

A Guide To:

CURRENT PLANNING

Subdivision and Land Development

The Forsyth County Department of Planning & Community Development is the issuing authority for all Land Development Permits and Plats. The department works in conjunction with other county departments as well as outside agencies in performing reviews of Land Development Permit and Plat applications.

This guide will describe the process from the point where a parcel has the proper zoning and sketch plat approval (if applicable) through site construction and As-Built plan approval, as well as describe all activity in the Current Planning Division.

LAND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND PERMITTING

Applicants are required to provide all necessary information for review at the time of submittal for Land Development Permits/Plats in order to ensure the best level of customer service. It is strongly recommended that application preparers utilize the Unified Development Code (UDC) and the Reviewing Department checklists to prepare all plans. The UDC and checklists should be accessed via the county website as it will contain the latest version. All other Forsyth County ordinances may be found online via Municode.

Plans are submitted either by hard copy (paper plans) or digitally. ePlan Solutions provides our portal for electronic submittals. The LDP application form is not required when submitting through ePlan - the information is collected through their website.

Once a submittal has been deemed complete, the Planner Technician processes the application and assigns a project number as well as permit number. Staff also emails the primary contact to inform them of the plan review meeting date. Applicants are encouraged to attend this meeting, where a representative from the reviewing departments will review comments.

All plans submitted to the Department of Planning & Community Development for final approval must be stamped by a licensed surveyor, engineer, architect, or land surveyor signifying that the submitted plans are complete and accurate. All reviewers will require the applicant to correct all inaccuracies on the plans.

A project and permit number will be assigned to all new plans once they have been accepted by the county as sufficient for review. All plan resubmittals or revisions must reference both the project number and permit number (e.g. **2137 SD150149**) on all submittals to the county. Inquiries will only need the eight digit permit number.

To eliminate duplication of efforts and reduce processing time, final plan approval can take place at the Wednesday plan review meeting. This method is effective only if the plan is in full compliance with the standards of each agency and the project conditions of approval. Plan review comments should be resolved with the affected agencies prior to the Wednesday meeting.

Additionally, we ask that you provide notice to our office by the Monday before the Wednesday meeting so staff is aware of the need to bring pertinent plan, file, and approval stamp by emailing PlannerTechnician@forsythco.com.

LAND DISTURBANCE PERMITS (LDPS) / CONSTRUCTION PLANS

No person shall commence excavation, grading, filling, cutting, stripping, clearing or grubbing unless and until there is a valid land disturbance permit issued, pursuant to the Unified Development Code (UDC), the Forsyth County Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance (Ordinance 73), and other state or federal regulations (as applicable), by the Department of Planning & Community Development, unless expressly excepted there from.

Land-disturbing activity means any activity which may result in soil erosion from water or wind and the movement of sediments into state waters or onto lands within the state, including but not limited to, clearing, grading, excavating, transporting, and filling of land but not including agricultural practices as described in Chapter 34 (Environment) of the Forsyth County Code. An approved LDP with a site plan is required prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

Definitions

- **Clearing & Grading/Grubbing (CG)** A clearing and grading/grubbing permit (hereafter referred to as Clearing & Grading) covers those actions that are associated with clearing & grubbing or clearing & grading. Clearing & grubbing is for the removal of trees, shrubs, and vegetation from a piece of property, whether by cutting or other means, insuring not to place, remove or move earth or, in any way, alter the grade of the land. Clearing & grading allows stripping, cutting, filling, stockpiling, or any combination thereof, and shall include the land itself in its cut or filled condition, to create new grades. A clearing and grading permit also allows the installation of sediment & erosion control infrastructure, e.g. sediment ponds, piping, as it relates to storm water control.
- **Road Construction (RC)** A road construction permit allows only for the grading for roads and the installation of utilities and drainage structures necessary for developing a new community. It also serves as a preliminary plat which details to the county where proposed individual lot lines will be. All road construction permits must be final platted upon completion.

- **Site Development (SD)** A site development permit allows for the grading and development (i.e. construction) of a site, including the installation of buildings, utilities, drainage structures, parking, landscaping, lighting, etc. Site Development permits are required for all commercial and industrial projects, residential amenities areas and condominium/multifamily projects. All Site Development Permits require the submittal and approval of a post-construction 'As-Built' survey. Vertical construction of projects require three (3) permits before construction can commence:
 - (1) *A Site Development Permit (for conformance with zoning codes)*
 - (2) *Building Plan Review with elevations (for conformance with building codes)*
 - (3) *The issuance of a building permit for each building: the Site Development Permit and the Building Plan Review may be submitted for review concurrently, but both approvals are required before a building permit may be issued.*
- **Off Site Sewer and Water Line (SW)** An off-site sewer and water line permit is a Site Development Permit that allows the construction of sewer and or water lines and associated infrastructure outside the boundaries of a specific land development project or subdivision.

LAND DISTURBANCE PERMIT/PLAT SUBMITTALS

Applicants for every Land Development Permit or Plat submitted to Forsyth County are required to submit all necessary information for review at the time of submittal. Should the submittal be incomplete, it will be "rejected" and will not move forward in the process until all requirements are met. Any submittal that is not complete by the deadline will not be processed for the current review cycle. Once all requirements are met, applications will be processed for the next available review cycle. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. If incomplete, Current Planning staff will contact the designated person on the application via email to inform them of the missing information.

Once the required information is changed or added, the now completed resubmittal will be processed for the next available Plan Review deadline. When resubmitting a "rejected" submittal, please resubmit the application form with any handwritten corrections that may have occurred. The Land Development Permit intake staff will perform a sufficiency check to ensure the resubmittal is now complete. Copies of all original "rejected" applications will be kept by the department and will become permanent record.

The Reviewing Department staff will distribute all comments to applicants in the form of checklists, digital notes, memos or other type of comment media. However, to further clarify some comments, some reviewers may also red line plans to better assist the applicant in making required corrections. All comments will be made in writing and may include additional information as to what needs to be done to move forward in the process. Comments may include specific items to be addressed or may require a meeting to be set up between the applicant and one of the Reviewing Departments.

SUBMITTAL PROCESS – ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Heather McKeldin, Planner Technician

All plans and supporting documents are to be submitted to the department by 5:00 p.m. each Monday, provided Monday is not a holiday for which the department offices are closed in observance. In such event, the plans and supporting documents must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. the Friday before the Monday holiday.

Once a submittal has been deemed complete the staff will begin processing the application and will assign a project number and permit number. The land development intake coordinator will contact the designated person on the application by email to inform them of the plan review meeting date. Applicants are encouraged to attend this meeting where a representative from the reviewing departments will distribute comments in the form of checklists, memos, digital comments, or other type of comment sheets. However, to further clarify some comments, some reviewers may also red line plans to better assist the applicant in making required corrections.

Digital format plans are submitted to ePlan Solutions. Plan designers should visit the ePlan web site as well as contact ePlan directly if necessary. No additional applications will be required when submitting through ePlan - information will be collected on their website. Paper plan sets of the digital plan will still be required to be printed for FINAL PERMITTING and use by the field inspectors.

The department will distribute the paper plans or release the digital plans and supporting documents to the appropriate departments for their review. The department will *not* accept LDP permit applications without submittal of the appropriate fee payment, or applications that are insufficient in other application requirements. Nine (9) business days after the plan submittal deadline, a plan review meeting will be held by the department at which one member of each reviewing department will be present.

PLAN REVIEW – CURRENT PLANNING STAFF

Lori Kyle, Planner II | John Barlow, Planner II | Greg Wallace, Arborist

Weekly Wednesday meetings give applicants access to the staff members responsible for reviewing their plans and fosters a relationship between plan designers, builders, and our department.

REVIEWING DEPARTMENT ROUTING INFORMATION

MINIMUM SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENT

All plans submitted to the Department of Planning and Community Development for final approval must be stamped by a licensed surveyor, engineer, architect, or land surveyor signifying that the submitted plans are complete and accurate. Should any plan contain inaccurate or false information that results in the plan being permitted in violation of any provisions of this Unified Development Code (UDC) or any other federal, state, or local regulation, the permit shall be void. The Department of Planning & Community Development will require the applicant to correct all inaccuracies on the plan and will process the corrections as if it was a complete new application.

SUBDIVISION PLATS

The County may approve plats for residential development or commercial development if found to be in compliance with the requirements of state and local regulations. Final plats are recorded for residential subdivisions and for commercial or industrial land subdivisions. Additionally, commercial As-Built plans shall be required for all ancillary uses to a residential subdivision, mobile home, or recreational vehicle park. This includes but is not limited to clubhouses, community buildings, active recreation-sites, golf courses, and community pools. No application for a building permit on a parcel requiring plat approval shall be granted unless the site has received final approval by the Department of Planning & Community Department.

Subdivision plats are a division of a tract or parcel of land into two (2) or more lots, building sites, or other divisions for the purpose of sale or building development, whether immediate or future, including all division of land involving the dedication of a new street or a change in existing streets. The word “subdivision” includes replat or assemblage and, when appropriate to the context, relates either to the process of subdividing or to the actual land or area which is subdivided. All subdivision plats shall be recorded at the Clerk of the Forsyth County Superior Court by the county. Developers should plan accordingly to allow county staff sufficient time to record these documents.

1. **Final Plats for Major Subdivisions (FP)** A subdivision of seven (7) or more lots which may or may not involve the construction of a new public or private street; or any subdivision of less than seven lots that involves the construction of a new public or private street. Because major subdivisions involve construction of a new public or private street or the upgrade of an existing private way to county standards, construction plans/land disturbance permits are required, and major subdivisions are therefore processed in multiple steps including Sketch Plat approval (unless specifically exempted), issuance and approval of construction plans/land disturbance permits, and then final plat approval. A final plat is a drawing of a subdivision and, as applicable, dedications, prepared for filing for public record with the Clerk of the Forsyth County Superior Court. The Forsyth County Department of Engineering staff records all new final plats. Revisions are processed by the Department of Planning & Community Development. Final Plats are recordable documents that result in a subdivision of land. Final Plats are used for recording the final alignment of streets and other associated infrastructure, and may be used to subdivide property in non-residential districts. Planning & Community Development (P&CD) works in conjunction with the County Tax Assessor’s Office (TAO) when subdividing property. In order to successfully subdivide property, applicants must have an approved plat, irrespective of whether or not a deed indicates official land ownership.

Forsyth County requires final plat CAD drawings to be submitted in a digital format as well as a metadata file describing the CAD drawings. Please visit the Forsyth County GIS Department Website Digital Data Submissions Policy page for additional information or contact their office at (770) 781-2108 or email gissupport@forsythco.com.

FINAL PLATS

NEW SUBMITTAL PROCESS: FINAL PLATS FOR MAJOR SUBDIVISIONS

A Final Plat for a major subdivision (excluding revisions) is the only Land Development application that is not submitted directly to Planning & Community Development. Final Plats are submitted first to the Forsyth County Department of Engineering. Consequently, Final Plat submittals shall include all the requirements as set forth by the Department of Engineering and all the requirements identified in this Guide. In addition to the requirements as found in this Guide, the Department of Engineering requires additional documents and fees.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Once approved, the plat will be taken by the staff of the Department of Engineering to the county's Clerk of Court's office and recorded. Recordable documents cannot be red-lined, nor can pages be individually added, removed, or replaced. All revisions to already approved recordable documents shall be submitted as complete new stand-alone plans. This is to ensure that the applicant, all Reviewing Departments, and the Clerk of Court are working off of the same approved and recorded document. The new cover page must include a corrected Revision Block which details the date of the revision. The LDP application must also detail a list of changes.

REVISIONS: MAJOR SUBDIVISION FINAL PLATS

All revisions to already approved plans, must be submitted directly to Department of Planning & Community Development by the required deadline, as well as a completed LDP application and all necessary supporting documentation. Once approved, revisions will be taken to the County Clerk's Office by the applicant to be recorded. The Forsyth County Clerk is participating in eFiling for Plats filing electronically via: <https://efile.gsccca.org>

AS-BUILT PLANS

As-Built (AS) An As-Built plan is a civil drawing depicting completed site development and building construction or as-built profile of utilities as it exists in the field. As-Built plans and sewer profiles must be prepared by a licensed land surveyor and may involve a licensed engineer. They must show all infrastructure improvements and building footprints as they were actually constructed in the field. Engineering Inspectors and the Zoning Inspector visit the site and also provide comments to the applicant.

As-built plans are required to be submitted to Planning & Community Development for the following:

- Commercial sites
- Schools
- Residential recreational tracts
- Industrial sites
- Attached residential units
- For condominium style ownership: completed for unit locations only; only after the entire site and associated infrastructure (e.g. utilities, roads, etc.) have been final platted.

Submittal Process

As-Built plans may be submitted Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm. Staff will process and distribute to the reviewing departments. The Planning Department reviews plans and provides comments within 5 business days. Applicants are encouraged to contact reviewers directly with regards to their comments. The surveyor must obtain a stamp on each plan from all applicable Reviewing Departments prior to submitting plans for final approval from the Current Planning Division.

Approval: As-Built The As-Built plan will be taken to the Clerk of Court by the applicant. Recordable documents cannot be red-lined, nor can pages be individually added, removed, or replaced.

The final inspections cannot be scheduled until the As-Built plan and supplemental material have been submitted and accepted for minimum sufficiency. Plumbing, electrical, or mechanical drawings are not submitted with the As-Built submittal. The hold on the final inspection is only to prompt the applicant to submit the As-Built plans. The final building inspection will not be scheduled until the As-Built plan is received. Upon approval of the As-Built, the applicant may request the certificate of occupancy from Planning & Community Development's Inspection Division.

Forsyth County requires **As-Built CAD drawings** to be submitted in a digital format as well as a metadata file describing the CAD drawings. Please visit the Forsyth County GIS Department Website Digital Data Submissions Policy page for additional information or contact their office at (770) 781-2108 or email gisplanreview@forsythco.com.

TREE ORDINANCE & LANDSCAPING REGULATIONS

Greg Wallace, County Arborist

Recognizing the significant environmental, economic, and social benefit of trees, the Forsyth County Tree Ordinance provides standards that guide development and incorporate trees into land use planning. Establishing a healthy and sustainable urban and community forest will preserve and enhance the quality of life within the county, while at the same time enhance economic growth and development. The Tree Ordinance requires that all commercial and industrial sites and major residential subdivisions maintain a minimum tree density following development. A guide is available online.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

NPDES PROCESS & INFORMATION

In addition to the local permitting fees and plan review fees, fees will also be assessed pursuant to O.C.G.A. §12-5-23 (NPDES), these fees shall not exceed \$80.00 per acre of land-disturbing activity, and these fees shall be calculated and paid by the primary permittee as defined in the State General Permit for each acre of land disturbed. Information regarding the Georgia NOI and NPDES may be found at epd.georgia.gov.

Additional Information can be found on the web:

Current Planning Division website

1. Land Development Information:
 - **LDP forms and applications**
 - **Department checklists** per Plan Type –checklists which will be used to review plans
2. All other applications that pertain to Current Planning
3. Public Hearing Application Information
4. Unified Development Code (UDC) & Other Ordinance Information

ePlan Solutions – eplansolution.com/forsyth

Digital plans can be uploaded using the ePlan Solutions portal. Forsyth County partnered with ePlan in 2014 and is continually working toward a streamlined and user friendly alternative to bulky, expensive paper plans.

eStatus – estatus.forsythco.com

The site provides detailed information and select downloadable documents (e.g. approved plats and plans and zoning resolutions) from specific permits, plats, and all public hearing applications.

GIS Interactive Map – maps.forsythco.com

The county's interactive mapping system which can be used to locate specific properties and then turn on and off specific layers such as zoning districts, aerial maps, etc.

Schedule of Fees

Application fees for plan review, as adopted by the Board of Commissioners, must be paid to Forsyth County *at the time of submittal*. In addition to the local permitting fees and plan review fees, fees are also collected pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 12-5-23. In Forsyth County, half of NPDES fees levied shall be submitted to the division.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS THAT MAY BE USED THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- **Architectural Elevation** A plan that shows detailed elevation drawings of all sides of structure as prepared by a registered architect. The plans shall incorporate elevation plans (to scale) and an exterior finish schedule. Although it is preferable to be submitted with the Land Development Plans, it is not required to be submitted until the Commercial Building Plan review process.

- **Conditional Use Permit (CUP)** A conditional use permit (CUP) is required when a parcel has the correct zoning classification, but the county has determined that the specific type of use requested should receive extra review to ensure that the potential impacts are minimized. Each zoning classification has a list of specific uses that are designated as those requiring Conditional Use Permits. All Conditional Use Permit applications require a public hearing in front of the Planning Commission and a final decision by the Board of Commissioners.
- **Digital Submission** Forsyth County requires final plats and as-built plan CAD drawings to be submitted in a digital format as well as a metadata file describing the CAD drawings. Forsyth County GIS Department also requires a simplified template version of the Final Plat, As-Built, or revision to be submitted as specified by the GIS Department. In addition GIS requires tabular information describing Storm Water and Sewer features.
- **Land Development Permits** A term used to define a set of Forsyth County permits/plats regulated by Chapter 18 and other chapters of the Unified Development Code (UDC). Land development permits (LDP) is also a term that differentiates these types of permits/plat from building permits regulated under the International Code Council (ICC). Land development permits/plats include construction/land disturbance permits, e.g. clearing and grading, road construction, sewer and water line development, site development, plats and as-built plans.
- **Landscape Plan** Forsyth County requires that a plan drawn to scale indicating the dimensions and details for placement, or the existence of, trees, shrubs, ground covers, herbaceous ornamentals and native vegetation be submitted for review and approval; the plan must include specifications, species, quantities, and method of installation.
- **Lighting Plan** Forsyth County requires that a plan drawn to scale indicating the locations and the photometric data for the development of commercial, industrial and residential land uses. The review of outdoor lighting proposed for a parcel includes the submittal of the manufacturer's data sheet of the selected features. This plan will be reviewed and approved during the Commercial Building Plan review process.
- **National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)** In compliance with the provisions of the Georgia Water Quality Control Act, the Federal Clean Water Act (as amended), and the Rules and Regulations promulgated pursuant to each of these Acts new and existing storm water point sources within the State of Georgia that are required to have a permit, upon submittal of a Notice of Intent (NOI), are authorized to discharge storm water associated with construction activity to the water of the State of Georgia in accordance with limitations, monitoring requirements, and other conditions.
- **Plan Review Meeting** All LDPs, Clearing & Grading, Road Construction, Sewer/Water Line Development, Site Development, and Plat submittals staff comments are emailed or uploaded via ePlan Solutions prior to the weekly plan review meeting. The meeting is held every Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. with sign-in starting at 8:30 a.m. The meeting is held in the department Conference Room. The meeting is not mandatory, it is the best forum to speak with representatives from each Reviewing Department at one time.
- **Reviewing Departments** The Department of Planning & Community Development works in conjunction with many other county departments and outside agencies in performing reviews of LDP permits and plats. Depending on the submittal type, the Reviewing Departments may include the Forsyth County departments of Engineering, Water and Sewer, Fire Department, Tax Assessors Office, GIS, and Environmental Health. Outside agencies are also part of the review process, including the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and the City of Cumming Water and Sewer Department.
- **Stormwater Management Report** A Stormwater Management Report is a document to be prepared for every Road Construction (RC) and Site Development (SD) project. The report must be sealed by a Professional Engineer currently registered in the State of Georgia describing the nature of stormwater issues and management strategies associated with the site. The purpose of the report shall be to formulate a plan to manage stormwater in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 34, Article V, Stormwater Management, including but not limited to the requirements set forth in the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual and the Forsyth County Addendum, so that stormwater runoff hazards are not created, existing runoff related problems are not worsened, and stormwater quality is not adversely effected. The study, commonly called the hydro study is reviewed by the Department of Engineering staff. There are some exemptions to this requirement – please contact Renee Hoge of the Department of Engineering.

- **Tree Replacement Plan** A plan drawn to scale, that identifies any portion on a site wherein located are existing trees that are proposed to be retained in order to comply with the requirements of the Forsyth County Tree Protection ordinance or other existing trees proposed to be retained due to zoning conditions or requirements from other codes. The plan must indicate the replacement ratio requirements, as well as methods of tree protection to be undertaken on the site. The plan is reviewed by the County Arborist.
- **Zoning Conditions** Additional requirements that are attached to the subject property that are above and beyond the requirements as set forth in the Unified Development Code (UDC). Conditions, referred to as *Zoning Conditions*, are approved by the Board of Commissioners and are binding to the subject property. Zoning Conditions can be found on the estatus web site.

FORSYTH COUNTY CONTACTS

Planning & Community Development

Heather McKeldin	Planner Technician	678-455-8472	hemckeldin@forsythco.com	Intake coordinator All application types
John Barlow	Planner II	770-886-2760	jbarlow@forsythco.com	Plan Reviewer
Lori Kyle	Planner II	770-205-4524	lakyle@forsythco.com	Plan Reviewer
Greg Wallace	County Arborist	770-205-4562	gewallace@forsythco.com	CG, RC, SW, SD, FP, AS
Chelsea Samples	Planner Technician	678-455-8473	ctsamples@forsythco.com	Minor Plats

City of Cumming

Heath Martin	Cumming Utilities	770-781-2020	hmartin@cummingutilities.com	CG, RC, SW, SD, FP, AS
Webb Hansard	Cumming Utilities	770-781-2020	whansard@cityofcumming.net	CG, RC, SW, SD, FP, AS

Department of Engineering

Lisa Rodgers	Administrative Specialist	770-781-2165 Ext. 2520	larodgers@forsythco.com	Final Plat Submittals
Bill Powell	Asst. County Engineer	770-781-2165 Ext. 2513	abpowell@forsythco.com	CG, RC, SW, SD, FP, AS
Renee Hoge	County Engineer	770-781-2165 Ext. 2519	rphoge@forsythco.com	Hydrology, Stormwater, Erosion Control
Tate Boyd	Plan Review Engineer	770-781-2165 Ext. 2536	atboyd@forsythco.com	Minor Plats, Hydrology
Steve Dempsey	Soil & Erosion	770-781-2165 Ext. 2518	bsdempsey@forsythco.com	Grading Plans, Soil & Erosion

Fire Marshal's Office

3520 Settingdown Road Cumming, GA 30040

Robin Branch	Administrative Specialist	678-455-8072	rbranch@forsythco.com	RC, SD, FP
--------------	---------------------------	--------------	--	------------

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Jessica Scott	GIS Specialist	770-781-2108	jscott@forsythco.com	SD, FP, AS Digital Submission
Dawn Hamby	GIS Senior Technician	770-886-2835	adhamby@forsythco.com	SD, FP, AS Addressing

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Louise Parker	Soil Conservationist	770-781-2148	lmcperson@dawsoncounty.org	CG, RC, SW, SD
Vivian Tanner	Soil Conservationist	770-781-2148	vtanner@forsythco.com	CG, RC, SW, SD

Tax Assessor's Office (TAO)

Marcy Marzloff	Tax Analyst	770-781-2106 x2652	landrecords@forsythco.com	SD, FP, AS
----------------	-------------	-----------------------	--	------------

County Water & Sewer Department

Juan Morfa	Engineer Tech	678-513-5997	jamorfa@forsythco.com	CG, RC, SW, SD, FP, AS
David Sublett	Engineer Tech	770-781-2121	dtsublett@forsythco.com	CG, RC, SW, SD, FP, AS