DIGITAL SIGNATURES

Are plans required to have a digital signature?

Yes. The digital signature must show as verified by an authorized third party certificate authority in compliance with FAC Rule 61G15 - 23.004 (Engineers) or 61G1-16.005 (Architects). 2023 FBC Sec. 107.1.

What to check before submitting a document that should have a digital signature:

1. Ensure the digital signature is visible and not expired. This can be viewed in both Adobe Acrobat (there will be a Signature Panel at the top of the document) or in Bluebeam (in the Signature tab). *A scanned copy of a wet signature or a scanned copy of a digitally signed document will not be accepted as a valid digital signature.*
2. The files should not be encrypted or password protected. The document should have permissions/security that allow for markups and stamps. This can be checked in either Adobe Acrobat or Bluebeam by accessing the Security tab in Document Properties.
3. You may not use the digital signature option provided in Adobe Acrobat, since it is self-authenticated and does not use a third party. However, you may use Adobe Acrobat in conjunction with the digital signature provided by a proper certification authority, such as, but not limited to IdenTrust, GlobalSign, or DigiCert.
   a. *If you are having problems ensuring that your digital signature is visible and validated on the documents you are submitting, reach out to the certification authority of your digital signature first to ensure you are using the appropriate procedure.*

Common mistakes that could remove or invalidate a digital signature:

1. Merge: You cannot merge PDFs with digital signatures and keep the signatures valid because the merging process invalidates them. To combine the files, you must first remove the signatures from each document, merge the files into a single PDF, and then add new digital signatures to the final, combined document or upload the individually digitally signed documents separately.
2. "Flatten" the PDF: This process merges all document elements, including e-signatures, into a single layer, making them a static image and invalidating the signature.
3. Convert to another format: Convert the signed document to a new file type, such as a Word document or a new PDF. This process can remove digital signatures and layers of authentication.
4. Save as a new file: Save the signed document under a new name. Some software will create a new, unsigned version.
5. Edit the content: Making changes to the text, formatting, or fields, after it has been digitally signed may invalidate the signature.