



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT BEST PRACTICES

## Streamlining the Development Permitting Process

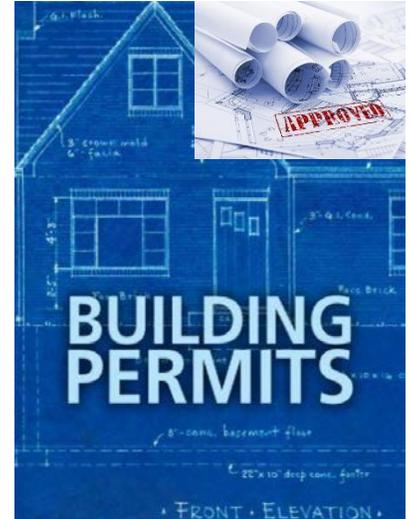
*The permitting process can be daunting. Many Georgia cities have streamlined the permitting process by implementing best practices to offer more transparent solutions, and to encourage economic development to improve their communities.*



# Local Government Best Practices for Streamlining the Development Permitting Process

## Improving Transparency and Communication

- ✓ Single Point of Contact
- ✓ User's Guide to Local Permitting Process
- ✓ Permitting Flow Charts and Checklists, Routing Sheets
- ✓ External Agency Contact List / Reviewing Agency Contact List
- ✓ Clear Submittal Requirements
- ✓ Concurrent Applications
- ✓ Combined Public Hearings
- ✓ Pre-Application Meetings and Requirements
- ✓ Project Technical Review Team
- ✓ Regularly Scheduled Inter-Departmental Meetings



## Standardizing the Process

- ✓ Effective Use of Site Plan Approval
- ✓ Tiered Review Process
- ✓ Delegation of Minor Decisions to Staff
- ✓ Uniform Timelines, Notifications and Appeals

## Resources to Improve Performance and Accountability

- ✓ Use of Third Party Consultants (when appropriate)
- ✓ Adequate Staffing
- ✓ Commitment to Training
- ✓ Maximization of Technology
- ✓ Electronic Permit Application Submittal Systems
- ✓ Electronic Permit Tracking Systems



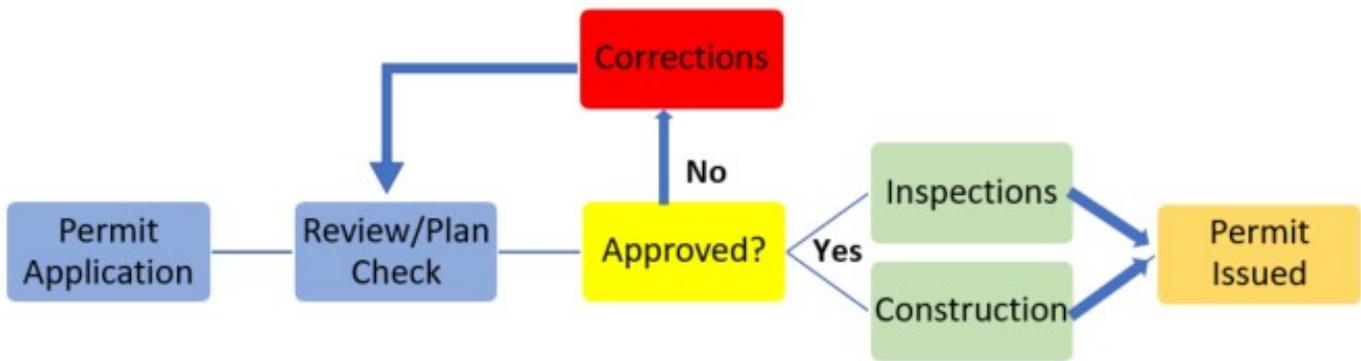
## Planning

- ✓ Development Agreements
- ✓ Pre-Permitting for Selected sites

## Improving Transparency and Communication

**Single Point of Contact** – A staff person assigned to be responsible for coordinating permitting activities with the applicant and reviewers/approvers. This improves efficiency and consistency throughout the process.

**User's Guide to Local Permitting Process** – Serves as a reference document and makes the process transparent and uniform. The goal of the guide is to provide a better understanding of common planning and development processes by including clear and easy to understand directions, requirements, and forms needed to navigate the step-by-step permitting process. The guide should also include process flow charts, checklists, and reference fee schedules and expected review and approval timeframes for each permit type.



**Permitting Flow Charts, Checklists, and Routing Sheets** – Flow charts illustrate the steps in the permitting process. A checklist describes the mandatory steps and documents required for permit application submittal, review and approval. A routing sheet shows the steps in the staff review and approval process and includes associated signatures and dates as an application goes through the process. These documents are more valuable when coupled with a User’s Guide. However, they are effective as stand-alone documents.

**Clear Submittal Requirements** – Let applicants know exactly what is required for submittal, when, and to whom. Clearly articulate requirements to minimize confusion and conflicts, set expectations, and promote transparency and uniformity in the process. Provides a comprehensive list of the items an applicant must submit for an application to be considered complete, format type, number of copies, fees, notice procedures, and whether digital copies and/or submittals are allowed or required.

**Concurrent Applications** - This is important for applications requiring approval from multiple boards or agencies. All projects will not qualify for concurrent application processing. Concurrent applications can save time and encourage collaboration. It also allows better coordination of large or complex projects. Sequencing details such as the required public hearings by each board or agency should be clearly indicated and provided on the local government’s website.

**Combined Public Hearings** – Speeds up the process and shortens the timeline of the permitting process. This is particularly true in local governments where the boards only meet once per month. It allows for coordinated reviews and conditions of approval.

**Pre-Application Meetings and Requirements** – Provides an opportunity for owners/applicants, developers, consultants, and the staff review team to meet to discuss the development concept, address potential issues, and voice concerns prior to the formal submission of an application. It facilitates open communication about the project scope and provides a realistic view of the permitting process, requirements, timetables, etc.

**Project Technical Review Team** – Formed to review applications requiring approval of multiple boards or commissions. The purpose is to review specific (not all) projects after the application has been filed to ensure applications are complete, address issues raised by reviewing departments or boards, and to provide a coordinated local government response. The team may also include staff from departments which do not grant permits, but which may have an interest in the proposed development (i.e., police department).

**Regularly Scheduled Inter-Departmental Meetings** - Designed to foster a collegial and collaborative working environment among departments/agencies charged with land use regulation. Such meetings foster effective communication, decrease “turf issues”, and provide a forum to discuss

process improvements, new regulations and policies. They are not designed to review specific projects.

### **Standardizing the Process**

**Effective Use of Site Plan Approval** – Allows for a detailed evaluation and mitigation of development project impacts. This review increases a local government’s ability to define the character and layout of a new development and to work with the applicant to balance local needs with project needs. Site plan review typically focuses on drainage, traffic, parking, roadway construction, signage, utilities, screening, lighting, and other project specific elements to arrive at the best possible design for the site.

**Tiered Review Process** - Allows a local government to provide different levels of review based on thresholds of scale or project impact. Specific criteria are identified and applications are reviewed based on established criteria. Projects meeting specified criteria can be expedited through the review process. A tiered review process provides predictability in the review process and staff resources are concentrated on projects with greater community impact or which do not conform to community expectations.

**Delegation of Minor Decisions to Staff** – Allows staff to make decisions based on criteria and/or approval thresholds determined by approval granting boards and/or governing bodies. Delegation of minor decisions expedites the review and permitting process and allows boards and governing bodies to focus on larger or more complex projects.

**Uniform Timelines, Notifications and Appeals** – When implemented simultaneously, interact to create efficient permitting without compromising the interests of the community. Applicants are provided a “road map” for the order of approvals, expected timeframes, and points of coordination in a consistent and transparent manner. All permit process documents should be readily available to prospective applicants on the local government website and at local government offices. Reference documents for ordinances, regulations, rules and process procedures should also be available.

### **Resources to Improve Performance and Accountability**

**Use of Third Party Consultants (when appropriate)** – Consultants can provide needed expertise to identify project impacts; review complex and technical issues such as stormwater and transportation; augment staff capacity to meet established timelines, and enhance board/commission expertise.

**Adequate Staffing** – Inadequate staffing can debilitate the permitting process, especially in small communities.

**Commitment to Training** – Educational training for regulatory board members and staff will pay immediate benefits by improving consistency, knowledge of ordinances, laws, and objectivity in decision making.

**Maximization of Technology** – Websites can provide 24/7 access to information about the permitting process and access to forms, documents, regulations, and procedures. Posting information online reduces staff time devoted to fielding calls and walk-ins during business hours. It allows the user an opportunity to conduct research at their own pace prior to engaging staff and provides a consistent tool to post agendas, notices, and information about the permit review process

**Electronic Permit Submittal and Tracking Systems** – Have the potential to streamline permitting from application submittal to project completion. Functionality of permit submittal and tracking systems include: permit application status, department approval status, view the status of plan reviews, request inspections, and payment of fees. Electronic submittal and tracking reduces staff time spent on administrative functions, provides more accuracy and transparency to the permitting process, allows electronic files to be disseminated to multiple parties at once, and provides an archive of all permitting activity associated with a parcel/project.

### Planning

**Development Agreements** – The local government agrees that existing restrictions on the property will remain in effect in exchange for the developer’s agreement on a defined set of conditions regarding use of the property. Agreements are frequently used for larger projects that use publicly held land or for which construction may take several years.

**Pre-Permitting for Selected Sites** - Sites are selected for “pre-permitting” based on zoning regulations, site design guidelines or master plan, if the community has one. This assists in expedited permitting and is a proactive approach to development instead of a reactive approach. It helps create a “business friendly” environment, gives clarity regarding the likely use of the property, and provides an advantage when competing for economic development.



### **Examples of Best Practices in Georgia Cities Website Links**



[Acworth](#)

[Oakwood](#)

[Atlanta E-Plans](#)  
[Atlanta Permitting](#)

[Peachtree City](#)

[Canton](#)

[Rome](#)

[Chamblee](#)

[Roswell](#)

[Decatur](#)

[Statesboro Planning](#)

[Douglasville](#)

[Statesboro Development Packet](#)

[Marietta](#)

[Statesboro – Right Start Program](#)

[McDonough](#)

[Suwanee](#)

[Metter](#)

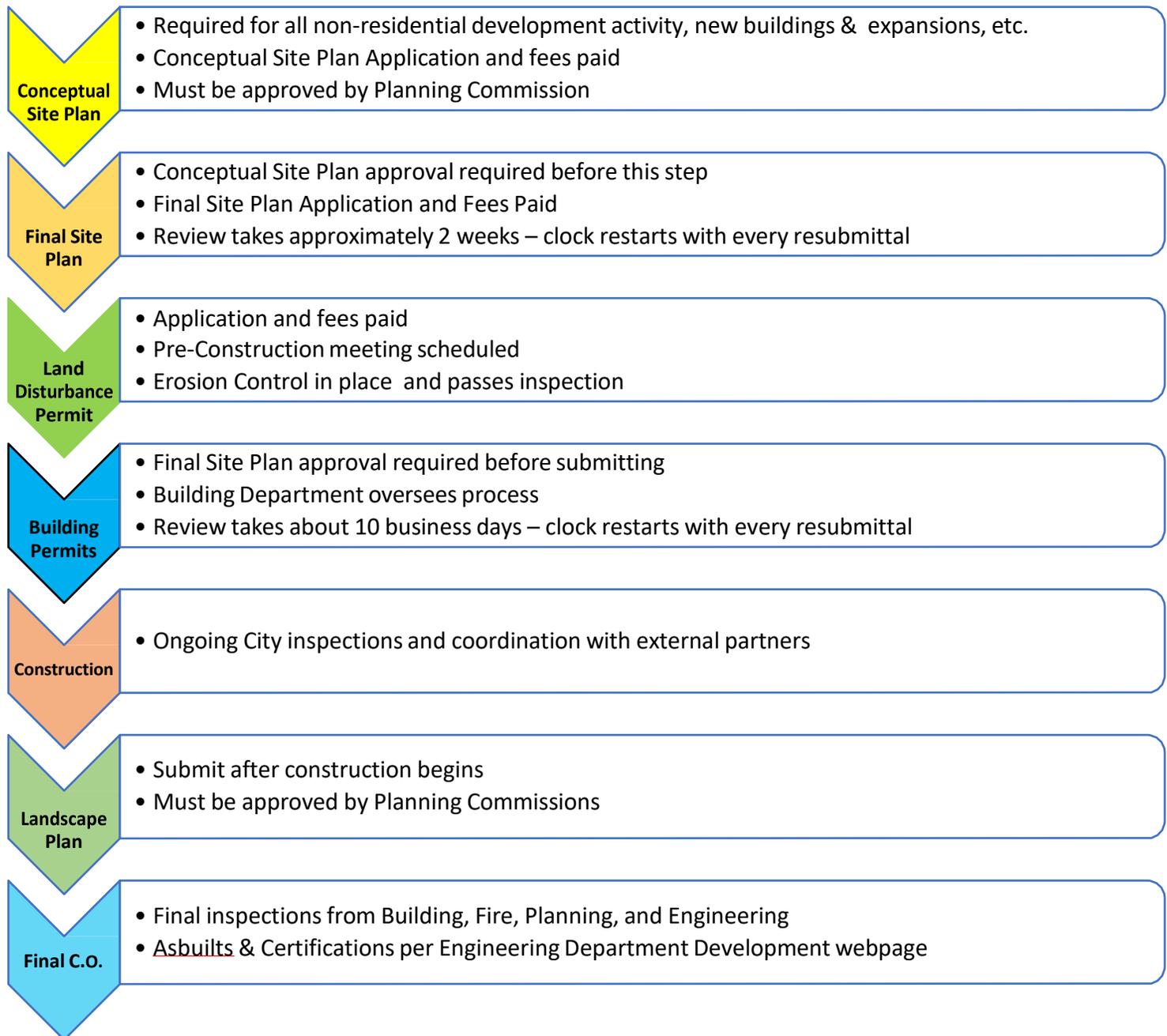
[Woodstock](#)

[Habersham County – CVIOG and Archway Project](#)

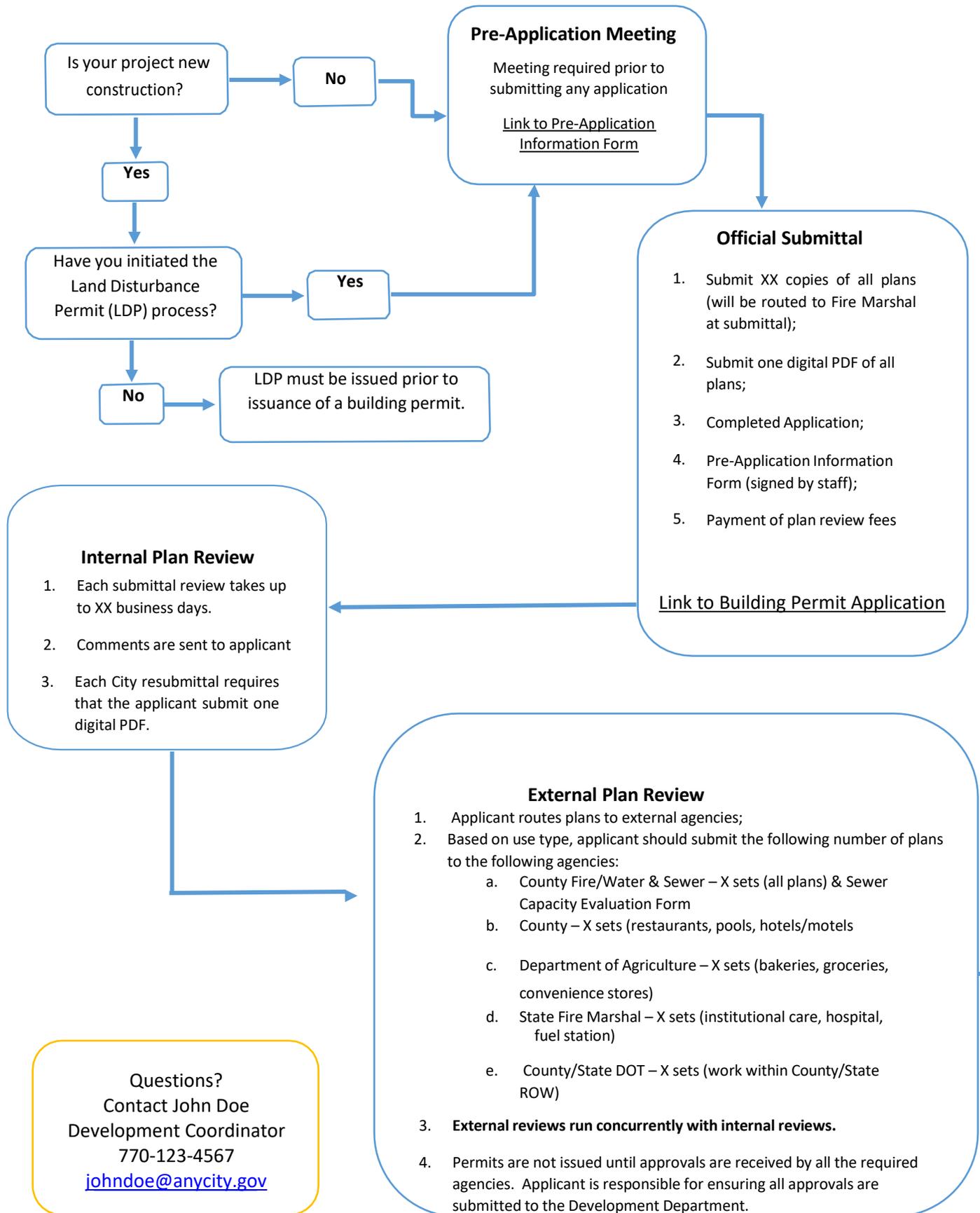
Sample Permitting Process Flow Chart A



## Sample Permitting Process Flow Chart B



# Sample Detailed Flow Chart Commercial Building Permit Process



## Plan Approval

1. Once plans are ready for approval, the applicant will be contacted by the Development Coordinator to submit the following:
  - a. Remaining fees to be paid.
  - b. Remaining Required Documents for Permit Issuance:
    - i. County Sewer Capacity Letter or Approved Sewer Action Plan
    - ii. Georgia State License
    - iii. Georgia Business License
    - iv. Government Issued ID for General Contractor and/or Qualified Agent (Driver's License, Passport, etc.)
    - v. Qualifying Agent Form (notarized)
    - vi. LEED or Green Globes Checklist
    - vii. Master Signage Plan recorded and submitted to City Clerk (PUDs and Planned Centers)
    - viii. Federal Aviation Administration FAA Form 7460-1 and all responses received from FA (projects in the Runway Protection Zone Overlay District)
    - ix. All subcontractor affidavits (no inspections until submitted)
2. Submit one final PDF version for digital signatures, if required. Plans will be signed electronically and returned to the applicant electronically.
3. Once all requisite documents are submitted and verified, a permit will be issued and a Pre-Construction Meeting will be scheduled. Applicant must bring a printed copy of the approved plans to the Pre-Construction Meeting.

## Inspections

1. Email for Building Inspections at [inspections@anycity.gov](mailto:inspections@anycity.gov) or call the inspection hotline at 770-123-5678.
2. Building Inspection requests submitted by X p.m. will be scheduled for the next business day.
3. Email for Fire Inspections at [janedoe@anycounty.gov](mailto:janedoe@anycounty.gov) or call 404-321-9876.
4. Fire Inspections requests submitted by X p.m. will be scheduled for the next business day.

## Project Closeout

1. The following project closeout documents are required at the conclusion of all projects:
  - a. In addition to inspections required by the Any City, the following agencies must provide a final inspection based on use type:
    - i. County Fire/Water & Sewer (all projects)
    - ii. County Health (restaurants, pools, hotels/motels)
    - iii. Department of Agriculture (bakeries, groceries, convenience stores)
    - iv. State Fire Marshal (institutional care, hospital, fuel station)
    - v. State Insurance Commissioner (elevator)
    - vi. County/State DOT (work within County/State ROW)
    - vii. Federal Aviation Administration (in Runway Protection Zone Overlay District)
  - b. Digital copy of plan set with inspection signatures (TIFF file format) – as determined necessary by the CBO.
  - c. Performance Bond (incomplete roads, sidewalks, landscape)— XXX%.
  - d. Maintenance Bond (detention ponds) -- \$X.XX/cubic foot of storage.
  - e. Maintenance Bond (roads, sidewalks, landscape)—XX%
  - f. Stormwater Maintenance Agreement executed and recorded (detention ponds).
  - g. Stormwater As-builts reviewed and approved by Engineer (detention ponds).
  - h. Confirmation of recorded easements and other dedications.
  - i. Green building certification fee (if applicable, all buildings over xx,xxx sf.
2. Once all required project closeout documents are submitted and verified, a Certificate of Occupancy/Completion is issued.