



Community Matters Institute



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Your key to stormwater compliance!

**Date:** January 15, 2026

**To:** **The Palmer Lake Board of Trustees**

**Through:** Glen Smith, Interim Town Administrator, Town of Palmer Lake (TOPL)

**From:** **The DRT technical reviewers, Palmer Lake Development Review Team (DRT)**

Barb Cole, Consulting Planners, Community Matters Institute

Mark Morton, PE, GMS, Inc., Consulting Engineers,

John Chavez, Chavez Consulting Inc., LLC, Stormwater Consultant

**CC:** Erica Romero, Town Clerk, Town of Palmer Lake

Scott Krob, Town Attorney

**Re:** **DRT and Processing of Applications**

### **Summary**

Interim Town Administrator requested that we provide the following requested information to the Board of Trustees:

1. What is the Development Review Team (DRT) as referenced in the adopted Land Use Code (Title 17)?
2. What is the process for reviewing development applications?

### **What is the DRT, and why was it formed?**

- The Development Review Team (DRT) is defined in the recently adopted Land Use Code as follows:
  - *Development Review Team (DRT)* means the town staff, and those technical experts, including planning, engineering, legal, stormwater quality control, and other needed contracted specialists, whose role is to collaboratively review and evaluate land use applications, code compliance, utilities, stormwater, and other technical aspects for the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees.
- The DRT was formed for the following reasons:
  - To ensure a coordinated review and a unified response to applicants wishing to develop in TOPL.
  - To ensure that applicants do not engage in 'divide and conquer', whereby an applicant seeks responses from one DRT member without the knowledge or



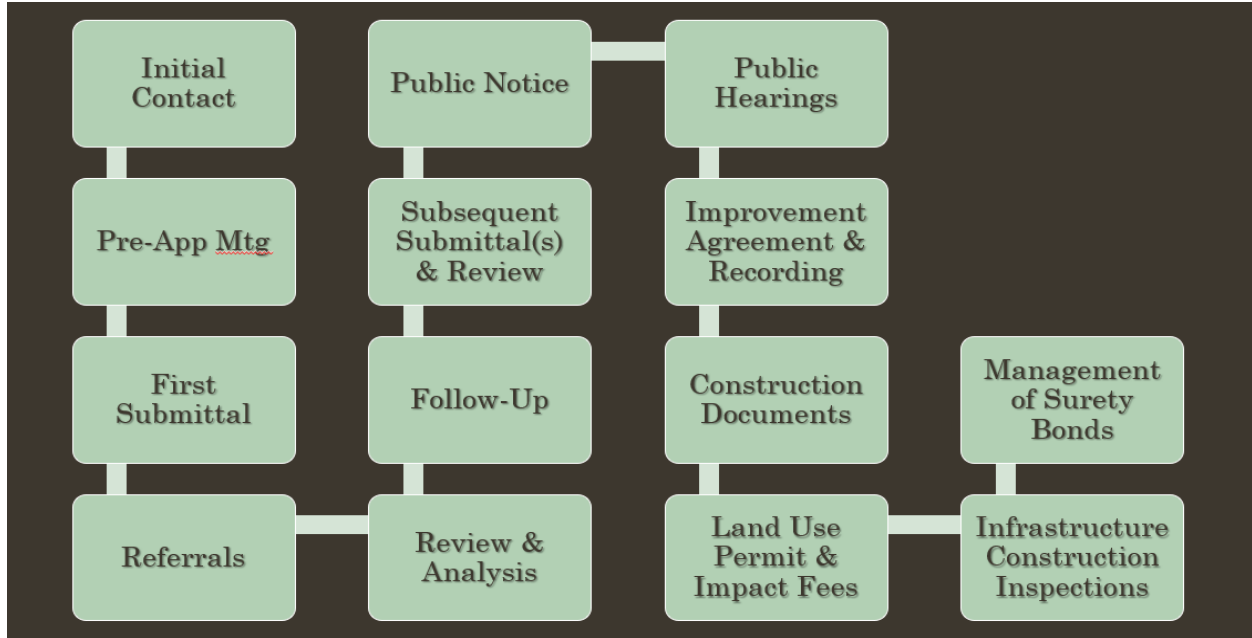
support of other professionals on the team. The DRT and its weekly meetings ensure clear, consistent direction from the technical experts through a single entity representing the TOPL.

- The DRT meets with Town Administration once a week, usually at 4 pm on Monday, for about 1 hour. This serves as a very efficient and cost-effective staff meeting. As a matter of routine course, DRT members do not meet independently of Town Administrative staff.
- Based on DRT meetings, there are memos and reports prepared either individually or collectively from the DRT members as applicable. The memos are provided to the applicant and the Planning Commission. Based on a positive Planning Commission's recommendation, these documents including requirements to address any conditions, are submitted to the Board of Trustees for their review and possible approval of a development application. The memos and attachments (if any) become part of the public record and are available upon request, if not available on the website as part of the packet materials for Planning Commission and Board of Trustees meetings and public hearings.
- The goal of the DRT is to submit a coordinated response to an applicant. This is extremely helpful when the applicant has not read or understood the adopted land use regulations or subdivision regulations, despite the checklists for all such applications and staff referring applicants to the checklists. Two examples include a coordinated response from the technical experts regarding the completeness review for the Buc-ees application and, more recently, for the town-owned Elephant Rock Property. *(A completeness review does not judge the application; its sole purpose is to ensure all required materials are submitted for both land use and subdivision. Applications are not processed or scheduled for public hearings unless all materials required by the Town's Municipal Code have been submitted.)*
- When there are several or complex projects and applications under review, an internal coordination document referred to as the 'Pending Projects' outline may be provided to the Team by CMI and the Town Administrator.

## **What is the Land Use and Subdivision Review Process?**

The new Subdivision Ordinance found in Title 16 was adopted in July 2024 by the Board of Trustees. The new Land Use Code found in Title 17 was adopted by the Board in August of 2025. These represent major rewrites of both titles in the Municipal Code. What is fundamentally different about these new titles is that the procedures for various land use applications are documented step by step. The new codes also have charts, particularly for subdivisions and Planned Developments, outlining the required submittal materials.

EXAMPLE: FULL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

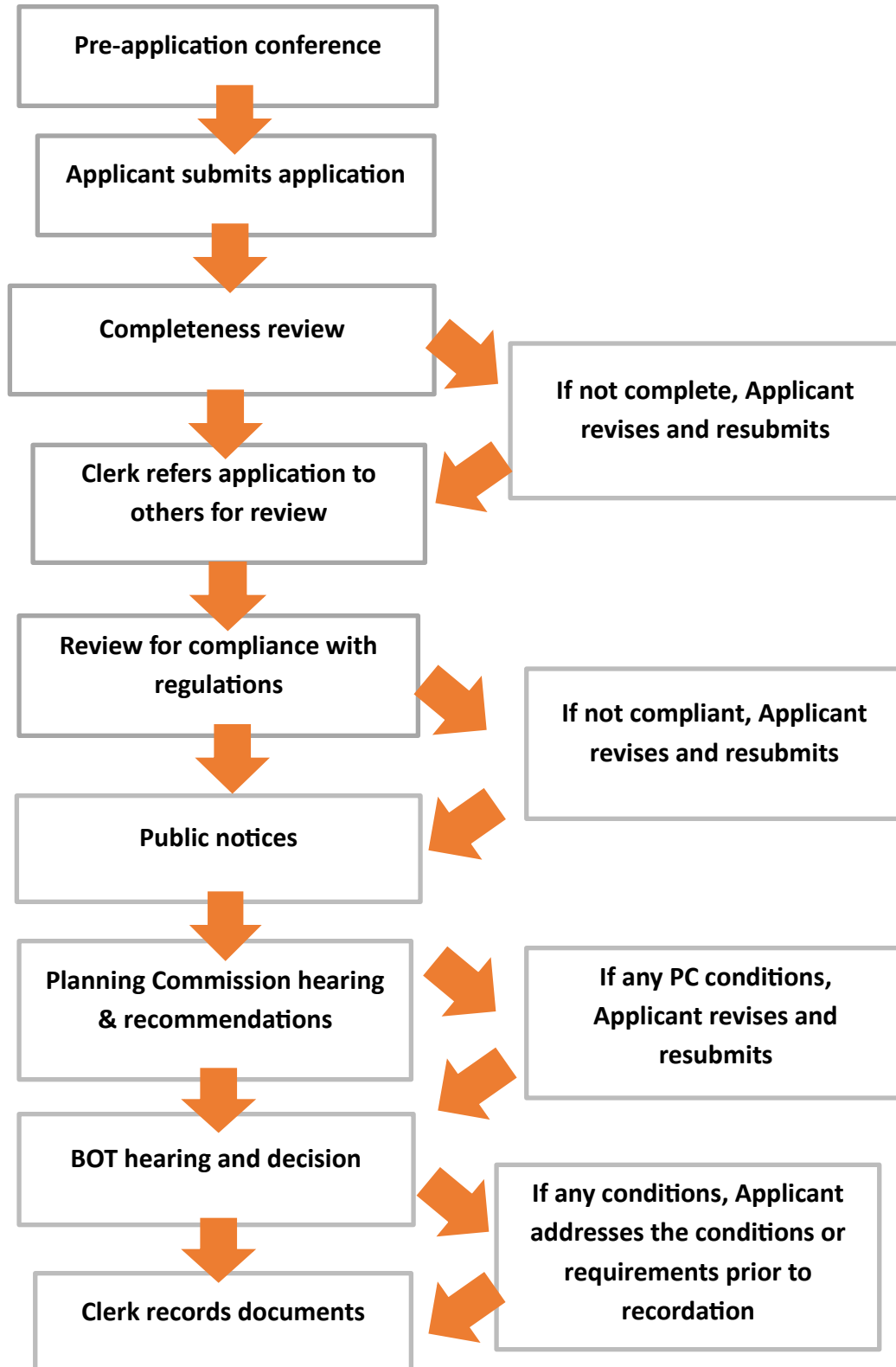


In Palmer Lake, the first step is a determination by the Town Administrator as to whether the application can be handled by Town Staff or if the application requires technical review by the DRT.

Any application requiring technical review by any member of the DRT requires the applicant to sign a cost reimbursement agreement. Most small towns do not have enough development applications nor budget to hire full-time or even part-time technical staff (engineer and planner). The system currently used by the TOPL ensures that almost all development review costs are borne by the applicant.

The other code provision added in 2024 was the requirement for a completeness review. This is conducted by either CMI (land use) or GMS (subdivision). No applicant is allowed to move forward, nor are any applications sent out for referral or set for public hearings, until the application is deemed complete. The completeness review does not judge the merit or the application, nor compliance with the code; it simply reviews the application materials to determine if all required materials have been submitted. Once deemed complete, the review process can commence.

Another unusual review procedure in TOPL, and other municipalities in El Paso County, is that the Pike Peak Regional Building Department will not review a building permit application unless the municipality has issued a certificate of zoning compliance. **(17.1.130 Certificate of zoning compliance.)** The following chart is used for internal processing.





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Please let the Interim Town Administrator know if you have further questions about the development review process or the role of the DRT.

We are in the process of finalizing additional flow charts that outline the steps for review by both the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees, which we hope to have the DRT and staff review, and then these charts and diagrams will be vetted by the Planning Commission.