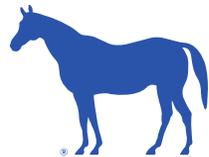


PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT STUDY: RECOMMENDATIONS 8 & 10

General Government & Planning (GGP) Committee

Alicia Larmour, Council Research Analyst

March 10, 2026



LEXINGTON

Working Group

- Jennifer Reynolds, Councilmember, District 11
- Andi Johnson, Chief Policy Officer & Director of Regional Engagement, Commerce Lexington
- Todd Johnson, Executive Vice President, Building Industry Association of Central KY
- Carla Blanton, Owner, Carla Blanton Consulting
- Branden Gross, Partner, Dentons
- Nick Nicholson, Member, Stoll Keenon Ogden PLLC
- Al Gross, P.E., P.L.S, Managing Partner, EA Partners, PLC

- LFUCG Staff:
 - Keith Horn, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Preservation
 - Shaun Denney, Administrative Officer Sr., Department of Planning and Preservation
 - Alicia Larmour, Research Analyst, Council Staff
 - Isabelle Ballard, Legislative Aide, District 11



Purpose and Scope of Work

- Recognize and commend the Planning Department for the significant progress made in streamlining the development review process, while continuing to advance measurable improvements that further strengthen predictability, coordination, and efficiency.
- Support the timely production of affordable and workforce housing by reducing avoidable delays and increasing certainty for income-restricted and infill projects, recognizing Lexington’s ongoing housing shortage.
- Implement key recommendations from the 2023 Planning and Development Approval Process Study, including tightening certification to “lock-in” approved requirements (***Recommendation 8***) and establishing a Development Liaison position (***Recommendation 10***).

Process Challenges

- The working group focused on reviewing and addressing the following challenges mentioned in the Approval Process Study:
 - Projects getting stuck in certification much longer than expected.
 - Things that were already approved sometimes get questioned again.
 - Small changes causing big delays.
 - Various departments are interpreting the rules differently.
 - Uncertainty of when a project is truly finalized and ready to move forward.

Effects of Our Inefficiencies

- Increased development costs due to extended timelines and uncertainty.
- Higher housing prices and rents, as carrying costs and financing risk are passed through to projects.
- Reduced feasibility for affordable and workforce housing, which depend on tight financing schedules and fixed funding deadlines.
- Delayed economic activity, including job creation and commercial investment.
- Competitive disadvantage compared to peer communities with clearer, more predictable approval processes.

Review of Peer Cities

City	Coordination Model	Centralized Intake?	Assigned Project Coordinator?	Published Review Timelines?	Customer Satisfaction Survey?	Notable Strength
Chattanooga, TN	Development Resource Center (DRC)	Yes	Yes (case coordination)	Yes	Limited public data	Centralized “front door” model
Madison, WI	Development Assistance Team (DAT)	Yes	Yes (project coordinators)	Yes	Yes (periodic surveys)	Strong early pre-application coordination
Knoxville, TN	Plans Review & Inspections Coordination	Yes	Partial (large projects)	Yes	Limited	Structured review accountability
Cary, NC	Project Facilitator	Yes	Yes (major developments)	Yes	Limited	Proactive infrastructure coordination
Greenville, SC	Development Services Facilitation Team	Yes	Yes (complex cases)	Yes	Yes	Business-facing development navigation

Proposed Next Steps

1. Create a Development Liaison position within the Chief Administrative Office to serve as the designated cross-departmental coordinator for land development, permitting, infrastructure review, and final sign-off processes within the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government.
2. In addition to operational coordination, the Liaison will help advance certification reform by identifying recurring post-approval issues, recommending policy clarifications, and strengthening the City's ability to “lock-in” approved requirements to improve predictability, accountability, and housing feasibility.

*Certification “*Lock-In*” means that once a development plan is approved, staff cannot add new requirements or increase standards during final sign-off unless something new has changed. Certification becomes a compliance check—not a reopening of negotiated conditions.



Essential Functions of a Development Liaison

- Executive-Level Cross-Department Coordination
 - Operate independently of any single reviewing division to ensure lifecycle oversight from intake through certification.
 - Convene and coordinate cross-functional meetings to resolve procedural conflicts and eliminate bottlenecks.
- Certification Lock-In & Final Sign-Off Oversight
 - Implement and monitor Certification Lock-In principles to ensure that development requirements are finalized at approval and not materially increased during final sign-off unless legally required or triggered by applicant revision.
- Process Improvement & Administrative Reform
- Infrastructure & Capital Alignment
 - Identify systemic infrastructure constraints affecting housing and commercial development.

Essential Functions (continued)

- **Housing Supply & Strategic Development Support**
 - Identify administrative barriers that impact housing feasibility and recommend process adjustments.
 - Monitor regional and local housing trends and identify gaps in housing supply.
- **Vacant & Underutilized Land Strategy**
 - Conduct and coordinate periodic assessments of vacant and underutilized land, including publicly and privately owned parcels.
 - Analyze development feasibility and collaborate with stakeholders to identify incentives, partnerships, and policy adjustments that advance infill and redevelopment opportunities.
- **Developer Recruitment & Economic Alignment**
- **Stakeholder Engagement & Transparency**

Essential Functions (continued)

- Data Analysis & Performance Monitoring
 - Develop dashboard reporting.
- Reporting & Accountability
 - Provide regular progress reporting to the Chief Administrative Officer and Council on:
 - Development timelines
 - Certification compliance
 - Regulatory efficiency
 - Housing production metrics
 - Administrative reform outcomes
 - Recommend data-driven policy adjustments to improve efficiency and housing outcomes.



Suggested Qualifications

- Background in city planning with a minimum of a Planning Degree and several years of relevant experience.
- Strong knowledge of zoning, subdivision, land development, and development review processes.
- Experience coordinating cross-departmental projects and managing complex, multi-stage reviews.
- Working knowledge of affordable housing tools, funding mechanisms, and redevelopment strategies.
- Advanced project management, facilitation, and conflict-resolution skills.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to explain complex regulatory processes clearly and neutrally.
- Demonstrated professionalism, neutrality, and ability to build consensus among staff, the development community, and residents.

Anticipated Outcomes

- **Certification Predictability & Timeline**
 - Reduce average time from Planning Commission approval to certification and post-approval re-review incidents.
 - Establish a defined certification review benchmark for standard projects and an expedited certification benchmark for qualifying affordable housing projects.
- **Cross-Department Coordination**
 - Achieve concurrent review for a majority of development plan applications.
 - Reduce resubmittal cycles during certification.
 - Require a cross-department alignment meeting prior to certification for complex projects.
- **Accountability & Transparency**
 - Quarterly public reporting on:
 - Average certification time of projects exceeding benchmark
 - Reasons for certification delay
 - Escalation protocol triggered when certification exceeds the defined timeframe

Anticipated Outcomes (continued)

- **Affordable & Workforce Housing Impact**
 - Reduce average time from approval to building permit for income-restricted housing by 25–40%.
 - Increase annual affordable housing unit production by 10–20%, driven by improved feasibility.
 - Increase the percentage of affordable projects meeting financing deadlines to $\geq 90\%$.
 - Reduce costly delays for affordable housing projects.
- **Economic Competitiveness**
 - Reduce overall development plan approval cycle time for standard projects.
 - Improve applicant satisfaction survey ratings.
 - Reduce project withdrawals due to process uncertainty.

Questions?



LEXINGTON