



THE CITY'S ROLE IN MANAGING CHANGE IN ALEXANDRIA

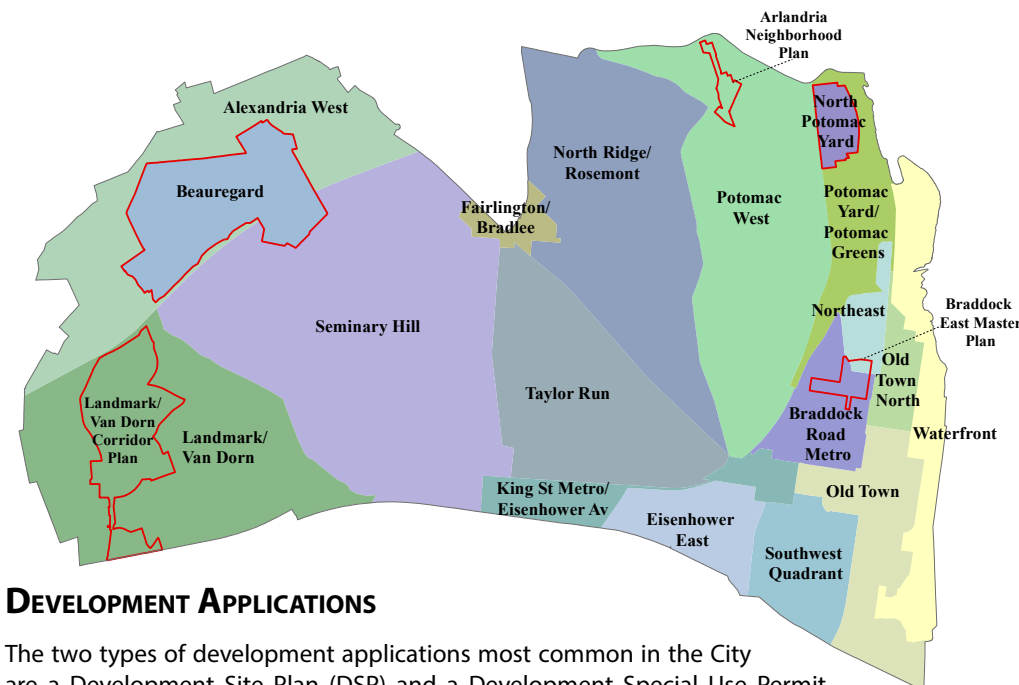
All major development projects in the City of Alexandria go through a rigorous review process. This process incorporates a high degree of public outreach, with active participation from residents and civic groups.

Our city is a diverse and attractive place to live and work, and the City Planning and Zoning Department works to retain and enhance Alexandria's quality of life by ensuring that development proposals:

- are consistent with the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance,
- consist of the highest quality building design, urban design and site planning, and
- provide an overall public benefit.

SMALL AREA PLANS

The foundation of any development proposal is the guidance provided in the Small Area Plan for the property being considered for development. Small Area Plans lay out the vision, goals, and policies for each area of the City, including how land should be used and how neighborhoods, parks and buildings should be designed. These plans—along with the City Charter, the Strategic Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and Design Guidelines—are the governing documents that guide the vision of the community.



DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

The two types of development applications most common in the City are a Development Site Plan (DSP) and a Development Special Use Permit with Site Plan (DSUP). A property owner must have an approved DSP or DSUP before building permits can be released.

A Development Site Plan (DSP) is required in all zones for any development that:

- contains three or more dwelling units;
- is a building or addition that is 3,000 sf or larger;
- provides a parking lot with five or more parking spaces;
- is a building addition that is 1/3 or more of the existing gross square feet of the building;
- falls under other criteria listed in Section 11-400 of the Zoning Ordinance.

DSPs contain specific information about building location and elevations, landscaping, lighting, open space, and other site amenities. Planning Commission holds a public hearing and takes final action. DSPs do not require review by the City Council.

A Development Special Use Permit with Site Plan (DSUP) is required in all zones for any development that requires a site plan and is requesting approval of a special use permit for the following:

- a modification of the parking ratios;
- a modification to the yard, landscape or open space requirements;
- increased building height;
- increased Floor Area Ratio;
- affordable housing bonus density;
- other special requirements listed in the applicable zone in the Zoning Ordinance.

DSUPs contain similar information to a DSP, but in greater detail, and there is more discretion with standards for review. The Planning Commission hears requests for DSUPs at a public hearing and forwards a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council holds a public hearing and takes final action.

A planner in the Development Division of the Planning and Zoning Department is assigned to each development proposal as the project manager and coordinates the review among other City departments. The planner is the main contact for questions or concerns.

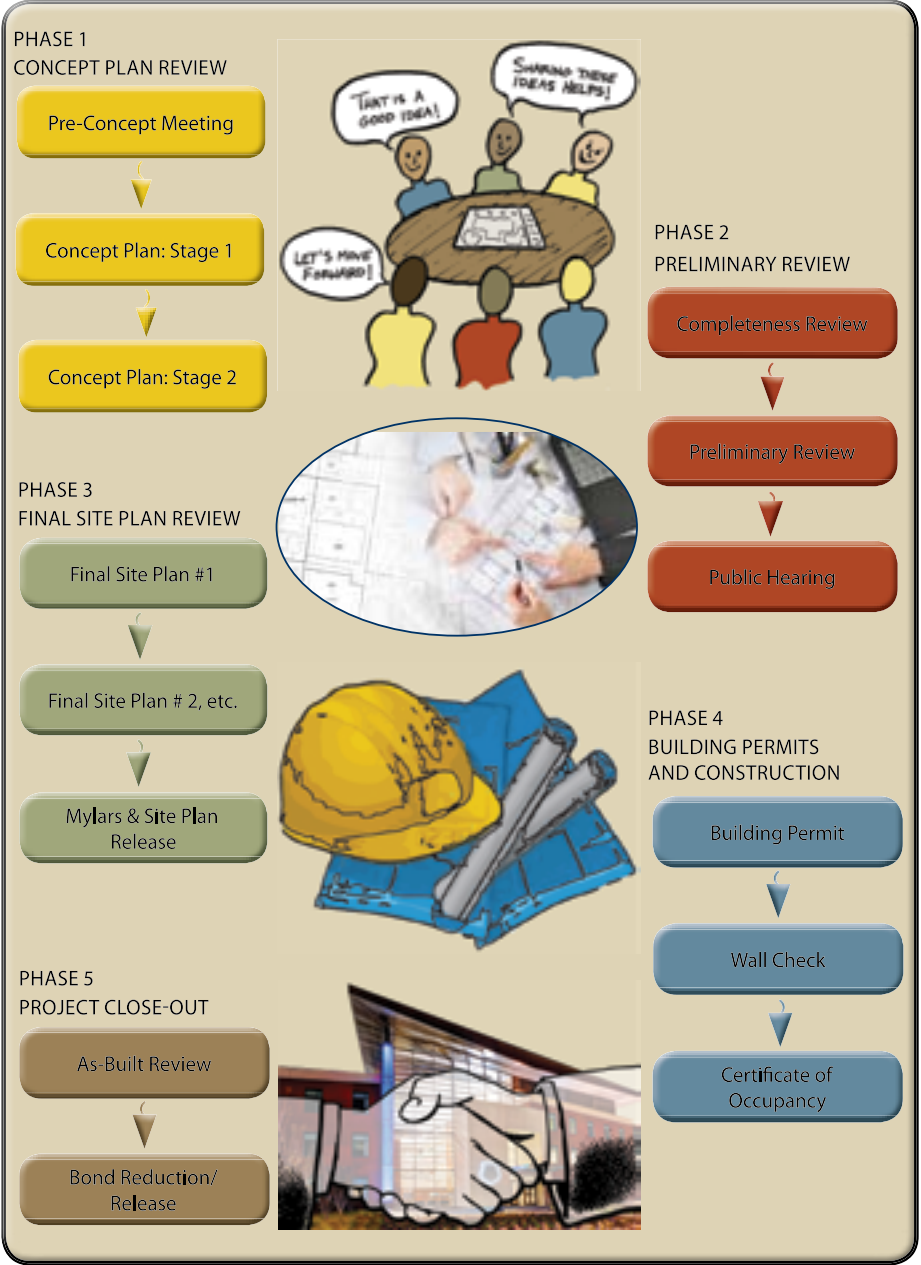
CONTACTING THE DEPARTMENT

- For information about proposed development projects, visit www.alexandriava.gov/Development
- For questions about which development planner is handling your case of interest, call the Department at 703.746.4666.
- For general questions about zoning, call the Front Counter at 703.746.2588 or 703.746.2589.
- To become involved in the planning process for Small Area Plans, contact the Neighborhood Planning Division at 703.746.3809.



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

The development review process falls into five phases:



1. CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW

- The Concept Plan review is an informal process designed to bring to light major issues before investment in detailed engineering.
- Applicant meets with Development Division staff for a pre-concept review.
- Applicant brings to the meeting a basic understanding of the zoning standards and small area plan policies for the project site and rough sketches of the development proposal.
- Input is provided on whether the proposal is consistent with City plans, what types of applications are necessary for approval, and a general sense of the major issues needing attention to move through development review.
- Applicant submits a Concept Plan (not mandatory) for feedback from all City departments. There is no fee for the Concept Plan process.

Concept Plans are divided into two stages:

- Concept 1** - Very basic information on the proposed project—the site plan, development program, building footprint, parking, etc.
- Concept 2** - More detailed information on issues such as traffic, stormwater management, and architectural design

- An assigned development planner will schedule the Concept Plan for an interdepartmental review (IDR) consisting of City staff and other public agencies.
- Comments are sent to the applicant identifying issues.
- The project is introduced to the community, typically at the Concept 2 stage. The applicant is expected to schedule meetings with nearby civic associations and groups. The development planner also conducts outreach to the community and engages them in discussion about issues related to the proposed project.

2. PRELIMINARY REVIEW

- Once major issues have been resolved, it is appropriate to file a formal DSP or DSUP application.
- The DSP or DSUP is first reviewed by all City departments to ensure that it is complete, containing the necessary information outlined in the checklist. This review for completeness is also done through the IDR process.
- Once the application is complete, the development planner will schedule the application for a public hearing.
 - The applicant is required to post the property with a sign providing contact information and material about the proposal.
 - The development planner will write a staff report and develop conditions for approval in preparation for the public hearings. These conditions are discussed through the IDR process.
 - The applicant will be able to discuss conditions that staff has proposed, before the staff report is issued.
 - Staff reports are posted online and available at City Hall in the Planning and Zoning office typically two weeks prior to public hearing.
- The Planning Commission hears cases at its monthly meetings (generally the first Tuesday of each month) and—in the case of DSUPs—the City Council hears cases at its monthly public hearings (held the 2nd or 3rd Saturday of each month). The Planning Commission and City Council reviews usually happen the same month.*
 - * In the case of DSPs, the Planning Commission is the regulatory body that makes final application decisions. In the case of DSUPs, the City Council renders the final decision.

3. FINAL SITE PLAN REVIEW

- If the proposal is approved with conditions, final engineered drawings will be submitted and reviewed. This Final Site Plan must be approved prior to release of any building permits or commencement of construction.
- The development planner gathers input from the same interdepartmental group as before and sends comments to the applicant. The plans are resubmitted and reviewed until all the conditions of approval related to site planning and building design are met.
- Once all conditions are satisfied, mylars of the plan set are submitted for final signature.

4. BUILDING PERMITS AND CONSTRUCTION

- Building permits are typically submitted after the Final Site Plan is released.
 - Building permits are submitted to the Permit Center and routed to the development planner and other departments for review.
 - Comments may require additional revisions in the permit plan set. Applicants then address the comments and slip the revised sheets into the permit set.
 - Once all comments are satisfied, building permits are issued and construction may begin.
- A Construction Management Plan is required as well as a pre-construction meeting with the community.
- Inspections are conducted by various City Departments. They occur throughout the duration of the project construction as well as several times after construction is completed.
 - One of the first inspections is a wall check review. A survey of the building foundation is required prior to any vertical construction. A wall check depicts the exact location of the building footprint and verifies compliance with the approved site plan and building permits. If an inconsistency is found, the foundation may need to be corrected. Once the wall check is approved, building framing can begin.
 - Inspections also are conducted during a request for a Certificate of Occupancy Permit. A Certificate of Occupancy Permit allows the buildings to be open for habitation. These

inspections ensure compliance with the approved Final Site Plan and Building Permit. Any inconsistencies found during the inspection must be resolved before a Certificate of Occupancy Permit is issued.

5. PROJECT CLOSE-OUT

- Project close-out begins with the as-built inspections for bond reduction and eventually for bond release. There are two types of bonds: performance bonds and maintenance bonds. They are essentially monetary deposits in the amount equivalent to the cost of the work to be done.
 - Applicants must provide estimates and post bonds prior to the issuance of any permits. Should a project not be completed or constructed satisfactorily, the City can pull the bond and use the funds to construct the project.
 - When construction is completed, applicants submit as-built plans and request a bond reduction. As-built plans are drawings that depict the approved plan with the survey of the actual construction.
 - City Departments review the drawings and inspect the project site to verify consistency with the approved plan.
 - If what was built is not performing correctly (i.e., sidewalks are failing), then the City can request those items be re-built or corrected prior to any bond reduction or release. If the project is performing well, the City will reduce or release the performance bond.
- Typically, about two years after the project is completed, the applicant will request reduction or release of the maintenance bond. The maintenance bond is posted to ensure the landscaping materials remain healthy and mature appropriately.
 - The City will conduct another inspection to ensure all plant materials are thriving and are maturing at a satisfactory rate.
 - If plant materials are not being maintained adequately, the City will provide a punch list of items to be addressed prior to the next request. If inspection findings are acceptable, the bond will be reduced or released.
- Once all bonds are released, the project is officially closed.
- Any property owner requests for modifications in the future are subject to the same DSP or DSUP conditions of approval. Changes to the site or building may require amendments to the site plan. There are two types of amendments:

- Minor amendments** - may be administratively approved
- Major amendments** - require a public hearing process

The Director of Planning and Zoning determines which type of amendment is required for proposed changes.

DEVELOPMENT CHECKLISTS

- **Concept Plan Checklist:** [http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/forms/Development%20Concept%20Checklist\(4\).pdf](http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/forms/Development%20Concept%20Checklist(4).pdf)
- **DSP/DSUP Checklists:** <http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/forms/Electronic%20Development%20Preliminary%20Checklist.pdf>
- **Final Site Plan Checklist:** <http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/forms/Development%20final%20checklist.pdf>

