





**Plantation**  
the grass is greener®



**Planning, Zoning & Economic Development  
Memorandum**

---

**DATE:** June 7, 2023

**TO:** Mayor Nick Sortal  
City Council Members  
AHAC Members

**THRU:**  William Gale, Building Official, and Danny A. Holmes, AICP, PZED Director 

**FROM:**  Carmen Hurlbut, Assistant Building Official, and  
 Michael Alpert, AICP, LEED AP, Assistant PZED Director

**SUBJECT:** Expedited Permitting and Land Development Process for Affordable Housing Projects

---

The City of Plantation had previously committed to implementing an expedited process for building permit review and issuance for Affordable/Attainable/Workforce housing (“AH”) projects as an incentive for AH developers to build housing stock in the City. To date, the City has not yet had to implement the policy/commitment, due a lack of AH developers coming forward.

In 2022, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) and City Council approved as an AH incentive, the establishment of an EXPEDITED PERMITTING process, which will include an expedited land development approval process as well. The incentive was brought back to the AHAC on March 2, 2023, for further discussion and ideas and again with this memorandum to their May 4 meeting for final approval.

The City’s Building Department is able to review most permits within a reasonable timeframe, with the disciplines of Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing and Structural typically reviewing a specific permit within the timeframe required by the Florida Building Code (FBC), depending on the workload of applications and inspections, but normally soon after the permit application is distributed once it is deemed a complete application (*i.e., when all of the required forms, documents and plans have been submitted is therefore determined by one of the City’s Permit Analysts to be a complete submission*). The other disciplines which are outside of the Building Department, including Engineering, Fire, Public Works (*Landscaping Division*), Utilities, and Zoning, vary in the timeframes that it takes their Staff to review a permit application. In addition, the City does not have any control over the time that it takes an applicant to submit, or resubmit, nor does it have any control on how long any outside review agency, such as Broward County or a drainage district, may take in reviewing any projects.

Most projects that involve the proposed construction of one or more buildings are reviewed about 2 or 3 times, sometimes more, depending on the ability of the project architects-of-record and engineers-of-record to address the written plan review comments made by Staff Plan Reviewers.

## **CRITERIA**

Staff is committed to ensure that projects that contain an AH component receive a special designation and are established to be reviewed for conformance with codes and approved plans ahead of all other types of permits. However, there needs to be a set of criteria in order to designate such projects for expedited review and processing:

- Projects that include at least 15% of the dwelling units as committed to provide owned or rented housing units for residents from extremely-low, very-low, low, and moderate income levels, shall qualify for the incentive of Expedited Permitting.

## **STEPS**

The Development Review process starts from the initial contact with the City about a proposal through to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). Once a prospective applicant reaches out to the City about a proposed project, they are asked to file for a Pre-Development Review meeting, a virtual meeting which involves all of the disciplines that review plans as members of the Development Review Committee (*DRC*). The prospective applicant and their design professionals are given about 45 minutes to introduce and explain their project and obtain feedback and comments from each discipline. Subsequently, "*Prospective Applicants*" become "*Applicants*" when their design team officially submits their application documents and plans into our Accela electronic permitting review system. The plans are distributed to the DRC members simultaneously, who then review and comment and then the project is discussed at a specified, regularly scheduled DRC meeting. Currently, most projects are reviewed twice by DRC, and then a third submittal is made for the Planning & Zoning Board (*PZB*) public hearing. After the PZB hearing, the applicant will address any comments that the PZB may have made and resubmit a fourth time for City Council consideration at their next regularly scheduled public hearing at which the project may obtain final approval for the site plan, which encompasses the site, architectural and landscaping design. Normally, this process takes about 4-8 months (*excluding the Pre-Development meeting, and starting from the time of official submittal to the final public hearing*). It will take longer if a Plat and/or a Land Use Plan Amendment (*LUPA*) is required, since those processes also involve Broward County Staff review and public hearings.

Subsequent to obtaining Final Site Plan approval by the Council, the applicant will then submit for the appropriate building, engineering, landscaping and zoning permits in order to begin construction of the project. Normally, the issuance of a building permit for one or more buildings takes anywhere from 3-9 months, depending on complexity of the project/plans and the workload of Staff, which encompasses at least two (2) full reviews of the plans (*i.e., by every discipline*).

The construction process of such projects normally takes anywhere from 6 months to about two (2) years, depending on the complexity and scope of the project. This timeframe is largely dependent on the applicant, their construction team, delivery of materials and the response time of the financing institutions that are involved. Consequently, the total timeframe for construction of a project from the first point of contact with the City of Plantation to the final inspection and issuance of COs can take anywhere from 1.5-3 years.

## **HOW CAN THE CITY HELP?**

The City can help shorten the timeframe for AH projects by (1) overlapping some of these processes and therefore reducing the overall timeframe; and (2) by earmarking Staff resources for special attention for such projects once they are officially submitted.

Once a project is determined to meet the criteria for providing some or all of its units as meeting the Affordable Housing definitions (*as noted above*), it will be assigned a Staff member who will act as a “Concierge” to help guide them through all steps in the process and to ensure that the City is responding to their questions, needs and concerns in a timely manner.

Such projects will be able to obtain:

- Priority scheduling for Pre-Dev, DRC, PZB, and City Council with an allowance of up to 10 calendar days for a deadline extension that other applicants will not be able to obtain
- Priority scheduling for Pre-Construction meetings with Building, Engineering and PZED Staff
- One (1) DRC meeting instead of the normal two (2), followed by PZB and City Council (*the latter will require that all DRC comments are addressed*) {*this step could save 4-8 weeks*}
- Priority for assignment of Flexibility, Reserve and Bonus Density units over projects that do not incorporate at least 15% AH
- The ability to submit for building, engineering, landscaping and zoning permits BEFORE final approval by the City Council (*at their own risk should the project not obtain such approval*) once it is determined that the plans will not change in a significant manner between DRC/PZB review and Council {*this step could save 4-8 weeks*}
- The initial review process during the permitting stage would be fast-tracked over all other submittals received during that week.
- All subsequent reviews would also be fast-tracked over all other submittals received during that week.

Additional incentives:

- If a project involves renovation of existing buildings to convert them into AH without expansion or up to a 25% expansion of building(s) of such a property, and the property does not require any Waivers, Rezoning or LUPA, then it may be approved Administratively by the DRC once all DRC comments are satisfied (*in this case, it would take two reviews, not one*).
- If the project involves demolition of existing buildings and new construction or new construction on vacant land, and at least 50% of the units will meet AH criteria, and the property does not require any Waivers, Rezoning or LUPA, then the applicant may be approved Administratively by the DRC once all DRC comments are satisfied (*in this case, it would take two reviews, not one*).

## CONSIDERATIONS

- The onus will be on the applicant to notify the City in writing of their intent to incorporate AH into their project and to notify the City about their status during every step in the process, their applications and receipt for public funding sources and the dates for which they plan to submit for the DRC, Board/Council and permitting processes. In this way, Staff can be most effective in alerting relevant parties and ensuring a smooth process.
- Expedited permitting requires AH developments to be placed ahead of other development and construction projects – this may result in tension with other developers, business owners and residents whose projects are put behind theirs as a result.

Thank you for your consideration.

