

# **PLANNING NEW CONSTRUCTION? FIRST VISIT THE *FIRST STEP CENTER***

1. **Real Property:** Please have a clear idea of the location of the subject property. This step ensures that future determination of setbacks, easements and right-of-way will be correct and will provide information. Included in this process should be the legal description and tax parcel numbers.
2. **Land Use and Zoning:** Having the basic property information in hand, contact the City's Planning Division at 334-5023 to obtain land use classification and the zoning of your property. For the respective land use and zoning district, obtain a copy of the list of permitted uses within the zoning district. When you call in regards to and intended use of the property be specific. Although you will be provided with developments standards at a later date, you may ask the planning official to for information and details pertaining to development standards. Generally, the planning official will refer you to the First Step Center, depending on your situation. You may be provided with applications and instructions on how to proceed with your development.

*For more information contact: Lawrence Calderon in Planning at 352/334-5023.*

## **WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP CENTER?**

The First Step Center is the City of Gainesville's permit and development assistance center. The center provides a convenient, one-stop location where business owners, developers, and other interested persons receive development

and permitting information from several city departments at one time. There is no fee for a First Step appointment.

By meeting with the First Step staff, you can find out about the regulations that apply to your development, issues of concern you should address, and whether your development is consistent with the City's comprehensive plan.

Upon contacting the First Step Center you will be asked for information about your property and proposed project. If your property is properly zoned and the use you propose is allowed on your parcel, a First Step appointment will be scheduled.

If it is determined that your property is not properly zoned, you will be referred to the City's planning division to discuss appropriate land use, zoning categories and locations. The Current Planning Division can be reached at (352) 334-5023.

## **WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO A FIRST STEP MEETING?**

To get the most out of your First Step meeting bring as much information as possible about your project such as a survey, set of plans of the existing site or a sketch of your proposed development.

## **WHAT INFORMATION IS PROVIDED?**

During your First Step meeting, City staff from the Building Inspection Department, Planning Division, Public Works Department, Gainesville Regional Utilities and Fire Protection will provide you preliminary information to help you get your project started.

During the meeting, you can learn about building permits, the availability of utilities at your site, how to submit development plans for review, sign regulations, parking requirements, transportation issues, comprehensive plan issues, fire safety requirements, zoning regulations such as setbacks and allowable activities within zoning districts, stormwater management, and

environmental protection requirements. By meeting with all the applicable city representatives at one time the petitioner saves time and avoids having duplicative meetings with various individuals.

*To get a generalized idea of site plans or Gainesville area site maps visit the Community Development Website at:*  
[www.state.fl.us/gvl/Government/Community.html](http://www.state.fl.us/gvl/Government/Community.html) - 02

## **DOES FIRST STEP REPLACE THE SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS?**

Your First Step meeting is not intended to replace the formal development review process required for most construction projects.

After attending First Step, you still have to submit your completed site and development plans and work with City staff and the appropriate review board to address issues of concern and obtain approval for your project. However, property owners have found First Step beneficial in determining site constraints and zoning requirements prior to making costly expenditures in real estate and professional services for projects that may not be feasible.

## **HOW DO I OBTAIN FINAL APPROVAL OF MY PROJECT?**

Homeowners who are building, remodeling, or expanding a home or duplex do not need to go through the normal site plan review process. Rather, homeowners can submit their completed building plans to the Building Inspection Department and apply for the necessary permits directly. The Building Inspections Department conducts a basic review for compliance with zoning development standards.

All other projects require a formal development plan review. The amount of review required is based on the type and intensity of the proposed development. The review of the development plan will fall into one of the following categories:

- **Rapid Review:**

This process is applicable to changes to existing approved development plans (not to exceed 500 square feet), which could be redlined on existing plans without making them illegible. Other simple reviews which fall below the Minor Review threshold may be treated as Rapid Review. Appropriate members of the City staff do reviews and approvals. This review is done in 3-5 days.

- **Minor Development Review:**

Includes new construction, changes to existing structures or amendments to an approved development plan where the square footage involved is less than 2,500 square feet; less than 5 dwelling units, less than 15 parking spaces, any deck, patio, court, and unenclosed pervious structure; pole barns in agriculture, industrial and warehouse districts, and projects which include no significant changes in stormwater management (as determined by the Development Review Engineer).

- **Intermediate Development Review:**

Includes new construction and amendments to existing developments, which are more substantial than the threshold for Minor Development Review. Thresholds 16-100 new parking spaces, 2,500-40,000 square feet, 6-50 dwelling units, planned developments of up to 3 acres within the above thresholds and changes to board-required conditions.

Review and approval require four to six weeks and are done by the Development Review Board or Plan board at a public hearing.

- **Major Development Review:**

Includes new construction and amendments to existing developments that are substantial

than the thresholds for Intermediate Development Review.

Thresholds are more than 100 new parking spaces, more than 40,000 square feet, or more than 50 dwelling units. Reviews and approval require eight or more weeks and is done by the Development Review Board at a public hearing. Concept review is not required but is encouraged for this level of review.

**NOTE:**

Time estimates given for plan reviews are for well-prepared, completed plans. Actual times will increase if plans are incomplete or the conditions given by City staff or the Development Review Board or Plan Board are not properly addressed.

In addition, developers should add the time required to obtain approvals from other organizations such as the water management district, the Department of Transportation, the Health Department and any others that may apply to the project.

**HOW DO I MAKE A FIRST STEP APPOINTMENT?**

To make a First Step appointment, call (352) 334-5055 during normal business hours. Meetings are held weekday mornings in Gainesville's Thomas Center, Building B, 306 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Gainesville.

(Note: The mailing address for all city departments is PO Box 490, Gainesville FL 32602-0490.)

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**First Step Center**

Thomas Center, Building "B"  
306 N.E. 6th Avenue, Gainesville, FL  
(352) 334-5055

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**Building Inspection Department**

Thomas Center, Building "B" 306 N.E. 6th Avenue, Gainesville, FL  
(352) 334-5050

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**Code Enforcement Division (Department of Community Development)**

Thomas Center, Building "B" 306 N.E. 6th Avenue, Gainesville, FL  
(352) 334-5030

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**Planning Division (Department of Community Development)**

Thomas Center, Building "B"  
306 N.E. 6th Avenue, Gainesville, FL  
Current Planning: (352) 334-5023  
Comprehensive Planning: (352) 334-5022

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**Public Works Department**

Engineering Services Division  
Thomas Center Building "B"  
306 N.E. 6th Avenue, Gainesville, FL  
(352) 334-5070

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**Traffic Engineering**

Thomas Center Building "B"  
306 N.E. 6th Avenue, Gainesville  
(352) 334-5074