CITY OF DELAWARE DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

Updated 09-2026

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

In the City of Delaware, policies, standards and regulations on land use and development are designed to help ensure the health, safety and welfare of its citizens, while protecting the rights and privileges of property owners. The land development process is the city's system to efficiently and consistently enforce these policies, standards, and regulations.

The land development process is designed to guide the development and redevelopment of land and structures in order to ensure development happens in an orderly and compatible manner. The process an applicant needs to follow is unique to each project and is dependent upon the specific details of the proposed project and site.

This Development Handbook is designed to be a one-stop shop for most items relating to land development within the City of Delaware, providing an overview of what land development within the City entails. This document includes links to the City's website, regulations, and application forms for reference. Note that this document is all-inclusive. Prospective applicants should still plan to reach out to a staff member to discuss their project and ensure compliance with all City regulations and procedures.

Below is the contact information for departments involved in the land development process. For all proposed developments in the City, the Planning department is the best place to start.

AIRPORT	airport@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1870
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	development@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1018
ENGINEERING SERVICES	engineeringservices@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1810
FIRE	fire@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1300
PARKS AND RECREATION	parks@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1450
PLANNING	planning@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1600
PUBLIC UTILITIES	publicutilities@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1900
PUBLIC WORKS	pwcs@cityofdelawareoh.gov	(740) 203-1810

AIRPORT

The City of Delaware oversees all aspects of the Delaware Municipal Airport, which is home to approximately 100 aircraft and handles an estimated 40,000 operations per year. These operations include corporate activity, training, and pleasure flying. More information about the airport can be found on the City's website.

View the Airport Website.

In addition to City requirements, all development within the vicinity of the airport has to meet the regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). These regulations limit the height of both temporary and permanent structures within the airport vicinity and require all stormwater management basins be dry.

Prior to starting work on a project in the vicinity of the airport, applicants should make sure they are familiar with the requirements both of the Delaware Municipal Airport and the FAA - including necessary FAA permits.

Individuals interested in constructing new hangars or infrastructure within the airport should contact airport staff directly to begin the process.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Department helps new businesses start operating in the City and helps existing businesses maintain and expand their operations. Economic Development staff help facilitate a variety of customizable incentive packages that align with the specific needs of each user. These primarily include CRAs, TIFs, and NCAs.

Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA) is the primary tool for encouraging new construction and revitalization. This program provides tax exemptions for businesses that invest in new buildings or significant renovations. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is used to partner with developers and applicants on public infrastructure. With TIFs, payments derived from the increased assessed value of any improvement to real property beyond a set amount are directed towards a separate fund to finance the construction of public infrastructure defined within the TIF legislation. New Community Authorities (NCA) provide opportunities for the City and property owners to partner on complex, community-oriented projects - including infrastructure construction and maintenance and community facilities.

In addition to these city-facilitated programs, the Economic Development department can assist with securing state-level funding through JobsOhio, the Ohio Department of Development, and other specialized grant and funding programs.

It is important for applicants to start thinking about their financial needs early in the development process. In order for the Economic Development team to best assist with financing and incentive opportunities, applicants must provide a variety of documentation demonstrating their need, including a pro forma. More information about the City's Economic Development Department and their programming can be found on their website.

Visit the Economic Development website.

ENGINEERING SERVICES

The Land Development engineering team guides applicants and property owners through the engineering process for all projects in the City. They are responsible for reviewing projects for compliance with the Engineering Design Standards, which can be found on the City website.

View the Engineering Design Standards.

These Standards are comprised of standard construction drawings, the Infrastructure Design Manual, general notes, plan notes, supplemental specifications, and design & construction policies. In general, the City follows the City of Columbus Construction and Material Specifications as indicated in the general notes. Where applicable, Ohio Department of Transportation Construction and Material Specifications may be used for city capital improvement projects and land development projects affecting the state highway system.

The Engineering Services Division also maintains the City's Thoroughfare Plan, which is designed to plan for future transportation improvements that are necessary to accommodate future growth in population and traffic. The City of Delaware Thoroughfare Plan shows proposed roadway and intersection improvements throughout the city. The original plan was developed in partnership with Delaware County in 2002 and has been updated several times since. The current edition is the 2020-2040 Thoroughfare Plan, which can be found on the City's website.

View the Thoroughfare Plan.

Roadways and improvements shown on the Thoroughfare Plan are generally required to be constructed by developers when they align with their projects.

In addition to pre-construction review and approval, the Engineering Services division is responsible for engineering inspections during the construction process.

FIRE

The City of Delaware has its own fire department, which is responsible for inspecting properties in the City for compliance with the Ohio Fire Code (in addition to providing life-saving services to Delaware residents). The Ohio Fire Code, as outlined in Division 1301:7 of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC), has been adopted by the City. In addition, the City has imposed some additional Fire Prevention regulations in Part 15 of the City's Code of Ordinances.

View Part 15 of the Codified Ordinances.

While the Department's Risk Reduction division is heavily involved in pre-development conversations with staff and applicants, no Fire Department permits are required as part of development or construction projects. All fire suppression and fire prevention permit applications are to be applied for through the City's building division alongside building permits.

A Fire Truck turning exhibit is generally required as part of new development or redevelopment. The City has a custom CAD model based on the City's non-articulating fire truck.

Residential Access Requirements are regulated by the Ohio Fire Code. This requires that multi-family developments with more than 100 dwelling units and single-family developments with more than 30 dwelling units have at least two access points.

PARKS & RECREATION

CITY PARKS

The Parks & Recreation Department oversees maintenance and improvements for all existing public parks and trails within City limits. The City's Parks and Recreation Plan, approved in 2022, establishes the goals and needs of the City's parks system, many of which are considered during the land development process.

View the full Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Primary goals of the Plan include establishing and expanding linear greenway connections, establishing a regional park in the southeast, and activating natural resources like the Delaware Run and Olentangy River.

FORESTRY

The Parks and Recreation Department is also home to the City's forestry division. The city's Forester is responsible for all public trees, and for staffing the Shade Tree Commission. This citizen board meets every other month to approve public street tree plans and review landscaping plans and Tree Canopy Management Plans. These plans are automatically routed by staff to the Shade Tree Commission as part of a land development application.

Street Tree Requirements are regulated by Chapter 1121 of the City's Zoning Code. Tree Canopy Management Plans are regulated by Chapter 1122 of the City's Zoning Code.

View Chapter 1121.

View Chapter 1122.

PLANNING & BUILDING

PLANNING AND ZONING

In 2021, City Council approved the Delaware Together Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan and its supplemental Focus Area Plans serve as a guide for new development and redevelopment, giving staff, Planning Commission, and City Council guidance when considering applications for Zoning Map Amendments and development. More information about the Comprehensive Plan and Focus Area Plans can be found on the City's website. View the Comprehensive Plan and Focus Area Plans.

As a municipality in Ohio, Delaware can establish its own zoning regulations. The City's Zoning Code and map were completely overhauled in 2025 for the first time in over 20 years in order to make the Code align with the City's goals. The Zoning Code is Part 11 of the City's codified ordinances. The Zoning Code and Map are living documents which change over time (following the approval of City Council), so it is vital that applicants review these documents before each new project to determine if any regulations have changed.

View Codified Ordinances Part 11.

View the Zoning Map.

BUILDING

The City of Delaware maintains a certified building department through the State of Ohio Board of Building Standards and follows the then-current Ohio Commercial and Residential Building Codes. Supplemental Building Code regulations can be found in Part 13 of the City's Codified Ordinances. This division of the Planning and Community Development Department provides plan review and inspection services for all projects that require it (with the exception of plumbing permits and inspections, which are handled by the Delaware Public Health District). All permits for construction are "blanket" permits which cover the building and zoning approvals.

View Codified Ordinances Part 13.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

WATER AND SEWER

The City of Delaware maintains a robust network of public water and sewer systems. All projects within the City of Delaware are required to utilize City utilities. Public Utility regulations and requirements can be found in Part Nine, Title Three of the CIty's Codified Ordinances.

View Part Nine, Title Three.

New utility taps require payment of a tap fee and a capacity fee based on the anticipated usage for the proposed use. These fees are outlined in the Codified Ordinances and are collected at the time of building permit issuance for new buildings, or separately for existing buildings where a tap is added.

View information about capacity fees on the City Website.

WATERSHED AND STORMWATER

The City's Public Utilities Department is also charged with protecting the Olentangy River watershed and overall water quality. This includes managing the City's Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit through the Ohio EPA.

The City updates its Stormwater Management Plan every five years upon renewal of the City's stormwater permit.

View the Stormwater Management Plan.

PUBLIC WORKS

STREETS

Delaware's Streets division is responsible for maintaining the City's ever-growing network of public roadways. This includes resurfacing, repair, and other road works big and small. Once public improvements for a development are accepted through the API process, the roadways are turned over to the City. This does not apply to private streets or commercial/industrial access areas, which remain the responsibility of the Owner Association, developer, or other managing entity. This includes all maintenance, including snow and ice removal.

REFUSE

The City's Refuse Division is responsible for weekly refuse collection. All new residential development where the dwelling units have driveways are required to utilize City tipcart service for refuse and recycling. Other residential development and commercial or industrial buildings may utilize the City's commercial service, which is fully customizable to the need of the user - including the number of collections per week and the size of the refuse container.

SECTION 2: PROCEDURES

PROCEDURES OVERVIEW

Developing or redeveloping property can be challenging, but it doesn't have to be complicated. On the next several pages, interested parties can see overviews of the primary procedural stages of the land development process. Each of these overviews include a simplified workflow.

For all steps in the process, there is a duration provided. Note that all of these durations are estimates and not all projects move through the process in the same cadence or speed. The time it takes to move a project through the process depends on a variety of factors - including site size, location, environmental characteristics, and quality of submittals.

Many projects require multiple approvals. For example, a new residential subdivision often requires annexation, rezoning, development plan, and plat approvals before construction can commence. At the end of this section is an example cadence demonstrating how all of the approvals can link together.

Unfortunately, because no two projects are the same, there is no "one-size-fits-all" methodology for all projects - but there is a specific kit of parts outlined in the Zoning Code.

ANNEXATION

BACKGROUND

In Ohio, the annexation process is regulated by Chapter 709 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) and is administered by the County where the property is located. View ORC Chapter 709.

PROCESS

The timing and complexity of the annexation process requires that applicants initiate review by the City prior to formal application with the County. The City of Delaware considers all annexation petitions on a case-by-case basis, considering availability of utilities, police and fire capabilities, etc. Depending on the complexity of a site or potential future development, a Pre-Annexation Agreement (PAA) may be necessary.

Below is a simplified process outline for the most common type of annexation, an Expedited Type II. Note that this process can take up to 120 days. Other types of annexation may take longer but be more appropriate for a given project. Staff always recommends reaching out to an individual with annexation experience to assist in the annexation process. Applicants must contact Delaware County for information regarding additional process requirements.

SIMPLIFIED PROCESS OVERVIEW

DURATION: APPROXIMATELY SIX MONTHS (DEPENDING ON ANNEXATION TYPE)

1. Applicant files application for pre-annexation review with the City.
2. City reviews pre-annexation application.
3. Applicant files Annexation Petition with Delaware County.
4. County Commissioners set hearing to discuss annexation application.
5. Applicant notifies City and Township of hearing date and advertises annexation application.
6. City Council passes resolutions of services if available. City forwards resolution to Delaware County.
7. County Commissioners hold hearing to approve or deny annexation application.
   60 DAY HOLD
8. If approved, Delaware County forwards annexation request to City Council.
9. City Council votes to approve or deny annexation request.
   30 DAY HOLD
10. ORDINANCE APPROVING OR DENYING REQUEST GOES INTO EFFECT.

REZONING

BACKGROUND

Property owners may request to amend the zoning on their property to accommodate development or redevelopment in accordance with the City's Zoning Code. View Zoning Code Section 1105.03-.09.

PROCESS

There are two types of Zoning Map Amendments: Straight Zoning, and Planned Unit Developments (PUDs).

Amendments to a straight zoning district are only permitted for sites less than 10 acres, residential subdivisions, or agricultural developments which meet all requirements of the A-1 (Agricultural) zoning district. Amendments to PUDs are required for all other zoning amendments and allow the property owner and City to establish regulations that accommodate unique and complex developments. These requests must meet all requirements of Chapter 1114. View Chapter 1114.

All zoning amendments require a public hearing at Planning Commission and at least three readings (including a public hearing) at City Council.

SIMPLIFIED PROCESS OVERVIEW

DURATION: APPROXIMATELY 3-4 MONTHS)

1. Applicant requests a process meeting with City Staff.
2. City Staff schedules process meeting to discuss procedures and identify potential challenges.
3. Applicant submits a concept plan for Staff to review.
4. Staff reviews and provides comments to Applicant.
5. Applicant revises plans to address comments and submits Zoning Amendment application.
6. City reviews application for completeness and provides any comments.
7. Applicant revises plans (if necessary) and resubmits.
8. City provides draft conditions of approval. *Note that conditions of approval only apply to PUD zoning requests. All straight-zoning requests must meet all requirements of the relevant Zoning Code chapters.*
9. City generates Staff Report and supporting documents
10. Case is heard by Planning Commission (one reading).
11. Case is heard by City Council (three readings).
    30 DAY HOLD
12. ORDINANCE APPROVING OR DENYING REQUEST GOES INTO EFFECT.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS (Commercial / Industrial)

BACKGROUND

All non-residential development and redevelopment in the City requires development plan approval in accordance with Section 1105.10-16 of the City's Zoning Code. There are two types of review: administrative, and City Council. View Section 1105.10-16.

PROCESS

Only projects located in straight zoning districts are eligible for administrative development plan review. All other projects, including those within planned or overlay districts, must get approval from City Council. For commercial and industrial projects, full civil engineering plans are required to be submitted alongside the development plan application. These plans include public utility extensions, site grading, stormwater management, on- and off-site roadway improvements, and other infrastructure.

SIMPLIFIED PROCESS OVERVIEW

DURATION: APPROXIMATELY 3-4 MONTHS, NOT INCLUDNG ENGINEERING PLAN REVIEW)

1. Applicant requests a process meeting with City Staff to discuss procedures and identify potential challenges.
2. Applicant submits a concept plan for Staff to review.
3. Staff reviews and provides comments to Applicant.
4. Applicant revises plans to address comments and submits Development Plan application and Civil Engineering plans. *If the City Engineer has determined that a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is necessary for a project, it must be fully complete and accepted prior to Development Plan submittal.*
5. City reviews application for completeness and provides any comments.
6. Applicant revises plans (if necessary) and resubmits.

STEPS 7-11 apply only to Development Plan applications requiring City Council approval. Administrative review projects are approved by staff once all comments are addressed.

7. City provides draft conditions of approval.
8. City generates Staff Report and supporting documents.
9. Case is heard by Planning Commission (one reading).
10. Case is heard by City Council (one reading).
    30 DAY HOLD
11. RESOLUTION APPROVING OR DENYING REQUEST GOES INTO EFFECT.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS (Residential)

BACKGROUND

All residential development and redevelopment in the City requires development plan approval in accordance with Section 1105.10-16 of the City's Zoning Code. There are two types of review: administrative, and City Council. View Section 1105.10-16.

PROCESS

Only projects located in straight zoning districts are eligible for administrative development plan review. All other projects, including those within planned or overlay districts, must get approval from City Council. For residential projects which will be split into multiple phases on multiple lots, engineering drawings are required to be submitted when the applicant applies for subdivision plat approval. Residential projects on one lot require engineering drawings to be submitted alongside the development plan.

SIMPLIFIED PROCESS OVERVIEW

DURATION: APPROXIMATELY 3-4 MONTHS, NOT INCLUDNG ENGINEERING PLAN REVIEW)

1. Applicant requests a process meeting with City Staff to discuss procedures and identify potential challenges.
2. Applicant submits a concept plan for Staff to review.
3. Staff reviews and provides comments to Applicant.
4. Applicant revises plans to address comments and submits Development Plan application and Civil Engineering plans (if needed). *If the City Engineer has determined that a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is necessary for a project, it must be fully complete and accepted prior to Development Plan submittal for multi-family development on one lot, and prior to Subdivision Plat submittal for residential development on multiple lots.*
5. City reviews application for completeness and provides any comments.
6. Applicant revises plans (if necessary) and resubmits.

STEPS 7-11 apply only to Development Plan applications requiring City Council approval. Administrative review projects are approved by staff once all comments are addressed.

7. City provides draft conditions of approval.
8. City generates Staff Report and supporting documents.
9. Case is heard by Planning Commission (one reading).
10. Case is heard by City Council (one reading).
    30 DAY HOLD
11. RESOLUTION APPROVING OR DENYING REQUEST GOES INTO EFFECT.

SUBDIVISION PLATS

BACKGROUND

Platting is the process of subdividing parcels into lots. This is most commonly associated with residential developments, but the Zoning Code requires that all un-platted properties in the City be platted during the development process.

PROCESS

When a property owner wishes to split an existing lot or parcel into two or more lots, a plat is required. This plat is to be submitted to and reviewed by the City's Planning Commission, which is the platting body for the City. Plats are required to include all right-of-way, drainage and utility easements, access easements, and other items as outlined in Zoning Code Chapter 1106. View Chapter 1106. Plats are reviewed at a single meeting of the Planning Commission.

Plats must be recorded with the Delaware County Recorder's Office before addresses can be assigned or building permits for a project can be released. For projects with no public infrastructure, these plats can be printed on mylar and routed for signatures immediately after approval (after lot numbers are requested from the Delaware County Map Room). If a project involves public infrastructure, the plat cannot be printed and routed for signatures until the project (or phase) receives Acceptance of Public Improvements (API).

SIMPLIFIED PROCESS OVERVIEW

DURATION: APPROXIMATELY 2 MONTHS, NOT INCLUDNG RECORDING)

1. Applicant requests a process meeting with City Staff to discuss procedures and identify potential challenges.
2. Applicant submits a draft plan for Staff to review.
3. Staff reviews and provides comments to Applicant.
4. Applicant revises plans to address comments and submits Subdivision Plat application and Civil Engineering plans (if needed). *If the City Engineer has determined that a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is necessary for a project, it must be fully complete and accepted prior to Subdivision Plat submittal for residential development on multiple lots.*
5. City reviews application for completeness and provides any comments.
6. Applicant revises plans (if necessary) and resubmits.
7. City provides draft conditions of approval.
8. City generates Staff Report and supporting documents.
9. Case is heard by Planning Commission (one reading). Plat approval immediately goes into effect.

SAMPLE CADENCE*

**Cadence is for reference only and is not a guarantee of approval process or timeline for your specific project.*

DURATION	PROCESS	
~3 MONTHS	ZONING MAP AMENDMENT While moving through the zoning amendment process, applicants may begin preparing documents needed for the Development Plan submittal.	
~3 MONTHS	DEVELOPMENT PLAN During the Development Plan process, applicants may begin preparing documents needed for plats and building permits. Building permit applications will not be accepted until the Development Plan is approved.	SUBDIVISION PLAT Plats may run through the process simultaneously with a Development Plan. For residential development on multiple lots, engineering submittals are made with the plat application.
~1 MONTH	BUILDING PERMITS Building permits will not be accepted until the Development Plan is approved.	SITE WORK / EXCAVATION Site work may commence after engineering drawings are approved and a pre-construction meeting has been held.
	BUILDING CONSTRUCTION Building work and construction may commence after Building Permit is approved.	

SAMPLE TIMELINE*

**Timeline is for reference only and is not a guarantee of approval timeline. Timeline assumes property is already in the City.*

JANUARY Pre-Development and Process Meetings with Staff. Concept Plan provided for comment.
FEBRUARY Preliminary plans submitted (i.e. Traffic Study). Zoning application submitted.
MARCH Preliminary plans reviewed. Applicant prepares for Development Plan submittal.
APRIL Zoning approved at Planning Commission. Applicant prepares for Development Plan submittal.
MAY Zoning approved at City Council. Development Plan (including engineering plans, if needed) submitted.
JUNE Zoning Amendment in effect. First round of staff comments provided to applicant. Building permit prep.
JULY Development Plan approved at Planning Commission and Council. Engineering resubmittal.
AUGUST Development Plan in effect. Building permit submitted. Engineering comments resolved.
SEPTEMBER Engineering drawings approved. Pre-Construction Meeting scheduled. Building permit approved.
OCTOBER Site work and building construction commence. Inspections handled by City staff.