

Planning and Development Review Department

Fast Track Site Plan Process

Austin City Code, Sections 25-4-23 and 25-4-24



November 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brief Overview of the Fast-Track Process.....	1
Fast-Track Requirements.....	2
Fast-Track Process.....	4
Fast-Track Concept Illustration.....	6
Certification for Fast-Tracking.....	7
Scheduling.....	11
Concurrent Site Plan and Building Reviews.....	12
Suspension of Fast-Tracking.....	12
Fast-Track "Do's".....	13
Fast-Track "Don'ts".....	14
Appendix	
Fast-Track Process Flow Chart.....	Back Page

OVERVIEW OF THE FAST-TRACK PROCESS

The City of Austin created an optional Fast-Track Site Plan process in an effort to shorten the startup time for site construction. This process is only available in certain parts of the City, primarily in non-environmentally sensitive areas. This optional process allows a developer to start constructing site improvements prior to complete site plan release. Without this option, no site work can be authorized unless the full site plan has been approved and released.

The Fast-Track process divides the site plan review into two approval stages. Stage One is the approved construction work which may be done prior to approval of the remainder of the plan-not including buildings. Stage Two is the remainder of the work to be done including the land use and compatibility details. When Stage One is approved, the developer can begin construction on the approved activities, saving the time that it may take to bring land use and compatibility elements of the review into final compliance. The aspect of concurrent building plan review also saves process time. The site construction that will be allowed for Stage One can include the following:

- placing fencing around construction area, tree protection fencing, erosion/sedimentation controls, and stabilized construction entrances
- preconstruction conference with City inspectors
- construction of temporary detention/sedimentation ponds
- clearing, rough grading, and construction of utilities and storm sewers
- final detention and water quality ponds
- construction of paved areas, curbs, islands, and the remainder of Stage One

To assist in making this process work, an agent/coordinator for the developer must be a person certified by the City of Austin for Fast-Tracking. The certification process is designed to allow communication between City staff and agents about how the process works before an application is requested. Certification requires successful completion of a short course and payment of an annual fee.

FAST-TRACK REQUIREMENTS

The following list describes criteria which must be met before the City of Austin will review a development proposal under the Fast-Track process:

1. The Fast-Track process can only be used in conjunction with a Consolidated administrative site plan application.
2. The development is located within the boundaries of an urban or suburban watershed.
3. Each Fast-Track project must have a project coordinator who has current Fast-Track Certification from the City. This certification must be verified during submittal of Stage One.
 - The project coordinator is responsible for obtaining site plan approval and assumes the responsibility for the coordination of all related site construction activity.
 - A letter must be submitted from the owner authorizing the coordinator to be responsible for all phases of site development.
4. A consolidated administrative site plan application must be submitted with the required information as described in the application packet. All submittal information must be complete. The following information must be included with the application:
 - Submit a letter requesting Fast-Tracking and outline of development staging.
 - Show proof of certification for the project coordinator.
 - Show Stage One, Fast-Track proposal and Stage Two (Remaining Construction) areas and indicate exact work to be conducted on affected sheets for each Stage.
 - Submit a construction schedule showing in detail expected times for City review of each Stage and expected construction start and finish dates. This schedule will be reviewed by the City's Fast Track Review Team for determination of feasibility of the project.
 - Complete submittal includes an environmental impact report with a tree and critical features survey to determine if Fast-Tracking is feasible. The trees surveyed should be those larger than eight inches in diameter and the protective fencing should be shown for those trees that need it.

5. fiscal posting for erosion/sedimentation controls, tree mitigation, and restoration must be submitted before Stage One can be approved.
6. The applicant must have obtained all of the necessary approvals and other authorizations from all other applicable governmental entities for the development authorized by the Stage One site plan. Fast-Tracking will be denied if other governmental authorizations are required and have not been obtained.
7. Once Stage One is approved, temporary erosion/sedimentation controls, silt fences, fencing around the limits of construction and for tree protection must be installed prior to any site work or clearing.
8. Fast-Tracking will be discontinued if any Commission or Council variances or waivers are identified during the review process, unless the variances do not affect Stage One and can be approved prior to completion of Stage One.
9. If required, permanent detention and water quality ponds will be installed in the first part of construction, in order to keep sediment and pollutants from reaching any waterways.
10. Grading plans showing elevation changes are required for all projects with proposed subsurface work.
11. Fast-Tracking of driveways and parking will not be permitted until all issues concerning driveway location and design, on-site circulation, surface parking and building location have been resolved.
12. Access roads of grades and material acceptable to the Fire Department will be required prior to building construction and will be maintained during construction.
 - Any site preparation or construction which limits the required access to other buildings will require Fire Department approval.
 - Required hydrants shall be installed and completed prior to building construction, unless otherwise authorized by the Fire Department.
 - Hydrants and other existing fire protection systems must be maintained throughout site preparation and building construction job, unless otherwise authorized by the Fire Department.

FAST-TRACK PROCESS

The following list describes the procedures which will apply for review of a development application submitted under the Fast-Track Process:

1. After submittal of a Fast Track request with an application, but before acceptance of the project, the applicant's team will meet with the City's review team to go over the submittal. At the meeting, the Fast Track Review Team will determine the feasibility of processing the application as a Fast Track project, including likely timelines, and what will be needed at each phase of review,
2. The consolidated administrative application will be reviewed in two stages (Stage One and Stage Two), as outlined by the applicant. Review times will remain the same. If possible, an early status report on the feasibility of Fast-Tracking will be given to the applicant.
3. A comment report will be prepared addressing the separate phases. Fast-Tracking will be approved after an update is submitted addressing staff comments on Stage One, and if:
 - no variances are required
 - proof of other governments' authorization is provided, if required
 - fiscal surety has been posted
 - Stage Two compliance is feasible
4. Stage One is only for site work, which can include the following:

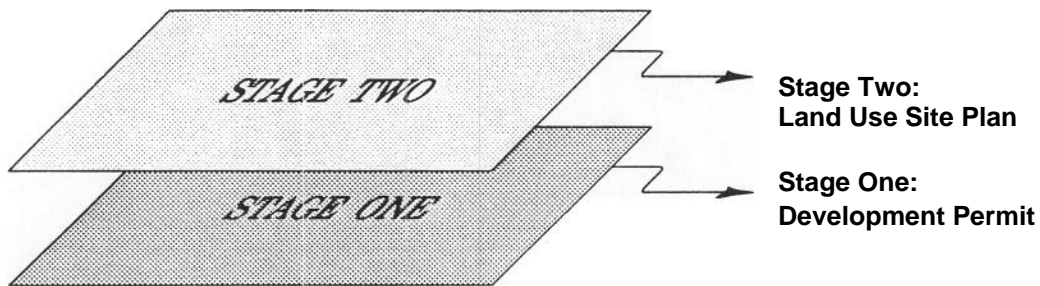
clearing and grubbing, earthwork, utility construction, storm sewer and drainage construction, sub grade work, grading, base and paving for parking and interior roads, driveways, detention, water quality ponds, temporary and permanent erosion/sedimentation controls, tree removal and protection, landscaping islands, fences, curb and gutters, landscaping and revegetation, retaining walls, and any other site-related work approved by the Director of Planning and Development Review. Paving of parking, driveways and interior roads, and construction of curb and gutter may not be allowed until Stage Two is approved, if location of buildings or expected number of employees or other reasons preclude determining location or size.
5. Stage One is approved and released by issuance of a Stage One temporary development permit.
 - Permit and site plan must describe the sequence of construction and the approved activity for each affected sheet.
 - A note must be added to the Stage One approval which states: "No layout inspection will be permitted until Stage One detention and water quality ponds

are constructed and a letter from the engineer has been submitted stating that the detention and water quality ponds are completed and this has been verified by designees of the Director."

- At a minimum, the following reviews and approvals are needed for the release of the Stage One Permit: Site Plan:
 - Drainage and Water Quality;
 - Plumbing;
 - Fire,
 - Water;
 - Environmental; and
 - Electric. Additional reviews may be necessary as determined during the pre-Fast Track process approval meeting. Traffic Control approval may be required as necessary.
6. After Stage One is approved and released, the case manager will organize a meeting with the staff construction engineer, the City arborist and field inspectors to go over the project's sequence of construction and give copies of the approved plans to both environmental and building inspectors. The case manager will develop a contact list of all individuals involved in the project for distribution at this meeting. This list should include the owner's name, engineer, architect, contractor, key staff, etc. The key staff contact for the field inspectors will be the staff construction engineer.
 7. The developer must install temporary erosion/sedimentation controls, tree protection fencing as shown on the approved plans and fence in the limits of construction for Stage One prior to a pre- construction conference and site work.
 8. City staff will conduct a pre-construction conference and inspect the above mentioned fencing and controls.
 9. Inspectors may approve minor field adjustments to the site plan if necessary. In such cases, they will contact the staff construction engineer and inform him/her of these changes. The staff construction engineer is responsible for informing the case manager of any site plan changes, who then will ensure that the agent revises/corrects the site plan as necessary.
 10. The City will conduct field inspections on a minimum of a Monthly basis, and after significant rainfall events depending on the slopes and/or watershed.
 11. Stage Two, which includes all the site work not contained within Stage One, continues to be reviewed. If Stage Two is not approved within Land Development Code deadlines, then the temporary development permit for Stage One will be revoked.

12. When Stage Two is approved, the entire site plan is released. A development permit is then issued for the entire project.
13. Concurrent site plan and building plan review is permissible.
14. No limited building permit will be issued until Stage Two is approved and the site plan is released.

FAST TRACK CONCEPT



Stages One + Two = Consolidated Administrative Site Plan

Stage One: (Development Permit)

- Temporary and permanent erosion/sedimentation controls
- Tree removal and protection
- Clearing and grubbing
- Earthwork
- Detention, filtration and sedimentation ponds
- Utility construction
- Storm sewer and drainage construction
- Subgrade work
- Grading
- Base and paving for parking and interior roads
- Interior vehicular bridges
- Driveways
- Landscaping islands, fences
- Curb and gutters
- Landscaping and revegetation
- Retaining walls and other site related work as approved by staff

Stage Two: * (Land Use Site Plan)

Zoning Ordinance compliance for the following:

- Location of buildings, building dimensions
- Legal description for the property
- Related building information (i.e., impervious cover, building coverage, floor-to-area ratio, etc.)
- Gross square feet, height
- Setbacks, including Compatibility setbacks
- Transportation review requirements for off-street parking, internal circulation, and all other ordinance and code requirements

** Stage One and Stage Two items may not necessarily be separated into these specific groupings. Since many site related issues interface between the two stages, in some cases it may not be possible to separate the proposed improvements into the two groupings as shown here.*

CERTIFICATION FOR FAST-TRACKING

A. CERTIFICATION PROCESS:

1. Individuals apply to take part in the certification training to become Fast-Track agent/coordinators. Individual participation is not limited to design professionals. However, it is recommended that applicants be familiar with the Land Development Code, City policies and the development processes.
2. To become certified, applicants are required to take a short course on the Fast-Track process. The purpose of the class is to discuss contents of this handbook and any discussion that will clarify the process. Candidates must also pay an annual certification fee to be determined by ordinance and take and pass a required written exam.
3. A certificate will be given to the successful candidates and a list of certified individuals will be distributed to the public upon request.
4. Upon expiration for not paying the annual certification fee, a new application and fee will be required for renewal, and the applicant will have to take an updated test based on the latest policy and Code requirements.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CERTIFIED PERSON:

The person certified for Fast-Tracking takes on the responsibility of liaison between the owner, the architect, the engineer, the contractor and City staff to assist in scheduling, Code compliance, and resolution of problems during the design, review and construction stages. The person will be required to provide the added communication and follow-up that is necessary to make the Fast-Track process work.

In brief these responsibilities are:

1. Predesign coordination

- Scheduling of site design, preparing application for complete submittal, anticipating City review time and construction time.
- Taking photographs of site for history of existing conditions.
- Coordinating preliminary meetings between City staff and land developer's staff.

2. Design coordination

- Coordinating meetings with City staff for design or submittal clarification.
- Synchronizing and familiarizing design team with the approved schedule.
- Submitting application after checking for completeness. Important items:
 - letter requesting Fast-Tracking with justification,
 - Stage One and Stage Two areas and exact work to be conducted in each,
 - final construction schedule,
 - environmental impact report with tree and critical environmental features survey,
 - affirmation that other required governmental authorization has been obtained (such as Texas Commission on Environmental Quality & U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Taking part in conflict resolution during review.
- Following through and expediting returns of plans for updates and clearing all comments.
- Coordinating timely submittal of the fiscal security for erosion and sedimentation controls.

3. Construction coordination

- Scheduling and coordinating the preconstruction meeting between owner, City inspection, designer and contractor's representative
- Determining sequence of construction.

- Visiting site a minimum of twice weekly to observe:
 - Contractor not extending beyond limits of construction for Stage One
 - that water quality and detention ponds are built first
 - that erosion/sedimentation controls are maintained after every storm
 - progress of project as related to the approved schedule
 - that tree protection is installed and being maintained

- Keeping log of coordination, description of observations during visits to the site and date when the visits occurred; dates and times of noticed violations to the Fast-Track process by the contractor; dates and times that contractor was warned and when violation was remedied. Giving a copy of logs to City staff when requested.

4. Acceptance of Stage One site work

- To be present at final inspection of Stage One site work. (Water quality and detention ponds have to be completed as shown on the construction plans)

5. Coordinating building site improvements per the approved site plan.

C. SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION:

Revocation of certification for Fast-Tracking means that the certified agent chosen for the particular project shall no longer be the liaison between the developer and the City on that project or any other Fast-Tracked projects. Suspension means that revocation is for a limited, specified period.

Revocation may occur for severe violations by the certified person which either result from negligent or intentional acts by the individual, or which result in significant injury to the health, safety, or welfare of either the public or the environment. It is important to note that a violation of Sections 25-5-23 and 25-5-24, dealing with Fast-Track, is considered a criminal violation of the Code (see Chapter 25-1, Article 10).

The term "Director", when used in this section, refers to the Director of the Planning and Development Review Department.

1. The decision to revoke or suspend an approved certification for Fast-Tracking will be made by the Director of Planning and Development Review.

2. Revocation may result when the certified person is negligent in coordinating the Fast-Track process. Revocation will be permanent unless it is reinstated by the Director or by an appeal to the Planning Commission. Violations to the section on "Responsibilities of Certified Person" may result in the Director's decision to revoke a certification. Two suspensions of certification during any calendar year will automatically result in revocation.

Examples of items that can cause revocation of the certification are:

- Observing the contractor not complying with Code. Agent warned by the City of an ordinance violation and not acting to stop or remedy the situation as required.
- Failing on several occasions during one project to maintain lines of communication or to coordinate necessary meetings.
- Submitting or stating false information and omitting information necessary to prevent damage or injury to the public or to the environment.
- Intentionally not informing the contractor and City staff of any protected environmental features or endangered species that were discovered on the site and not protecting them in a manner approved by the City and other regulatory agencies.
- Other actions which, in the opinion of the Director, interfere with the intent of the Fast-Track process or are in violation of the City Code or policy.

3. Suspension of the certification may result when the certified person is warned in written form, of any violation to the responsibilities of the certification and neglects to remedy or give adequate written explanation for the violation. Notice of violation shall specify the time frame within which action must be taken.

4. If certification has been revoked or suspended, Stage One authorization is suspended until this person's certification is revalidated or the owner decides to replace the formerly certified person by another certified individual approved by the Director.

D. APPEALS

1. The decision by the Director to revoke the certification for Fast-Tracking can be appealed to the Land Use Commission in accordance with Sec. 25-5-24(D) of the Land Development Code.

SCHEDULING

A. DESIGN

1. Design scheduling is the responsibility of the owner and his or her consultant. However, it is expected that during the preliminary design steps the certified person will take part in formulating a schedule, which will include site design, application submittal, review and construction.
2. A meeting with City review staff during the preliminary design stages is required for all projects.

B. CONSTRUCTION

1. These activities have to follow this approximate sequence:
 - A. Meeting between case manager and review team, contractor, agent and City inspectors.
 - B. Place fencing, tree protection fencing, erosion/sedimentation controls and stabilized construction entrances.
 - C. Have a preconstruction conference with City inspectors.
 - D. Construct temporary detention/sedimentation ponds.
 - E. Perform clearing, rough grading and construct utilities and storm sewers.
 - F. Finalize detention ponds and build filtration.
 - G. Construct paved areas, curbs, islands and the remainder of Stage One.
 - H. Begin building construction if the entire site plan has been approved and released and a building permit has been issued.

Note: If Stage Two - and therefore, the entire site plan - is approved and released, items G and H can be done concurrently or in any order.

CONCURRENT SITE PLAN AND BUILDING PERMIT REVIEWS

- A. During site plan review, the applicant can ask for permission to submit an application for building permit review before the site plan is released. A request for concurrent plan review may be obtained from the Building Plan Review section on the 2nd floor of One Texas Center. Concurrent review should not be requested until the certified agent is reasonably sure that the building location will not change due to site plan requirements.
- B. If concurrent building and site plan review is approved, the site plan case manager will also review the building plan layout sheet against the site plan to ensure that there are no discrepancies.

SUSPENSION OF FAST-TRACKING

- A. Fast-Tracking a project is a unique process requiring special attention from the certified agent, the design engineer, the contractor and City staff. All parts of the review and construction coordination have to fit together well, instructions have to be followed systematically, and the contractor's personnel should be trained to avoid falling into ordinance violation or outside of the Fast-Tracking limits.
- B. The following are examples of justification for suspending the Fast-Track process:
 - 1. Identification of a variance during the review process.
 - 2. Stages One and Two not approved within the Land Development Code deadline for site plan approval.
 - 3. Items not approved under Stage One being constructed prior to site plan approval and release.
 - 4. Issuance of a red tag because an ordinance violation is not corrected within the required time frame.
 - 5. Construction method resulting in a serious safety problem, which can only be reduced or eliminated by stopping construction.
 - 6. Construction or disturbance of soil outside of the limits of construction.
 - 7. Spoils disposal at an unpermitted site.
 - 8. Revocation or suspension of the Certification from the developer's agent in effect suspends the project for tack of a coordinator.
 - 9. Removal or damage to a tree which is shown to remain on the site.

DO MAKE SURE THAT:

- you schedule a pre-application meeting with site plan, construction and environmental staff to review the application information;
- the application is complete, signed and the agent clearly identified;
- the legal description shown on the application matches the tax plat maps indicating the site boundaries in red, unless only the construction limits will be used as the site area;
- you know if the site is subject to private deed restrictions which may limit its use, site layout or access;
- the site plan is submitted on a sheet size of 24" x 36";
- each sheet is legible, and existing site improvements and proposed construction are clearly defined;
- the layout of the site is consistent from sheet to sheet;
- drainage calculations for existing and proposed conditions are consistent with the Drainage criteria Manual and good engineering practice;
- flow arrows are shown on buildings and where the direction of flow is not readily evident;
- for sites only partially within the City limits, that the amount of impervious cover, building coverage and floor-to-area ratio are calculated on that portion of the site located within the City limits (either full or limited purpose), not just within the limits of construction;
- even if the limits of construction area is smaller than the legal lots or legal tracts, the entire site composing all legal lots or tracts must be shown on at least one sheet;
- the specific uses on the site are permitted uses of the Land Development Code, not uses requiring Conditional Use Permits;

DO NOT:

- confuse building coverage with the slab area associated with impervious cover. Building coverage is the total amount of horizontal roofed area, which may include carports, breezeways, covered porches, etc.;
- submit any update before receiving comments on the previous update;

- walk-through reviewers' offices to obtain approvals. All updates will be submitted to Intake, unless previously authorized by the case manager to do otherwise. The Case Manager can obtain signoffs if only a few minor comments are outstanding.
- assume that if Stage One is approved, Stage Two will automatically be also approved; there are no vested rights with Stage One;
- request Fast-Track if a land use site plan was approved by the Planning Commission or City Council prior to January 1, 1988, and it has not expired;
- request Fast-Track if not inside the Urban or Suburban Watersheds as defined by the Land Development Code;
- request Fast-Track if a variance will be necessary for site plan approval; examples of common variance requests are for compatibility setbacks, cut and fill in excess of four feet or sidewalk waivers.
- request Fast-Track if an area to be used for buildings or parking is within a 100-year floodplain, unless the Director determines that development in that area will result in minimal adverse impact on other properties or the environment.