



Land Development Services

Technical Bulletin

Subject: Gateway Review Policy

Date: August 31, 2020

No.: 20-05

Summary: This technical bulletin explains the launch of a new Gateway Review policy for first submissions of major site-related plans that are not peer reviewed by the Engineer and Surveyors Institute (ESI). During the Gateway Review, a Land Development Services (LDS) site reviewer will screen the plan based on the published Gateway checklist attached to this Technical Bulletin, to ensure the plan meets county standards for review.

Effective Date: The Gateway Review will be launched in three phases:

Phase 1 – Beginning September 1, 2020, LDS will review plans against the Gateway checklist, which is attached to this Technical Bulletin and available online on our [Forms webpage](#). If your plan does not meet the new checklist criteria, it will not be failed in this phase, but you will receive comments based on the new checklist.

Phase 2 – LDS expects to officially launch the Gateway Review on January 1, 2021. After launch, if your plan does not meet the checklist criteria, LDS will return it to you for corrections.

You must resubmit through the Gateway Review until LDS finds that your plan is acceptable.

Phase 3 – LDS expects to update fees for fiscal year 2022 with new fees assessed for the Gateway Review on July 1, 2021.

Background:

LDS has experienced a degradation in the quality of major plan submissions. The Gateway Review will accelerate review times overall and shorten the time-to-market for projects because reviewers will only perform detailed reviews on complete plans with all required elements.

Policy:

LDS will apply the Gateway Review to the first submission of site, subdivision, and public improvement plans that are not peer reviewed by ESI. Prior to plan acceptance into the Fairfax County site review process, an LDS site reviewer will conduct a Gateway Review using the Gateway checklist. This checklist lists essential content related to county and other review agency requirements that must be included in the plan to allow a complete and thorough review. You must address all essential items or justify exclusions on or attached to the checklist. If your plan does not pass the Gateway Review, LDS will return it to you for correction and resubmission. This cycle continues until the plan meets Gateway Review requirements. Once accepted, LDS will distribute the plan to county and other review agencies through the usual [ePlan process](#).



Gateway Review Objectives:

- *Improve the quality of plan submissions.* A ‘quality plan’ is one that is complete, accurate, readable and has been quality-checked by the signing professional prior to submission to the county.
- *Reduce the “Time to Market.”* Improving the quality of plan submittals directly impacts overall review time. Conversely, a poor-quality submission is difficult to review, generates an excessive number of review comments, may require multiple submissions before approval and “new” comments during the second and subsequent reviews. This delays the process and impacts the review timeline for other higher quality plans. Poorly prepared plans have direct impacts on the owner too, including high project carry costs and potentially escalated construction costs due to change orders and delays.
- *Create a more predictable process.* Quality plans can be reviewed within a more predictable timeframe benefiting the project owner, the design team and the regulatory agencies.



While the initial phase of the Gateway Review will launch without a fee, we anticipate that the next fee schedule change in July 2021 will include a separate Gateway Review fee.

Gateway Review Procedure:

1. Major plans submitted by non-ESI member firms will go through a Gateway Review process where a county site reviewer will determine if the plans are acceptable using the Gateway checklist as a guide.
2. Plans submitted by ESI member firms will continue to be submitted to ESI for peer review. The ESI checklists have been enhanced and are consistent with the county’s Gateway checklist.
3. Prior to initial submission, the submitting engineer will review the plan using the appropriate checklist and indicate in each line of the checklist: a) the plan sheet number(s) where the item appears; b) a checkmark in the OK column or c) a checkmark in the N/A column if not applicable to the plan; and d) an explanation for any “essential items” not addressed in the plan. The explanation can be explained in the checklist such as in a footnote or may be attached to the checklist.
4. The submitting engineer will include the completed checklist with the plan submission package.
5. The Gateway Reviewer reviews the plan for completeness, accuracy and readability using the checklist as a guide.
6. If the plan meets the criteria for acceptance, the submitting engineer will be notified and the plan will be distributed to LDS and other review agencies.

7. If the plan is deemed unacceptable, it will be returned to the submitting engineer with the reasons for non-acceptance. The applicant must make appropriate corrections and resubmit the plan through the Gateway Review, with a new Gateway Review fee once applicable, and include a comment-response letter and updated checklist with the resubmission package. This cycle continues until the plan is deemed acceptable.

Definitions:

1. *Acceptable plan.* The Gateway Reviewer has determined the plan is complete, accurate and readable so that a thorough review can be conducted.
2. *Non-acceptable plan.* The Gateway Reviewer has determined that the plan does not meet required standards for completeness, accuracy or readability. The plan cannot be thoroughly reviewed due to missing, inaccurate, or unreadable information.
3. *Completeness.* The plan includes all information necessary for a thorough review.
4. *Accuracy.* The information on the plan correctly depicts existing and proposed conditions, including standard cover sheet information; Final Development Plan (FDP), Conceptual Development Plan (CDP), Zoning Ordinance, Public Facilities Manual (PFM) and Code requirements; tabulations and design calculations; labeled features and dimensions; site-specific notes and narratives; sections, details, dimensions and specifications that meet codes and engineering standards.
5. *Readability.* A readable plan is necessary for reviewers to conduct a thorough review and for site inspectors to enforce the approved plan during construction. Factors that diminish readability include overlapping lines, labels or information; insufficient distinction among line types or line weights; inaccurate or missing legend; heavy lines or shading that obscures underlying information; misplaced or missing leaders; lines or features without labels; scale too small to clearly depict all information; existing features indistinguishable from proposed work; and unreadable text (smaller than 0.1 inch, blurred, obscured by linework, overlapping text).
6. *Essential Items.* Line items identified on the Gateway checklist as being essential to a complete and accurate plan that can be thoroughly reviewed. Essential items are those components of a plan that are fundamental requirements that if omitted, prevent a thorough review and could lead to design modifications requiring new review comments during a subsequent plan review.

Checklists:

- The Gateway checklist can be found at this link:
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/plan2build/forms-publications-library>
- ESI checklists can be found at the following link:
<http://www.esinova.org/jurisdictions/fairfax-county/>

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Behnaz Bagherian in the Site Development and Inspections Division (SDID) at Behnaz.Bagherian@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-1720, TTY 711.

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