



What is a Site Plan?

Most Michigan communities have some form of site plan review. The State of Michigan "*Township Zoning Act*" defines the site plan as "*the documents and drawings specified in the zoning ordinance necessary to insure that the proposed land use or activity is in compliance with local ordinance, and state and federal statutes.*"

The Benefits of Site Plan Review (SPR)

The whole point of reviewing a site plan is to make sure the site functions well and is attractive and safe for the public. Poorly designed sites that are cramped, inconvenient, unsafe and unattractive can hurt a business and impact on neighboring properties. It can also make a site more difficult to sell, lease or reuse. When reviewing a site plan, reviewers imagine themselves on the site and visualize such things as: how vehicles and people will circulate on the site, how the rainwater will set or run off the site, where utilities will connect, how emergency vehicles will access the site, and how the development will impact its neighbors.

What Kind of Development Needs Site Plan Review?

All land uses, new construction and uses, or additions to existing buildings (in excess of 25% of the gross floor area of the main building) in Mobile Home Parks, Commercial and Industrial Districts need site plan, review and approval before a building permit can be issued. Exceptions are single family dwellings, temporary buildings and uses and accessory uses or structures. All special land uses in any zoning district also require site plan review. Any use which does not specifically require site plan review is subject to review by the Zoning Administrator to ensure that Zoning Ordinance requirements are met.

The SPR Process

1. The process starts with the Zoning Administrator, who coordinates with other departments and consultants.
2. The Zoning Administrator takes the application and appropriate fees. All SPR applications must be filled out completely and accurately by the applicant in order to be accepted. Applications must be signed by the owner of the property, unless an applicant has a signed agreement with the owner giving them permission to apply for zoning approvals. Applications must be accompanied by ten copies of a complete site plan. A site plan review application must be accompanied by a \$ ___ fee.
3. The site plan is circulated for review, and the Planning Commission shall either approve or disapprove the site plan within sixty (60) days of its submittal.
4. The Planning Commission shall review the site plan and make recommendations to the applicant at their regular meeting, based on the purposes, objectives and requirements of the Township's Zoning Ordinance. If major changes are needed to the plan, the Planning Commission will need to review it again. If the plan is approved or only needs minor changes (notes will be made on the plan), it will be approved with conditions. A final site plan will be signed by the applicant and Township representative. An approved site plan will be used as a governing document for the development.

5. Once the site plan gets final approval, it's good for 12 months from that date. If no construction has taken place or if no substantial steps have been taken to begin construction within the one year period the approval shall be null and void.

What Should the Site Plan Include?

Sections 18.01, 18.02 and Article 17 of the Zoning Ordinance address walls and fences, greenbelts and screening, signs and site plan review (respectively). Copies of these sections of the ordinance are available from the Zoning Administrator, 490 Quarterline Road, P.O. Box 625, Newaygo, MI 49337, 231-652-6763. The full zoning ordinance can also be obtained there or found on our website www.brookstownship.org by selecting "Township Ordinances" and following the instructions there.

To help sift through the technical language more quickly, below is an outline of the Township's requirements under site plan review. **They are in a checklist form so that items can be checked off when addressed.**

Basic Information

The site plan needs to be accurate, reproducible, and at a scale of not more than 1 inch = 20 feet for a site of less than 3 total acres, 1 inch=50 feet for sites that have between 3 to 10 acres, and not more than 1 inch = 100 feet for a site of ten acres or more total acres. All drawings must be submitted on a twenty-four by thirty-six inch (24 in. x 36 in.) sheet size.

Every site plan should have "the basics" so anyone reviewing it can understand where the site is and what is being proposed. The sooner the Planning Commission gets oriented, the quicker and easier the review will be. The basics include such things as:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Project Name, if any | <input type="checkbox"/> Dates of submission and any revisions to the plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any proposed deed restrictions | <input type="checkbox"/> Scale and north arrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name, address, phone number of the applicant | <input type="checkbox"/> Locational diagram of the site drawn to scale |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name, address, phone number & seal of the site plan preparer | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal description of the subject property |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property name, address and legal description | <input type="checkbox"/> Net acreage (minus rights-of-way) and total acreage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location sketch drawn to scale showing the relationship of the proposed use to the area and major landmarks within one-half mile. | <input type="checkbox"/> Location and dimensions of proposed and/or existing lot lines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All required building setbacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Location, all dimensions and use of all on-site existing and proposed buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abutting roads, streets, alleys and easements- the location and pavement width and right-of-way width of all abutting roads, streets, alleys and easements. | <input type="checkbox"/> Properties within 300 feet – Existing plats, buildings, ownership, and zoning of adjoining properties. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Size and location of all utilities and infrastructure, including drainage, utility poles, electric, telephone, water, sewer, gas. | <input type="checkbox"/> Location of accessory structures, buildings and uses (such as flagpoles, sheds, light poles, generators, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Topography at contour intervals of not less than two feet. * | * For multiple family and mobile home developments with an average slope site of zero to ten percent, contour intervals must be shown at 2 foot intervals. If the average slope of site is over 10 percent, contours must be shown at 5 foot intervals. |

District Requirements

Each zoning district has basic dimensional requirements to check. Requirements for each zoning district are listed Article IV (Schedule of Regulations) of the Zoning Ordinance.

- Minimum lot size: _____
- Front Yard Setback: _____
- Side Yard Setback: _____
- Rear Yard Setback: _____
- Minimum lot width: _____
- Maximum building height: _____
- Percentage of lot coverage: _____

Development Data

SPR regulations enable the Zoning Administrator to ask for a variety of information to facilitate review. It's best to meet with Township representatives ahead of time, if possible, in order to help streamline the process. Items that are necessary include (ordinance section numbers are included for reference where applicable):

Engineering and Utility Information

- Size and location of all existing utilities, including utility poles, drainage, telephone, electric, water, sewer, gas, etc. Proposed connections to public sewer or water supply systems. (Section 17.03, I)
- The size and location of all surface water drainage facilities.
- The site will be adequately served by necessary improvements, including but not limited to sewage collection and treatment, potable water supply, storm drainage, lighting, roads and parking. Storm drainage measures also must be followed as outlined in standards. (Section 17.05, C 1-5)

Parking, Access and Circulation

- That the movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic within the site and in relation to access streets will be safe and convenient. (Section 17.05, A.)
- The location and dimensions of all existing drives, sidewalks, curb openings, signs, exterior lighting, curbing, parking areas (with dimensions of a typical parking space), unloading areas, recreation areas, common use areas, and areas which have been conveyed for public use and purpose. (Section 17.03, D)
- The location and pavement width and right-of-way width of all abutting roads, streets, alleys, and easements. (Section 17.03, E.)

Natural features, Landscaping, Screening, Lighting and Signs

- Adequate information concerning soils, groundwater, water table, and the impact of the proposed activities on each. (Section 17.03, R.)
- The location of all proposed landscaping and the location, height, and types of fences and walls. See Article 18-Landscaping, Buffering, Walls and Fences. (Section 17.03, T.)
- Existing mature trees shall be retained and incorporated into the project design where feasible. Removal of mature trees of twelve inch (12 inch) caliper or greater will be discouraged. (Section 17.07, B.)

- The landscape shall be preserved in its natural state, as much as practical, by removing only those areas of vegetation or making those alterations to the topography which are reasonably necessary to develop the site in accordance with the requirements of the Brooks Township Ordinance. The Planning Commission or Township Board may require that landscaping, buffers, and/or greenbelts be preserved and/or provided to ensure that proposed uses will be adequately buffered from one another and from surrounding public and private property. (Section 17.07, C.)
- Areas of natural drainage such as swales, wetlands, ponds or swamps shall be protected from grading activity and preserved as much as practical in their natural state to provide areas for natural habitat preserve drainage patterns and maintain the natural characteristics of the land. (Section 17.07, D.)
- Where known, groundwater flow patterns shall not be interrupted. (Section 17.07, E.)

Building Developments

- Proposed building sites and lots with dimensions; parking areas including landscaping and drives; streets and street right-of-way widths; setback lines; distance between buildings and lines; location of sewers and water mains; permanent open spaces; types, size, and locations of dwellings to be erected (single-family, two-family, multiple-unit buildings); proposed commercial structures, if any, including parking areas and floor area devoted to business use. (Section 17.03, L)
- The height of all existing and proposed buildings and structures shall be shown. (Section 17.03, M.)
- A proposed schedule of land area by use category, building ground coverage, required lot area of the zoning district for each use, and proposed lot areas and preserved open space per lot for the development and areas to be conveyed for public use and purpose. (Section 17.03, N.)
- Architectural sketches showing typical building features and floor areas. (Section 17.03, O.)
- Buildings constructed within either the Lakefront Overlay District, Article IX, or the River and Tributary Overlay District, Article X, have additional setbacks and standards that apply.

Helpful Hints

1. Of course, if all the information and details necessary are provided on the site plan as originally submitted, and if the plan meets all ordinance requirements, approval can be received very quickly. The Township likes to be able to say “yes!” to a job well done.
2. Remember, the site plan is a contract with the community and should not leave out information. Site plan notes assuring the Planning Commission that you know what your responsibilities are help a speedy approval. For example, the ordinance requires that existing trees be preserved if practical. Less tree removal saves you time, money and may reduce landscaping requirements. It also makes the site more attractive and helps storm water runoff. If you have noted the trees on site, also note which ones are going “to be protected”.

Other Approvals

Sometimes developments are in a floodplain or they may involve altering a wetland. These activities fall under state and/or federal law and often need state level permits. Site Plan approval is often conditioned upon getting these other approvals. Copies of such approvals should be provided for the project file.

