



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Guide to the Development Process

City Policies and Procedures
Department Roles and Responsibilities

Department of Planning & Zoning
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I. The Development Review Process

MISSION

The mission of the development review process outlined below is to assure the highest quality development consistent with Alexandria's vision for a diverse, livable, vibrant community as outlined in its Plans and Policies.

Create a shared vision of Alexandria's future through an inclusive, community-based process;

Create a clear, consistent set of Standards, Guidelines, and Principles that support the visions (The Plans & Policies);

Communicate the City's Vision, Standards, Guidelines, and Principles that support the Visions;

Establish and maintain a process that will implement the Mission; - A process that is:

- Well managed
- Clearly articulated
- Fair
- Timely
- Consistent
- Equitable
- Helpful
- Collaborative

BACKGROUND

The City of Alexandria has undertaken a more active role in defining and shaping its future. In doing so, the City identified a series of steps designed to ensure that future development and redevelopment reflect community goals and values and advance a vision of the City for the future. As a first step in this process, in June 2001, the City endorsed a comprehensive planning and development approach embodied in the *Plan for Planning* which provides the policy basis adopted by the Mayor and the City Council for the procedures below.

The City's Master Plan governs all physical development for the City of Alexandria. The Zoning Ordinance of 1998 is consistent with the Master Plan and lays out the process for development review. Thus, the major recommendations of the *Plan for Planning* document are based on and consistent with these legal requirements and highlight: the need to develop a set of shared expectations as a vision for the future; the importance of involving the residential and development

communities in a constructive dialogue leading to consensus; and the requirement to provide certainty and clarity in development review by ensuring that issues can be addressed sooner in the process and consistency can be maintained throughout the subsequent phases of review. To implement these goals, and responding to extraordinary development pressure, the City is moving forward on several levels. While initiating several specific geographic planning efforts with extensive community outreach, the Department of Planning and Zoning also carried out a detailed review of the current development review process. The final report of that study was completed in April 2002: *City of Alexandria, Virginia, Development Review Process and Policies, Analysis and Recommendations*.

The *Development Review Process and Policies* report pointed out that from a City perspective issue identification, resolution at an early stage, and staff coordination are the keys to a successful development review process. The process is extraordinarily complex with multiple participants, including: property owners; developers and the architectural and engineering members of their development teams; dozens of different City Departments and divisions; utility companies; outside agencies such as the Park Service or the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; numerous City boards and commissions; City officials; and numerous citizen associations and other civic groups.

Complicating coordination is the fact that up to the present the responsibility for coordinating review passed among various City Departments depending upon the status of the review. One of the principal recommendations in the report is that there be a single point of contact within the City for each development project. In addition, the report recommended that there be a team composed of city staff members from the various offices and agencies that would be responsible for each development project.

Lastly, the report recommended that there be a concept meeting with the applicant to identify and resolve basic land use issues prior to the applicant proceeding. If the project proceeds, a pre-application process has been established to provide adequate time for all City staff to identify issues at the earliest point in the development review process. This early identification of issues, prior to formal submission, is expected to result in a higher quality review of a development project and to shorten the time needed in the overall development review process.

BASIC CITY POLICIES ON DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

- Development projects in the City will be reviewed promptly, fairly, and carefully by City staff, making sure that all projects meet city plans, policies, and regulations, and abide by formal City Council/Planning Commission decisions.
- The City's development review process should be clear and understandable to citizens, developers, and city staff.
- City staff will work collaboratively with applicants, actively seeking to find solutions to issues raised by development proposals early in the process, and abiding by those early decisions without undue reversals.
- City staff will work collaboratively with each other, actively seeking compromises which achieve City goals.

IN DEVELOPMENT REVIEW, THE CITY PLEDGES TO:

- Clearly articulate the City's expectations,
 - Plans & Policies, Standards, Guidelines, Principles
- Process/Schedule
- Submittal Requirements
- Expected levels of quality

- Listen carefully to plans, approaches, expectations, and needs

- Seek solutions that meet the goals of the City

- Advocate the project to the community when it is consistent with and supports the City's vision;

- Strive to respond to all phases of the process in a timely manner; and

- Provide a service-oriented organization that strives for:
 - Clear communication
 - Fairness and equity
 - Consistency and constancy
 - Helpful attitude

CITY'S EXPECTATION OF THE APPLICANT:

- Be familiar with City policies, procedures, and regulations related to a proposed development project.

- Submit complete applications with all required plans, documents, and certifications.

- Coordinate any questions or issues through the project-designated Development Team Leader (DTL).

- Respond in a timely manner to *City* staff requests for additional information needed to fully evaluate an application.

Notify the DTL promptly if there is a major change to the scale or timing of a development project under review by the City.

If a problem or issue arises during the review of an application, work with the DTL and City staff in a cooperative manner to seek a joint resolution of the problem or issue.



11. Development Review Process Responsibilities

The following identifies the general responsibilities of the various City participants in the development review process. The Mayor and City Council adopt land use policies that are consistent with and codified in the 1998 Zoning Code. The Planning Commission reviews staff recommendations regarding specific plans and/or development projects and makes a recommendation to the Mayor and Council, and in the case of site plan or subdivision, approves or denies such plans and projects. The City Manager ensures that the City Vision and legal requirements are implemented effectively and efficiently through the policies and procedures identified below. City Departments generally are responsible for following the direction provided through these policies and procedures.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITY DEPARTMENTS

At each point in the development process, a single department has responsibility for coordinating the review process for the entire City. The responsible agency should designate a specific person to function as the coordinator for each project. This person will serve as the single point of contact with the applicant for the City, coordinating a unified City response.

P&Z is responsible for developing comprehensive and local plans that guide the City in the review of development projects. P&Z is also responsible for coordinating development plan review prior to formal submission (concept and pre-application phases) and through the preliminary and final review processes. P&Z is responsible for staffing the Planning Commission and City Council relating to development project review. T&ES assumes responsibility for City coordination after the final site plan has been released. This will include coordinating the review of plan revisions, as-bulks, and bonding. Code Enforcement is responsible for managing the review and issuance of building permits and ensuring that there is a smooth transition for a development project from final site plan approval to building permit review, approval and inspection. Throughout the process, individual departments have specific areas of responsibility, i.e. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Activities - trees and open space, Office of Housing - affordable housing, etc.

Each Department will prepare internal department procedures that implement the policies and procedures described in this Staff Guide. Copies of these internal procedures shall be shared among departments to enhance the understanding of each department's processes.

Department Directors or designees are responsible for promptly designating a department staff member to the Development Review Team for each development project and notifying the Development Team Leader. Directors are also responsible for assuring that department Team members attend meetings, perform reviews, and fully function as a Team member. Team members

must also have the director's authority to make decisions on behalf of the department related to the development project.

Department Directors are responsible for ensuring a collaborative development review process and should foster resolution of staff problems and differences at the working staff level in the departments. Only the most significant policy issues should be brought to the City manager for discussion and resolution.

Department Directors are responsible for ensuring that department decisions and recommendations are made at the earliest possible stage of preliminary review, and that such recommendations are comprehensive in scope and remain consistent throughout the development project review.

In addition to the responsibilities identified above, the *Development Review Process and Policies Report* adopted by the City Council recommended the following procedures be implemented:

APPOINTMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT TEAM LEADER (DTL). The P&Z Development Team Leader is responsible for:

- Coordinating all reviews,
- Directly receiving all plans and materials submitted to the City by the applicant, including any supplemental information intended to address specific concerns of any department, and distributing all materials to other departments,
- Establishing deadlines for all departmental comments.
- Assuring that necessary meetings, both with the applicant and internally, are scheduled and that the appropriate representatives from other departments are invited to the meetings,
- Preparing and distributing meeting minutes,
- Designating the preliminary plan public hearing dates for Planning Commission and City Council,
- Compiling all departmental comments on the project and, where necessary, combining and clarifying the comments (without changing content),
- Distributing all city comments to the applicant (comments will not go from individual departments),
- Compiling all comments and actions from boards, commissions and the public,
- Preparing all staff reports on the project for boards, commissions and the council,
- As single point of contact, ensure that the process is both expedited and efficient.

APPOINTMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT REVIEW TEAM (DRT). P&Z will designate a lead staff person as the Development Team Leader to coordinate the City's review of the project. Departments will designate a staff member to sit on the Development Review Team for the project. The Team will work together under the leadership of the Development Team Leader to identify and resolve issues and process plans in accordance with the City's goals and regulations. At a minimum, the Team will be composed of representatives from P&Z, T&ES, Code Enforcement, and Parks & Recreation. Membership on specific teams may be expanded according to the character of the proposed development application and may include representatives from Housing, Police, General Services, and Historic Preservation/Archeology. Team members have the following responsibilities:

- Reviewing development plans promptly; identifying issues during the pre-application phase of the review process, and meeting the established review schedule,
- Assuring that departmental comments are compiled and coordinated, resolving conflicting comments within the department,
- Attending all meetings on the project, including Inter-Departmental Review meetings where the project is on the agenda,
- Working collaboratively with other members of the team to find solutions to issues raised by applicants' proposals and to find compromises which balance competing City goals where there are conflicting city comments,
- Referring general inquiries from applicants or citizens to the Development Team Leader,
- Informing applicants that submissions must be sent to the Development Team Leader, and
- Keeping the Development Team Leader informed about departmental issues regarding the development project.

ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS. To ensure consistency and constancy, the project team member assigned to the project by each department should attend the appropriate Development Review Team meetings and all other meetings where the proposal is discussed. Inter-Departmental Review meetings are regularly scheduled working staff level meetings that provide the team members the opportunity to discuss his/her particular project. The team member should possess the knowledge to identify relevant issues and viable approaches to resolving issues. To empower staff and to ensure that early resolution of issues is maintained, each project team member should be authorized to work with applicants and other staff to find solutions to address issues and to resolve conflicting staff comments. At a minimum, completeness and preliminary comments of all departments will be shared at the meeting so all DRT members *for a project are aware* of all other departments' comments.

APPOINTMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW COMMITTEE. A regularly scheduled monthly senior staff level Development Overview Committee is established to provide a mechanism whereby the various City departments can jointly review and address long-term, cross-cutting issues posed by large or complex development proposals seeking permanent solutions. The function of this committee is to identify where there may be technical differences between departments and seek to resolve these differences through the development of clear standards. This Committee is composed of a staff representative from T&ES, Parks & Recreation and Code Enforcement, and is chaired by the Development Division Chief of P&Z. It is not the purpose of the Development Overview Committee to second guess the decisions made by a DRT but rather to provide the City the ability to ensure interdepartmental collaboration and coordination. In addition, the Development Overview Committee should:

- Monitor cumulative impacts of proposed development projects, ensure interdepartmental coordination that crosses specific development project boundaries, and resolve inter-project conflicts, and address the unintended consequences created by the impacts of multiple developments,
- Continuously review procedures and make recommendations for improvements, such as ensuring deadline compliance and making better use of Permit*Plan,
- Improve existing regulations, i.e., resolve standing conflicts among current regulations, and
- Monitor the preparation of a Development Standards Manual.



III. Concept and Pre-Application Process

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Applicants are required to meet with City staff prior to submission of formal site plan applications with the goal of resolving major land use policy and site plan issues prior to an applicant finalizing detailed plans and submitting them for review. To achieve this goal, there is a two-step process, the Concept Review meeting, and Pre-Application review meeting(s). For projects that do not meet the criteria as major projects, only the Pre-Application meeting is required.
- The purpose of the initial Concept Review meeting(s) between the proposed applicant and P&Z staff is to review the appropriateness of the proposed land use and zoning, to provide land use planning feedback to the applicant, and to determine if the project should proceed.
- The purpose of subsequent Concept Review meetings and the Pre-Application meeting between the applicant and all appropriate City staff is to review the project and to address major staff issues and citizen concerns prior to submission of a formal application.
- To maintain flexibility in the process, the Director of Planning and Zoning may waive the Pre-Application meeting requirement for those development projects that are determined to be insignificant with respect to their impacts or where no benefit accrues to the City from the Pre-Application meetings.

GENERAL PROCESS

Under the following conditions, applicants are required to have a Concept Review meeting (or series of meetings) with P&Z at least 90 days before submitting any DSP/DSUP if the project:

- Is within a Coordinated Development District,
- Requires a master plan amendment or rezoning,
- Requires a special use permit for an increase in density or height,
- Is of a size that triggers the requirement for a transportation management plan special use permit
- Proposes a parking or open space reduction,
- Is located within an historic district, or
- Is located on environmentally sensitive lands.

While additional issues are likely to be identified in Concept Review and Pre-Application Review, as projects progress and more information is provided from applicants, agencies are expected to maintain consistent positions throughout the review process.

STEPS AND PROCEDURES

- Potential applicants for development projects will first contact the Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z). Other City departments should refer potential development applicants to the P&Z to start the process.
- A Development Project Leader is appointed by the P&Z Development Division Chief for that specific project.
- The Development Project Leader will schedule a Concept Review meeting with the potential applicant if the development meets certain characteristics as specified above. This initial meeting with the P&Z staff will be at least 90 days prior to formal submission of an application. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that basic City planning and zoning policies regarding land use are met and to determine if the project can proceed.
- Within 10 days of the Concept Review meeting, the Development Team Leader prepares minutes of the meeting, distributes minutes to meeting attendees, and logs meeting and minutes into Permit*Plan.
- If a project proceeds or if a project does not require Concept Review but instead comes forward for Pre-Application Review, the P&Z Development Division Chief requests via email that each core department (T&ES, CE, Parks & Recreation) assign a specific staff person to the Development Review Team for the project who will coordinate the department's position on all issues relative to that case. Other staff may participate as necessary. The Development Team Leader also asks other departments to identify staff representatives depending on the scope and extent of the project.
- Each department notifies the Development Division Chief via email within 48 hours of the name of the staff assignment for the project on the Development Review Team.
- The Development Project Leader will schedule subsequent meetings, including pre-Application meetings with applicants, and will invite the appropriate representatives from the Development Review Teams. It is not anticipated that every team member will attend every meeting with the applicant, but that P&Z will ensure that the appropriate team members are in attendance in order to resolve identified issues. Applicants will provide materials to the City prior to the meeting.
- Within 10 days of the subsequent meetings and Pre-Application meetings, the Development Team Leader prepares minutes of the meeting, distributes to meeting attendees, and logs meeting and minutes into Permit*Plan.
- The Development Team Leader docket the proposed project for discussion at the next available

Interdepartmental Review Meeting.

- All members of the Development Review Team for a project will attend the Interdepartmental Review Meeting where his/her project is being discussed. The Development Review Team will discuss the proposed project, and each department will identify relevant issues. If problems arise between departmental positions, the team will work to resolve these conflicts, with the goal of balancing conflicting requirements to achieve development that best achieves the City's vision.
- For major development projects or those projects that may have significant impact on neighborhoods, the P&Z Development Division Chief may authorize the Development Team Leader to schedule a community meeting on the proposed development during the pre-application phase. This meeting is scheduled after the staff determines that the project meets legal requirements, but prior to the submission of a formal application. The purpose of the community meeting is to enable the P&Z's Development Project Leader to describe the proposed development to the community; to present and discuss issues identified by City staff; and to provide a forum to solicit citizen comment early in the process.
- The community meeting is coordinated by the Development Project Leader, and the developer/applicant is available for questions from the public during the meeting. For more complex projects, a second community meeting may be scheduled if deemed necessary by the Director of P&Z.



IV. Preliminary Site Plan Process

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Although the completeness review is intended to merely identify those materials needed to complete the application, departments need to identify any substantive issues which are immediately apparent, so that these issues can be conveyed to the applicant as soon as possible.
- During the preliminary plan review process, a detailed and complete review of a project should be done as quickly as possible by city staff so that results can be shared among the staff and the applicant has time to make adjustments or revisions to project plans.

City staff should resolve any problems or disagreements quickly and should speak to the applicant with a single voice through the Development Team Leader.

Care should be taken by staff to resolve policy issues during this Preliminary Plan Review process and to recommend detailed comments to the Planning Commission and the City Council. Such comments should be clearly stated and complete and should not be subject to interpretation during the Final Plan Review process.

GENERAL PROCESS

The purpose of the Completeness Review is to identify the information or materials lacking or necessary to the review of the application, rather than to identify substantive issues with the proposed development. For this review, Planning and Zoning staff sends all applications to a core group of review agencies (typically Transportation and Environmental Services, Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation). These agencies review the application to determine if the application is complete according to their agency requirements. Planning and Zoning staff then compiles the comments and sends them to the applicant within 15 days of submission.

Once an application is deemed to be complete, the Preliminary Review process begins. Planning and Zoning circulates the complete plans to review agencies throughout the City, and in some cases, to outside agencies or applicable review boards. Typically, agencies are given three weeks to conduct their full review and provide written comments to Planning and Zoning. The Development Team Leader compiles the comments prepared by all Departments, attempts to reconcile any conflicts or inconsistencies among the comments of the various agencies and then prepares a staff report, which may include any discussion from departments on alternative technical recommendations. The staff recommendations are forwarded to the Planning Commission and City Council.

STEPS AND PROCEDURES

The applicant submits preliminary development plans, with all materials required on DSUP/DSP application forms and checklists, and filing fee, to P&Z.

The P&Z Development Team Leader assigned during conceptual/pre-application review continues as coordinator for the case. The P&Z Team Leader ensures that the case is logged into Permit*Plan and routed to departments which review plans for completeness (T&ES, CE, Parks & Recreation, Archeology, and Housing) within 2 days of receipt. All departments are given a 7 day deadline for completeness comments.

- Each department reviews plans for completeness, with the designated project team member coordinating comments internally. Comments are provided to P&Z project team leader within the 7 day deadline, with comments entered and signed off in Permit*Plan. Reminder e-mails are sent when agencies are late with their comments, with a copy to the team member's supervisor.
- The Development Team Leader docket the project plan for discussion at a Interdepartmental Development Review (IDR) meeting during the completeness period. Project team members discuss proposal at the IDR meeting, identifying issues and resolving conflicting comments.
- The Development Team Leader compiles completeness comments and forwards them to the applicant within 15 days of the original filing deadline. If plans are complete, the Team Leader sends the applicant a notice of completeness.
- If the application is not complete, the applicant submits complete preliminary plans with revised application materials, if necessary to complete the application. Materials are required to be accompanied by a transmittal letter describing the applicant's response to the completeness comments.
- The Development Team Leader ensures that the re-submission is logged into Permit*Plan and that plans are routed to reviewing departments within 2 days of re-submission (Core reviewing departments are: T&ES, Parks & Recreation, Code Enforcement, Archeology, Police, Housing, Sanitation Authority, and the Virginia American Water Company. Plans are also routed to special agencies/departments depending on the location of the proposal, including potentially: Health, WMATA, National Park Service, City Attorney's Office, Assessor's Office, etc.) All departments are given three weeks to provide comments. Comments should be provided on all related applications concurrently (e.g. TMP and vacation w/development application).
- Each department reviews plans within the established time-frame, and with the assigned project team member coordinating the department's response to P&Z. Each department assures that their comments are logged into Permit*Plan and signed off in Permit*Plan, in addition to being routed manually. Reminder e-mails are sent when agencies are late with their comments, with a copy to the team member's supervisor.
- After receipt of departmental comments, the Development Team Leader reviews the comments, rewrites for clarity, combines related comments and docket case for discussion at IDR. Agency

comments which have clarified or edited are highlighted when they are circulated at IDR. All departments receive copies of all other departments' comments for discussion and resolution of any outstanding issues or conflicts.

- P&Z provides copies of staff comments to applicant at least two weeks prior to release of the staff report for the case. To the extent feasible, outstanding issues are resolved and comments are adjusted to reflect mutually satisfactory wording. If necessary to resolve issues, the Development Team Leader will schedule a meeting with the applicant and the appropriate departments to resolve issues and review comments.
- The Development Team Leader prepares the Staff Report for the Planning Commission and, for Development Special Use Permits, City Council, ensuring that all department comments are incorporated into the staff report. Where discussion of technical issues is desired within the Staff Report, the Development Team Leader will incorporate discussion of technical issues. Each affected department will provide written discussion on alternative technical recommendations.
- The Development Team Leader prepares the presentation for the Planning Commission or City Council as appropriate.
- For the Planning Commission public hearing, Development Review Team members attend the hearing to respond to questions and address issues. The Development Team Leader records the Planning Commission action on reports going forward to the City Council.
- For the City Council public hearing, Development Review Team members attend the hearing to respond to questions and address issues. The Development Team Leader assures that final action is recorded on the Final Staff Report, with final conditions as approved, and is located in Permit*Plan.



V. Final Site Plan Process

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- The Final Site Plan process is an administrative process to implement decisions made during the Preliminary Plan process. City staff should not be raising any new issues or interpretations during this stage of development review.
- The City's goal is to complete the final site plan process in two review cycles, plus mylars. The City has committed meeting a 4 week turn-around for a first final submission and a 2 week turn-around for subsequent submissions.
- While historically, the final site plan process was required to be completed prior to the release of any grading permits or the review or release of any building permits, several changes have been made to this sequential process to expedite plan review and construction. The process now incorporates, and staff is expected to facilitate where reasonable:
 - early release of plan elements such as grading;
 - final release of plan without resolution of minor elements such as landscaping details or architectural design;
 - concurrent processing of building permits with the final site plan;
 - release of sheeting and shoring plans in advance of final release of plans, where appropriate

GENERAL PROCESS

The final site plan process is the administrative process whereby the City reviews and approves the detailed site plan required for construction. The planner assigned as the Project's Development Team Leader during the earlier stages of reviews continues to coordinate the overall City process at the final site plan stage. City staff has no authority at the final site plan stage to add or change requirements for the plan. Staff is charged with assuring the final plan corresponds with the preliminary plan reviewed and approved by Planning Commission and/or City Council and that any changes to the plans approved by these bodies are incorporated into the final plans.

STEPS AND PROCEDURES

FIRST FINAL SITE PLAN

1. The applicant submits the first final site plan, with all materials on final site plan application checklist and filing fee to P&Z.
2. *Complete Submission.* The P&Z planner assigned as the Development Team Leader will review the final plan submissions for completeness, assuring that a complete transmittal letter responding to issues raised by all departments is present, and that required checklists and fees have been submitted before routing plans for review.
3. After the Development Team Leader checks the application for completeness, he/she ensures the plan is logged into Permit*Plan, and within two days has plans routed to reviewing departments (T&ES, CE, Parks & Recreation, Archeology, Police, Sanitation, Water, plus any other department which commented on the preliminary plan). All departments are given a three week deadline to provide comments. If a department is routed final plans they believe to be incomplete, that department should immediately notify the Development Team Leader so that the plans can be corrected by the applicant and re-routed immediately, rather than waiting until the end of the review period.
4. T&ES docket the item for T&ES/ESI review within ten days of receiving plans. The T&ES Site Plan Coordinator sends notice of ESI meeting docket to P&Z and CE. The Development Team Leader for the project and Code Enforcement team member for the project attend ESI critical flaws review for the project.
5. Each department reviews plans and coordinates comments internally, providing coordinated comments to P&Z by the deadline (i.e., within three weeks of original routing), signing off on comments in Permit*Plan, attaching comments to Permit*Plan, and sending signed hard-copy to P&Z. Reminder e-mails are sent when agencies are late with their comments, with a copy to the team member's supervisor.
6. The Development Team Leader compiles comments and resolves any conflicts in comments by consulting with the appropriate departments. The Development Team Leader may docket comments for discussion at appropriate Interdepartmental Review meetings, if helpful in coordinating and resolving issues.
7. *Bonding.* The following is to be included as a comment on first final:

"The applicant shall submit a bond application and estimate worksheet with the submission of the second final site plan on forms provided by T&ES."

8. *Subdivision and Easement Plats.* The following is to be included as a comment on first final:

"The applicant shall submit all subdivision and easement plat sheets, along with any deeds or other instruments proposed for recordation with the submission of the second final site plan. The subdivision and easement sheets submitted and the deeds shall be identical/consistent with any future subdivision or easement plat and documents submitted for approval and recording."

9. The Development Team Leader sends compiled comments to the applicant within 4 weeks of original submission of the first final site plan.

SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT SITE PLAN

10. The applicant submits the final site plan, with all materials on the final site plan application checklist and filing fee, if applicable, to P&Z. Submission #2 includes a bond estimate and all easement and subdivision plats [and certificate of notice for all cluster plans).
11. *Bonding.* To facilitate the bonding process, applicants submit bond estimates with the second final site plan submission. This bond submission will be reviewed concurrently with the final site plan, with any comments or changes necessary to the bonding estimate provided along with the second final site plan comments.
12. *Review of Easement and Subdivision Plats.* Typically, the preliminary plan approval requires that easement and subdivision plats be recorded prior to release of the final site plan. To facilitate this outcome, these supplementary plats are now required to be submitted with the second final site plan, with review comments on the plats due along with comments on the final plan. This schedule will allow these plats to be approved concurrent with the final site plan, facilitating their recordation prior to final plan release.
13. The Development Team Leader checks the application for completeness, ensures the re-submission is logged into Permit*Plan, and within two days has plans routed to all reviewing agencies which had comments on the first final. All departments are given a ten day deadline to provide comments (Exception: Where first submission was particularly poor and extensive comments were required on first review, the P&Z project team leader may determine that additional review time is warranted for the second review and extend the 10 day review period to 15 days.) Reminder e-mails are sent when agencies are late with their comments, with a copy to the team member's supervisor.
14. T&ES docket the item for T&ES/ESI review within one week of receiving plans. The T&ES Site Plan Coordinator sends the notice of ESI meeting docket to P&Z and CE.
15. Each department reviews plans and coordinates comments internally, providing coordinated comments to P&Z by the deadline (i.e., within ten days of original routing), signing off on comments in Permit*Plan, attaching comments to Permit*Plan, and sending signed hard-copy to P&Z.

16. *Concurrent Processing and Early Release of Plan Elements.* In order to expedite plan release and the construction process, the City has agreed to review building permits concurrent with final site plans and to provide early release of grading plans and sheeting and shoring permits, where appropriate. The procedures for these expedited processes are to be developed.
17. The Development Team Leader compiles comments and resolves any conflicts in comments by consulting with appropriate departments. The Development Team Leader may docket comments for discussion at the appropriate Interdepartmental Review meeting, if helpful in coordinating and resolving issues.
18. The Development Team Leader sends compiled comments to the applicant within 2 (or 3, in case of the exception noted earlier) weeks of complete submission of the final site plan.
19. Steps 8 through 16 are repeated, with additional submissions, until all comments are resolved, including resolution of any issues related to bonding, subdivision or easements. No site plan shall be released if pending issues remain unless authorized by the affected department.
20. *Mylar Comments.* The following comment is to be included with the last set of comments, or independently when appropriate, but only after each department says that it is okay to submit mylars:

"The applicant may submit the mylars for the project to P&Z. They will be routed to T&ES. P&Z will notify the applicant that the plans are ready for release and available in T&ES on receipt of evidence of subdivision and easement recordation and payment of required bond."

MYLARS AND PLAN RELEASE

21. The applicant submits the mylar set to P&Z, including all subdivision and easement plats, along with two copies of mylar plans.
22. The Development Team Leader hand-delivers the mylars to T&ES the same day they are received.
23. *Approval of Final Plan Before Resolution of **Some** Details.* In order to expedite plan release and the construction process, the City has agreed to release final site plans without resolution of minor details related to building design and landscaping. Where a plan is released without sheets related to such details, the Development Team Leader for the project shall be responsible for tracking the final approval of the additional sheets, which when signed shall become part of the final record set.
24. T&ES reviews and signs off on mylars within 7 calendar days. If a problem is discovered with the mylars, T&ES informs the Development Team Leader, who coordinates corrections with the applicant, and T&ES signs off on mylars within 7 calendar days of mylars being corrected and records the action in Permit*Plan. T&ES hand-delivers the mylars to P&Z within 7 calendar days of original receipt.

25. The Development Team Leader reviews the mylars and the P&Z Director and the Planning Commission chair signs mylars within 7 calendar days of routing from T&ES.
26. Plans are sent to T&ES for release within 1 day of obtaining signatures.

27. Copies of signed mylars, including subdivision and easement plats and documents for recordation are provided to the applicant and the applicant is informed that the site plan is ready for release by T&ES pending T&ES receipt of 1) bond amount; 2) deed-book and page number of recorded subdivision and easement plats/documents.

28. The applicant posts bond and provides evidence of recordation of easement and subdivision plats.

29. The final site plan is released.



VI. Building Permit Process

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Staff in the Code Enforcement Bureau enforce the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, 1996 Edition with 2000 Amendments, which governs building, mechanical, plumbing, electrical and fire protection services. The Bureau also enforces federal, state, and city handicapped accessibility and energy conservation standards.

When there is no change of building use, applicants need only comply with new requirements for upgrade changes. When there is a change of building use, the full requirements of the Code must be met.

- The Code Enforcement Bureau has a sensitivity to historic buildings and existing conditions and will work with applicants to seek alternative approaches to meet Code requirements.
- The Code provisions are stated in terms of a required level of performance to take into account new materials and methods. In addition, the Code provisions allow construction at least possible cost consistent with recognized standards.
- A building permit application is required for the following activities:
 - Construct or alter a structure.
 - Construct an addition.
 - Demolish or move a structure.
 - Make a change of occupancy.
 - Install or alter any equipment which is regulated by this code.
 - Move a lot line which affects an existing structure.
- The Certificate of Occupancy is the final construction document issued by the Code Enforcement Bureau to authorize occupancy of a structure upon completion of all building requirements.

GENERAL PROCESS

The Code Enforcement Bureau reviews and approves detailed construction documents to be sure that construction will be in compliance with all appropriate laws, regulations, and standards. There is a multi-agency review process with other City agencies to ensure that the project is not violating any regulations or prior approvals. It is far better to identify any construction problems while the

project is still on paper. There are four steps in the building permit process:

- Permit Application
- Plan Review
- Field Inspection
- Certificate of Occupancy

STEPS AND PROCEDURES

PERMIT APPLICATION

1. The applicant comes to the Code Enforcement Bureau (CE) counter with an application and a set of plans for the proposed construction. Five sets of plans are required; six sets if the Health Department needs to review the plans.
2. An engineering aide at the counter does a cursory review of the plans to make sure that the basic components are in place on the plans and that they are complete. An Intake Checklist is used as a guide. Part of this review includes a verification as to who will be doing the work. Unless the applicant is a property owner, manager, or tenant, a licensed contractor must do the work. The engineer will also make sure that the plans contain the elements necessary for review by other City agencies. If the plans are not complete, the application is not accepted at the counter.
3. A preliminary fee assessment is done and fees are assessed based on the fee schedule adopted by the City Council. For large projects, the permit fee is based upon 20% of the estimated cost of the project. Fees are non-refundable.
4. After accepting the application, plans and fees from the application, CE staff enter the information about the project into Permit*Plan (computer tracking system) and route the plans to plan reviewers.

PLAN REVIEW

5. *Preliminary* reviews are conducted by CE to identify code deficiencies on plans awaiting Site Plan approval. In this way, comments from review of the construction plans can be incorporated into the final plan submission before approval of the site plan and can speed up the process of final review of the construction documents. Time frames for preliminary reviews are as follows:
 - New commercial construction 30 working days
 - Commercial alterations 20 working days
 - New residential single family dwellings 20 working days
6. The plans are assigned to a team of CE reviewers, who individually and collectively review the

plans to assure code compliance for building, mechanical, plumbing, electrical and fire protection codes, as well as handicapped accessibility and energy conservation standards.

7. Once the CE team identifies all the problems with the plans, the staff prepares their comments, records them in Permit*Plan, and forwards the comments to the applicant by e-mail, fax, or by letter. The applicant must make changes to the plans to ensure compliance with all code requirements.
8. For the final review process, the plans are first routed to other City agencies for review. Two sets of plans are forwarded to P&Z so that they can check that the construction plans are consistent with the approved final site plan. Plans are marked by P&Z if changes need to be made to the plans. P&Z enters comments in Permit*Plan and forwards the plans to T&ES. T&ES reviews the plans for consistency with the approved final site plan. Plans are marked by T&ES if changes need to be made to the plans. T&ES staff enters comments into Permit*Plan and the plans are returned to Code Enforcement.
9. Once the plans have been approved and returned to CE, the final review process for CE begins. CE reviews the plans and the plan comments of other agencies in Plan*Review to be sure that all issues have been resolved. If the issues have not been resolved, meetings with the applicants and other City agencies may be necessary to come to resolution. Following are the final plan review time frames:
 - New commercial construction 30 working days
 - Commercial alterations 20 working days
 - New residential single family dwellings 20 working days
 - Revisions 10 working days
10. When all issues are resolved, CE collects the remainder of the required fees and issues the permit.

FIELD INSPECTION

11. Code Enforcement field inspections are required at specific intervals during construction and upon completion of the project. Applicants request these inspections at the appropriate time to meet their construction timetable by calling 703-838-4900 at least one working day prior to the required inspection.
12. Routine inspections are defined as one inspection and one reinspection. Reinspection fees may be charged if the work is not ready for a scheduled inspection or if additional inspections are required.
13. Stop Work Orders may be issued if work is not being done under permit or if inspections are not scheduled at the proper time in the construction cycle.

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

14. The Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is the final construction document that authorizes occupancy of a structure upon completion of all building and development issues. The CO follows the final approval of all issued trade and building permits, the completion of required site plan items and the completion of special use permit requirements.
15. The CO can be applied for as early as the initial construction plans are submitted for review.

16. CE routes applications for CO to other City agencies, including P&Z and T&ES. Housing and the Health Department may be added depending on the type of project. Separate inspections are conducted by each agency to ensure that the items under their jurisdiction are completed by the applicant.

17. While CE conducts inspections on the date requested, P&Z, T&ES, and the Health Department require three to five days for their inspections.