In some cases, uses that do not require site design approvals can move straight to building permits or zoning clearances.
The developer or property owner attends a meeting with County staff to understand the development process and potential challenges. This is REQUIRED for all decisions that go before the Board of Supervisors. (See “Special Legislative Permissions”)

Pre-Application Meeting

Is the proposed development “by-right” or does it require legislative action?

By-Right
- By-right projects involve uses allowed in the current zoning district. They go through an administrative review process to ensure they comply with the County code.

Legislative Review

Does the proposed development require changing the zoning district to allow for different uses, densities or design regulations than those allowed in the current district?

Does the proposed development include one of the “special uses” listed in the Zoning Ordinance?

By-Right

Subdivision (new lots)
- Parcels are split or their lot boundaries are adjusted. This includes areas dedicated for roads or easements. County staff review and approved.

Site Design Planning

Site Development Review (new construction)
- County staff review proposed site plans that include building placement, parking, street designs, landscaping and utilities.

Water Protection Ordinance
- Larger projects with the potential to affect water resources must have approved plans to minimize their impact.

Architectural Review
- Buildings, signs, and landscaping are reviewed by the Architectural Review Board in certain areas that contain historic and cultural resources.

Approved Legislative Action

Subdivision (new lots)
- If so, County staff review proposed designs to ensure that they meet regulations and protect public health, safety and welfare.

Site Review Committee
- The Site Review Committee (made up of County staff from various departments) review initial site plans, preliminary subdivisions, and major amendments to plats.

Required Next Step

Building & Zoning Permits

Building, Engineering and Zoning Inspections staff review plans to ensure compliance with building code and approved plans.

Building Permit Issued
- Construction
- Final Inspection by County Staff

Clearances
- Commercial and Industrial businesses are subject to final review to ensure businesses can operate safely.
- Certificate of Occupancy (CO) Issued

Code Compliance
- County staff ensure that properties and businesses stay in compliance with County regulations over time.

Approved Legislative Action

Site Review Committee
- Zoning Map Amendments (ZMAs) change a property’s zoning district (otherwise known as a rezoning) and are approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Special Use Permits
- The Board of Supervisors grants special approvals for certain uses, which also impose conditions upon those approved uses.

Zoning Map Amendments

DISCLAIMER: This is an illustrative document that is meant to provide an overview of Albemarle County’s development review process. It is not to be construed as official interpretation of the County code, given that every proposed development is different and moves through the process accordingly.