencies within small municipalities is slightly higher than that of large communities, while the median is equal. Approximately, 16% of planning agencies within large municipalities, but 13% of agencies in small communities, have low levels of enforcement capacity. Surprisingly, small communities have higher proportion of agencies with high levels of enforcement capacity than large municipalities, which could be explained by different reasons. In large municipalities, planning issues are more controversial and diverse. Therefore, planning activities may be performed by different agencies, not by a single municipal planning agency. Approximately 80% of planning agencies in large municipalities, but 72% of agencies in small communities do not have authority to impose fines. Therefore, other departments or divisions are more likely to be responsible for imposing fines for plan violation in large communities.

Table (5.13) Levels of Local Agency Enforcement Capacity by Municipal Group

Levels of Enforcement Capacity	Group A (<25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	7	13	8	16
Moderate*	32	59.3	32	64
High*	14	25.9	9	18
Total	53	98.1	49	98
Missing	1	1.9	1	2
Total Cases	54	100	50	100
Mean	1.13		1.02	
Median	1.00		1.00	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). The mean of agency enforcement capacity is 1.078 and St. is .608 Low enforcement capacity (< .47), Moderate enforcement capacity (.47- 1.686), and High enforcement capacity (> 1.686). The maximum score of agency enforcement capacity= 2, while the minimum= 0

### 5.4.5 Overall Agency Capacity

An index is constructed to summarize overall agency capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning in Florida. Previous research indicates that agency capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning has four sub-dimensions: technical, fiscal, institutional, and enforcement (see Chapter Four). Therefore, the overall capacity index is constructed based on the four indices summarizing capacity sub-dimensions to ensure its comprehensiveness and ability to reflect an accurate picture of agency capacity to make planning decisions. Indices included in the overall capacity index are: technical, fiscal, institutional, and enforcement capacity (see figure 5.8). These indices capture the various dimensions of agency capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning.

## OVERALL CAPACITY INDEX

### Technical Capacity Index

- (Staff with planning degrees) Percentage of professionals with planning degrees.
- (Software availability) Availability of computer software programs.
- (Years of experience) Number of staff's years of planning experience.

### Fiscal Capacity Index

- (Planner turnover) Rate of planner turn over for any reason in the last two years.
- (Staff cut) Agency cut staff/ planning activities in the last two years for budgetary reasons.

### Institutional Capacity Index

- (Participation in RPCs) Planner participation in the Regional Planning Council's activities in the last two years.
- (Agencies contacted) Number of local governmental agencies contacted by the planning agency at least once a month last year.
- (Participation in boards) Participation of planners in committees or boards of other local governmental agencies last year.
- (Citizen group meetings) Number of meetings with citizen groups held by the planning agency last year.
- (Public hearings) Number of public hearings held by the planning agency last year.

### Enforcement Index

- (Imposing fines) Agency responsibility to impose fines for violation of development regulations.
- (Development applications) Agency responsibility to approve or deny development applications.

Figure (5.8): Proposed Index of Overall Agency Capacity.

Enforcement Index is concerned with agency capacity for enforcement of development plans and regulations, while the technical capacity index reflects qualifications of professional planners and availability of software; the institutional capacity index summarizes agency ability to link with regional, local, and other

municipal agencies and citizen groups; and the fiscal capacity index deals with the capability of the agency to fund major planning functions and provide incentives reducing planner turnover. The proposed overall capacity index was coded from low to high (see table 5.14).

Table (5.14) Levels of Overall Agency Capacity by Municipal Group

Levels of Agency Capacity	Group A (<25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	12	22.2	6	12
Moderate*	23	42.6	23	46
High*	8	14.8	14	28
Total	43	79.6	43	86
Missing	11	20.4	7	14
Total Agencies	54	100	50	100
Mean	8.349		8.814	
Median	9.00		9.00	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). The mean= 8.581, while St. is 1.350. Low capacity (< 7.231), Moderate capacity (7.231- 9.931), and High capacity (> 9.931). The maximum score of agency capacity = 11.00, while the minimum= 5.00

Table (5.14) compares levels of agency capacity to make decisions for comprehensive planning in small and large municipalities. The mean of agency capacity for large communities is higher than that of small municipalities (8.814 and 8.349, respectively), while the median is equal. Therefore, the overall capacity of planning agencies in large municipalities is similar to that of small communities. The percentage of planning agencies having high levels of capacity in large municipalities is approximately

double that of agencies within small communities. However, the proportion of planning agencies with low levels of capacity for small municipalities is higher than that in large municipalities (22.2% and 12%, respectively).

### **5.5 Local Agency Power over Decision-Making for Comprehensive Planning**

The previous sections discuss the extent of agency legal authority, relative autonomy, control over local planning actions, and capacity to make planning decisions for comprehensive planning across municipalities of Florida. In this section, an index of agency power is constructed to capture the overall level of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning. Previous studies identify four major dimensions of agency power over decision-making, which are agency legal authority, relative autonomy, control over local planning actions, and capacity to make decisions for planning. Therefore, the proposed power index was constructed to include indices summarizing the four dimensions of power.

Florida statutes set the relationships between a local planning agency and upper level agencies based on administrative arrangements. These relationships are not concerned with agency capacity, but with its position in the administrative hierarchy, responsibilities and authority, and types of linkages with other planning agencies at the state, regional, and local levels. Therefore, for these particular groups of municipalities, agency level of capacity does not influence the extent of agency autonomy, because statutes and special charters or acts determine the extent of agency autonomy without any reference to its capacity to make planning decisions. In addition, the index of “autonomy”

and both “authority” and “control” indices are concerned with different sets of agency relationships and responsibilities. The “autonomy” index focuses on the relationship between a municipal planning agency and upper level agencies, while the index of “control” deals with the relationship between an agency and other municipal agencies, and the index of “authority” reflects additional authority given to an agency to perform planning functions at the municipal level. Because previous research indicates that authority, autonomy, control, and capacity are major dimensions of power, indices reflecting these dimensions are included in the proposed index of agency overall power over decision-making for comprehensive planning (see figure 5.9).

The proposed index of power summarizes four dimensions of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning. These dimensions are: agency legal authority, relative autonomy, control over local planning actions, and capacity to make planning decisions. Equal weights are given to these indices to capture the major dimensions of agency power over decision-making. Regression analyses are used to investigate how empirical measures of each dimension contribute to the proposed power index. The “autonomy” index is the measure contributing most to the power index (Beta weight= .567), while the index of “Capacity” makes the next highest contribution to the power index (Beta Weight= .523), then “authority” index (Beta Weights =. 508) and the index of “control” makes the lowest contribution to the power index (Beta Weight= .407). The structure of the proposed index of power agrees with the literature considering autonomy and capacity as the most important dimensions of local agency power over decision-making.

## POWER INDEX

### Agency Legal Authority

(Additional Authority) Additional authority given to a local planning agency by ordinances, agreements, special acts or charters to make planning decisions.

### Agency Relative Autonomy

(Upper agencies veto) Absence of upper level agencies other the DCA with authority to veto planning agency decisions.

(DCA plan approving) Frequency that the DCA approves or denies local plan amendments recommended by the local government.

### Agency Control over Local Planning Actions

(Governing body Involvement) Frequency of the municipal governing body involvement in the process of approving or denying applications for development.

(Board agreeing) Frequency of the municipal council agreeing with planning staff recommendations on zoning or land use proposals.

(Adjustment Boards) Existence of a board of adjustments or zoning hearing examiner within the planning agency.

### Agency Capacity Index

Technical Capacity Index.

Fiscal Capacity Index.

Institutional Capacity Index.

Enforcement Capacity Index.

Figure (5.9): Proposed Index of Local Agency Power over Decision-Making for Comprehensive Planning.

Based on the proposed index of power, levels of overall agency power across municipalities of Florida were coded from low to high (see table 5.15). Planning agencies within large municipalities have higher levels of overall agency power than their counterparts in small communities (the mean= 7.00 and 6.543 and the median= 7.00 and

6.00, respectively).

Table (5.15) Levels of Local Agency Power by Municipal Group

Levels of power	Group A (<25,000)		Group B (>= 25,000)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low*	7	13	4	8
Moderate*	26	48.1	30	60
High*	2	3.7	6	12
Total	35	64.8	40	80
Missing	19	35.2	10	20
Total Agencies	54	100	50	100
Mean	6.543		7.00	
Median	6.00		7.00	

\* Low (<Mean- 1St.), Moderate (Mean - 1St. to Mean + 1St.), and High (> Mean + 1St.). Since the mean= 6.787 and the standard deviation= 1.308, then, Low agency power (< 5.479), Moderate agency power (5.479 – 8.095), and High agency power (> 8.095). The maximum score of agency power= 10.00, while the minimum= 4.00

Table (5.15) shows that the percentage of planning agencies of large municipalities with high levels of power is more than three times that of small communities. In addition, large municipalities have smaller proportions of agencies with low levels of power than that of small communities. Therefore, levels of overall power of planning agencies in large municipalities are higher than that of small municipalities.

The distribution of levels of power in small and large municipalities agrees with the advisory role of municipal planning agencies in Florida. The governing body of a municipality makes planning decisions based on recommendations of local planning agencies. There is no guarantee that policy makers in Florida’s municipalities follow the

recommendations of local planning staff. The persuasive power of a local planning agency determines the extent of its influence on local decisions. The top-down approach adopted by the growth management program of Florida reduces the magnitude of the power of local agencies over decision-making for comprehensive planning. In addition, consistency requirements give the DCA a dominant role in local planning processes. Local compliance with state requirements is achieved by the adopted sanction approach. Therefore, the growth management system of Florida reduces the power of local planning agencies over decision-making, while empowering the DCA in order to achieve state goals and objectives.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter investigates the extent of agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning across Florida's municipalities. It presents empirical indices summarizing major dimensions of local agency power over decision-making for comprehensive planning. Based on these indices, an overall power index was constructed to reflect agency legal authority, relative autonomy, control over local planning actions, and capacity to make planning decisions for comprehensive planning.

The analyses indicate that planning agencies of large municipalities have higher levels of overall power over decision-making for comprehensive planning than their counterparts in small communities. In addition, agencies within large municipalities have more additional authority than those in small communities. However, in average levels of agency autonomy, control, and overall capacity are equal for small and large

communities. Small municipalities have less complicated and controversial planning issues, which neither requires the frequent involvement of the governing body in development processes nor leads to disagreements between planning staff and the planning board. Moreover, the lower levels of agency technical and institutional capacity in small communities may lead the governing body to practice non-decision power. In this situation, municipal planning agencies perform based on their expectation of the reactions of the governing body, which is more likely to produce decisions approved.

This research proposes an index of agency overall power as a comprehensive indicator capturing the various dimensions of governmental decentralization. The index reflects political, economic, and administrative dimensions of decentralization. To explore the association between the proposed power index and previously used measures of decentralization, levels of power within Florida's municipalities are compared to their decentralization levels estimated based on measures adopted by previous studies (see Chapter Six).