

# Memorandum



**Date:** December 2, 2008

**To:** Honorable Chairman Bruno A. Barreiro  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**From:** George M. Burgess  
County Manager 

**Subject:** Update on Improved Platting Process

**Agenda Item No.**  
**12(B)2**

Platting is a fundamental element in the orderly and progressive development of land in Miami-Dade County. In terms of progression when developing and subdividing land, platting is an intermediate development order, sequentially after zoning (the initial development order) and before building permit (the final development order). It creates legal, buildable parcels of land and ensures the establishment of standards for subdivision design which encourages the development of stable communities and healthy living environments. Benefits derived from platting regulations include the efficient and economic supply of utilities and services to land development; the provision of safe and convenient traffic circulation; and the allowance for public open spaces for recreational and educational purposes.

The subdivision process is regulated by the Florida Statutes, Chapter 177 and by the Miami-Dade County Code, Chapter 28. Land subdivision regulations are administered by our Public Works Department (PWD), with input and approvals from other County, School, State agencies, and utility companies, as required.

**Location of the land.** It is important to note that platting regulations are dependent on the location of the land. Projects within cities and towns are initiated by the applicant with the municipality; once approved by the municipality the County proceeds to approve and finalize. Projects in unincorporated Miami-Dade County (UMSA) are regulated by the County; and, in both municipal and UMSA cases PWD administers the application process. Therefore, Countywide all platting actions are ultimately approved by the County. During 2007 and 2008 to-date, approximately 56 percent of applications processed by the County were for UMSA-located properties, with the remaining 44 percent for properties within municipal areas (see Table 1 below).

Table 1:

Development Location	Recent Land Subdivision Applications Processed
Land in UMSA	56%
Land in municipalities	44%
Total	100%

**Application types and processing time.** Whether located within cities or in UMSA, one (1) of two (2) distinct plat application types is utilized depending on the complexity of the proposed project. Simpler, smaller development projects (six [6] parcels or less) obtain land subdivision approval via a Waiver of Plat; more complex projects require formal Platting. The Waiver of Plat process was recently used in 42 percent of all land subdivision applications to the County and required an average of 87 processing days; while the Platting process for more complex projects was used in 58 percent of applications, requiring an average of 447 processing days (see Table 2).

Table 2:

Application Type	Percentage of Application	Processing Time
Waiver of Plat – smaller projects	42% of applications	87 avg. application process days
Platting – larger projects	58% of applications	447 avg. application process days
Total	100%	

**Waiver of Plat process - Smaller projects.** The division of land accomplished through a Waiver of Plat cannot exceed six (6) parcels and must meet zoning requirements. The earlier zoning approval is taken into account when the land subdivision is processed via the Waiver of Plat, which is utilized when most of the required infrastructure that will serve the property is in place. This less formal process has the benefits of faster approval, less costs for the applicant, and no time needed for recordation. The process culminates when the Board County Commissioners (BCC) and the Mayor approve the application; said approval provides for a valid, legal, buildable site that can be assigned parcel folio numbers by the Property Appraiser's Office. This process reserves two (2) years of "Concurrency" on the project from date of Waiver of Plat approval. Concurrency reservations refer to and ensure that when a development action is granted, the adopted level of service standards required for roads, potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, park and recreation, and mass transit, if applicable, can and/or will be maintained by the proposed development.

Once administratively processed, the Waiver of Plat applications along with the associated plans are scheduled within ten (10) calendar days on the following available Miami-Dade County Plat Committee agenda. This Committee consists of staff members from PWD, Planning & Zoning (P&Z), Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), Miami-Dade Water and Sewer (MDWS), Park and Recreation Department (PRD), the Fire Department, the School Board, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Department of Health. Waiver of Plats that do not comply with all the participating departments' criteria are not granted approval or allotted concurrency capacity reservations.

**Formal Platting process - Larger and/or complex projects.** The "Platting" process is utilized for larger scale projects when there is a need for site or area infrastructure and/or dedications of public right-of-way to serve the site in question. The platting process creates legally buildable sites, describes the property, and adds the ease of transferring title with legal descriptions. This formal process has the benefits of providing an executed, recordable document, reviewed and approved by all affected County and State agencies in compliance with existing developmental legislation. Our formal platting process is made up of three (3) separate phases: 1) Tentative (or T-Plat) phase; 2) Tentative Plat conditions satisfaction phase; and 3) Final Plat phase (see Table 3).

**Phase 1** of "Platting" is the Tentative Plat (commonly called T-Plat) application process and is developed as an initial development action which includes a plan illustrating existing conforming and non-conforming improvements within the property to be platted, pursuant to all applicable codes. Additionally, the Tentative Plat illustrates existing and proposed rights-of-way dedications, along with the graphically depicted proposal of the division of land into lots, blocks and/or tracts. A simple Tentative Plat application, filed in good and complete order can be approved within 10 days of application. With an average of 92 processing days, it is evident that frequently an application presented at Miami-Dade County Plat Committee results in deferral until the applicant demonstrates it meets Tentative Plat requirements. The time taken is largely dependent on the applicant, the application's completeness, and the project's complexity. A Tentative Plat is valid for nine (9) months from the date of the Plat Committee's approval with concurrency capacity reservation granted for one (1) year. To avoid forfeiture of the concurrency reservation, the applicant must submit the required form and fees requesting an extension of the tentative plat approval prior to the nine (9) month approval expiration period.

**Phase 2** of “Platting” is the time period after Tentative Plat approval wherein the applicant satisfies Tentative Plat conditions such as, but not limited to, paving and drainage and water and sewer plans submittal and approval. It is also the time period wherein the applicant builds needed infrastructure such as roads, drainage, water lines, etc. The length of this Phase 2 period between Tentative Plat and Final Plat application is an average of 97 days, fully dependent on the developer and as such the project can take up to, or exceed one (1) year, due to permit approvals and subsequent construction.

**Phase 3** of “Platting”, is the completion of the Final Plat process. It begins when Tentative Plat conditions have mostly been satisfied by the applicant/developer; and, for UMSA projects, it ends when the BCC and the Mayor approve the Final Plat, and the Clerk of the Board records the Final Plat. At the time of the Final Plat submittal, in order to ascertain that minimal, preliminary compliance with all State and local legislation is present, a cursory review is conducted and the Plat is formally accepted. Final Plats that are not 100 percent compliant with these minimum submittal requirements are not accepted and are immediately returned to the applicant. PWD’s preliminary acceptance of the Final Plat submittal allows the applicant to continue to resolve conditioned requirements imposed at the Tentative Plat approval level prior to final plat review. The newly-implemented preliminary review procedure has resulted in ultimately reducing the time period needed to conduct a complete Final Plat application. The average number of days for Phase 3 is 258 days in a combination of both applicant and County time; and, “Concurrency” of two (2) years is reserved on the project.

Table 3:  
 Platting Phases/Recent Average Processing Time Breakdown:

Platting Phase	Average Total Processing Time for 05-06	Average Total Processing Time by Phase (07-08)	County Processing Time (07-08)	Applicant Condition Satisfaction Time (07-08)
Phase 1 – Tentative or (T-Plat) application	339 days	92 days	18 days	74 days
Phase 2 – Tentative approval to final approval (by developer)	229 days	97 days	0 days	97 days
Phase 3 – Final Plat approval	298 days	258 days	88 days	170 days
Total	866 days	447 days	106 days	341 days

The Final Plat submittal includes what will become the official, recordable “Final Plat Mylar” document. This is the document that is executed by the property owner(s) and any mortgagee interest holder(s). The Directors of the PWD and P&Z Departments sign-off on the actual plat document once approved by the BCC. The Mayor then signs the Final Plat confirming validation/approval and document is finally recorded with the Clerk of the Board in the public records of Miami-Dade County.

**Recent process improvements.** In 2005, the County began an initiative to streamline the land development and permitting process which included expediting the platting process. As such, certain procedures have already been improved and streamlined as we continue to look for opportunities to improve the process. These improvements, in part, include the following platting efforts which have substantially reduced the processing time as denoted in Table 3 above:

- Recently incorporated new technology and the use of the internet to expeditiously disseminate plat application information to reviewing County departments;
- Electronically interfacing project information acquired during the earlier zoning approval stage;
- Reducing the amount of applicant paperwork by increasing use of computers and electronic file receipt;
- Providing applicants and the public with easy internet access to pertinent data concerning the platting of land within the County;
- Improving communication with both the property owner and the development applicant by emailing the owner and applicant during key stages of application processing;
- Reducing the amount of time various reviewing County departments and outside entities need to review applications;
- Reducing the amount of time it takes applicants with individual infrastructure approval applications as part of platting (i.e., road closures – reducing application process by six [6] months; water and sewer line service agreements – reducing agreement process by nine [9] months; etc.);
- County acceptance of the Final Plat submittal at a time that allows the applicant to continue to resolve conditioned requirements imposed at the Tentative Plat approval level;
- Reducing the length of overall time needed to obtain a “Waiver of Plat” or a “Final Plat”.

Platting process improvements to expedite land development projects are part of a continuing effort by PWD in conjunction with other County Departments and the industry for improved services. Recently, as part of this effort a new process flow chart was produced which extends across departmental jurisdictions. This chart which now serves as the County’s processing road map has been shared with customers in order to allow them to voice their suggested improvements. In order to ultimately enhance the delivery of services by the County, their comments were considered and incorporated into the process. These efforts, along with our collaboration with the industry have yielded substantial time savings in the process, and will ultimately bring satisfaction to our customers who appreciate the County’s cooperation in facilitating the development process.



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