



Royal Oak Township Development Handbook 2024

Introduction

Opening Statement

Royal Oak Township wants to encourage investment and economic development. The Royal Oak Township Development Handbook is intended to promote investment by making the development process simple and clear for business owners and prospective investors. In this Handbook, we:

1. Assemble the relevant laws, documents, and applications that are necessary to develop a project in Royal Oak Township into a single source that is easy to understand.
2. Introduce the various people or groups involved in the process and identify when their involvement is needed.
3. Share local, county, and state-level programs that can help with project funding.

How to Use this Document

This Handbook is written to support people navigating the real estate development process, whether first-time developers or seasoned developers new to the Township. This guide is general, and investors are still responsible for reviewing local laws and seeking professional advice from Township staff, other government entities, and outside professionals. Each development project is unique and may require slight changes to the general process. Contact information, website links, and related documents are linked throughout the document. [Royal Oak Township's website](#) has accessible forms and documents, program descriptions, and links to outside sources that would be helpful for investors, developers, and new business owners.

Acknowledgments

This document was created for Royal Oak Charter Township by a team of University of Michigan Master of Urban and Regional Planning students: Brooklyn Peppo, Marcellous Weaver, Nate Fisher, and Russell Lin. The team would like to thank Professors Larissa Larsen and Julie Steiff, and McKenna consultants Nani Wolf and Donovan Smith for their support on this handbook.

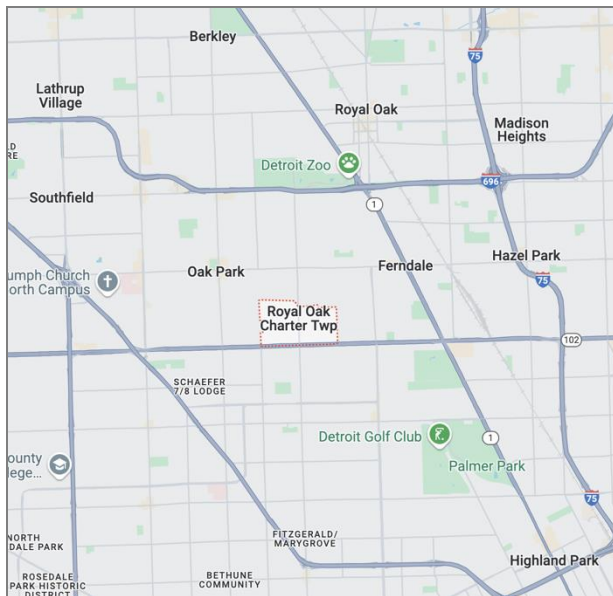
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1 | Why develop in Royal Oak Township?



About Royal Oak Township

Royal Oak Township is a charming community with a rich history. Located on the southern border of Oakland County, the Township is situated north of Detroit, west of Ferndale, and south and east of Oak Park. Within just 0.55 square miles, the township includes a unique mix of high-, medium-, and low-density residential, commercial, and industrial uses. The Township is home to approximately 2,400 residents and dozens of small, medium, and large businesses.¹ The Township is proud of its historically African American heritage and eager to welcome a new wave of investment to help revitalize pockets of vacant or underutilized land, particularly along the bustling Eight Mile Road corridor.



¹ (US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022)

Strategically Located

Royal Oak Township benefits from excellent connectivity as it’s centrally located within Metro Detroit and close to major traffic routes. The township is strategically located near M-102 (Eight Mile Road), M-10, I-696, and I-75, which provide convenient access to the entire region. Over 2.3M people live within a 30-minute drive to Royal Oak Township, providing a robust market size for your development project.² This strategic location in Southeast Michigan positions Royal Oak Township as an attractive community for new investments, offering logistical advantages and ensuring seamless connectivity with the surrounding region.

The Township is also located close to downtown Ferndale and Royal Oak, with many shopping and dining options within a five-minute drive or 15-minute bicycle ride.

Affordable

Royal Oak Township is one of the most affordable communities for development in Oakland County. As the only township in Southern Oakland County, it has significantly lower property tax rates than neighboring cities. The Township also has lower land values, providing opportunities for considerable savings.

Municipality	Millage Rate ^{3,4}				Example: Annual Property Taxes for a \$200K Residence
	Principal Residence	Non-Homestead	Industrial	Commercial	
Royal Oak Twp	48	66	32	44	\$4,800
City of Ferndale	51-60	69-78	43-53	55-65	\$5,100- \$6,000

² (Social Explorer 2024)

³ The millage rate is the annual taxes per 1000 dollars of taxable property value

⁴ Note: Tax rates vary depending on the school district where the property is located

City of Oak Park	54-57	72-75	48-51	60-63	\$5,400 - \$5,700
City of Detroit	69	86	63	74	\$6,900

Source: State of Michigan 2023 Millage Rates

Development-Ready

Royal Oak Township is ready for development. The Township has worked to rezone prospective development sites for flexible and attractive uses. The Township's size enables it to have a high focus on each project within its boundaries. Additionally, Oakland County has a robust [business development department](#) eager to support you.

Amenity-Rich

Royal Oak Township is rich with community amenities, making it a great place to invest.

These amenities include:

- **Walkable neighborhoods** with strong sidewalk infrastructure
- **Multiple chain grocery stores** located within the Township (Kroger, Aldi)
- **Healthcare facilities** located within the Township (Henry Ford)
- **High-quality school systems** (Ferndale Schools, Oak Park Schools, & Tri-County Ed)



Example of Royal Oak Township's sidewalk infrastructure.

Source: McKenna



Wayfinding to the Township
Library | Source: McKenna

2 | When to Use This Guide?

People engage in real estate development for many reasons. No matter what kind of development you want to pursue, this Handbook is designed to help you. Use the information below to jump to the relevant chapter for your project.

2.1 Opening a New Business in an Existing Building

Please reference Chapter 7: Small Business Resources and Chapter 11: Business Licensing Process.

2.2 Purchasing a Commercial Building

If you are purchasing an existing building, please follow the Township’s permitting process in Chapter 11.

2.3 Engaging in Adaptive Reuse

In an adaptive reuse project, a developer modifies an existing building to serve a new purpose. Adaptive reuse implies a transformation of use. For example, vacant office buildings have become residential buildings, industrial warehouses have become co-workspaces, and so on.



Royal Oak Township Recreation Center
Source: Royal Oak Township

If you are interested in an adaptive reuse project, please reach out to the Township Planner to discuss sites that are currently available, or check out the most recent Master Plan. Review Chapter 9: Development Process for more information.

2.4 Constructing a New Building

When constructing a new building, be sure to refer to the Township's development process in [Chapter 9](#).

2.5 Rehabbing or Building a Home

While you may encounter financial barriers to rehabbing or building new homes, there are many benefits such as improving community value, building personal wealth, and achieving a better quality of life. Below are resources to assist current or future homeowners in rehabbing residential properties:

- [Michigan Homeowner Repair and Rehabilitation Assistance](#)
- [Home Improvement Loans for an Energy-modern Home](#)
- New construction homes (single-family or duplex) are processed directly through the Building Department. Refer to [Chapter 10.2](#) for information on the process.
- Purchasing Township-owned property
 - If you are interested in purchasing and developing Township property, please reach Donovan Smith at (248) 596-0920 or email dsmith@mcka.com
- [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services \(MDHHS\) State Emergency Relief](#)
- [Do It Yourself Guide to Rehabbing Single-family Homes](#)

3 | Key Contact Information

Your development project will require approval from different departments and commissions before, during, and after construction. Contact the following departments with any questions. Royal Oak Township is here to help!

Department Name	Key Contact	Telephone	Email
Supervisor's Office	Donna Squalls	248-542-7540	supervisor@royaloaktwp.com
Building Department	Building Clerk	248-965-3582	bldgadmin@royaloaktwp.com
Township Clerk	Gwendolyn Turner	248-547-9804	gturner@royaloaktwp.com
Planning and Zoning Department	Donovan Smith (McKenna Associates)	248-596-0920	dsmith@mcka.com
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)	Anita Singh, Permit Coordinator	517-281-2615	SinghA3@Michigan.gov
Oakland County Water and Sewer	N/A	248-858-0958	wrc@oakgov.com
Road Commission for Oakland County	N/A	248-858-4835	permits@rcoc.org

4 | Key Documents

The Township's goals, laws, and development processes are outlined in several documents, summarized below. All of them can be found on the [Planning & Building Department website](#).

Document	Purpose
Master Plan	The Township's vision guide for future growth and development. Potential small business owners and developers should review it to understand how their development plans fit into the Township's vision and goals.
Zoning Map	A Township map that displays which zoning districts apply to specific parcels. See Chapter 5 for more information.
Township Code of Ordinances	The comprehensive set of laws that govern the Township. It includes key information related to zoning, permitting, and construction.
Residential Building Design Standards	A set of architectural design requirements for single-family homes. Found in Section 32-621 of the Zoning Code.
Construction Permits	Various applications for building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits.
Planning Applications	Various applications for site plans, special land use, rezonings, or variances.

5 | How Land is Regulated

5.1 Defining Land Use

“Land use” is a term used to describe the activities that take place on a property. For example, the land use of a home would be “Residential,” while the land use of a shoe store would be “Retail.” Municipalities control where different land uses can be located to ensure that two conflicting land uses do not end up next to each other. For example, a community would not want a waste incinerator next to a school or residential area.

Communities regulate land use through a legal process called zoning. In Royal Oak Township, these land use regulations are documented in its Zoning Ordinance, which consists of a map as well as text. The Township’s Zoning Map aims to promote a variety of land uses while minimizing conflicts between neighbors. Each property (commonly referred to as a “parcel”) is assigned to one of 11 zoning districts, which dictate what uses are allowed on that parcel. See below for the full list of zoning classifications and their general definitions.

For more information on each zoning district, including the permitted uses in each district, please see [Chapter 32, Article III](#) of the Zoning Ordinance.

5.2 Royal Oak Township Zoning Districts

Zoning District	Definition (Intent)
R-1A and R-1B One Family Residential	“To provide areas of the township for the construction and continued use of single-family dwellings within stable neighborhoods.” (<i>Article III, Division 2</i>)
R-M Multiple Family Residential	“To address the varied housing needs of the community by providing locations for development of multiple-family housing and other housing that meets special needs at a higher density than is permitted in the single-family districts.” (<i>Article III, Division 3</i>)

Zoning District	Definition (Intent)
C-1 Neighborhood Business	“For the convenience of persons residing in adjacent residential areas and is intended to permit only such uses which satisfy the limited shopping and services needs of these residents. Commercial development in this district offers a less intensive range of goods and services than uses permitted in the C-2 district and the C-3 districts.” <i>(Article III, Division 5)</i>
C-2 Community Business	“The intent of the C-2 Community Business District is to provide for commercial development that offers a broad range of goods and services. Uses permitted in the C-2 district are generally intended to be less intensive than those permitted in the C-3 district but provide for uses serving the entire community rather than being limited to services for a localized neighborhood like the C-1 district.” <i>(Article III, Division 6)</i>
C-3 General Business	“To provide for intensive commercial development. The permitted business uses in the C-3 district typically exhibits one or more of the following characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer a broad range of goods and services, including both comparison and convenience goods and services. 2. The demand market for businesses include[s] the general township population, residents in surrounding communities, and the people in transit; 3. Are pedestrian-oriented, rather than auto-oriented; and 4. Are generally appropriate for unified development due to their size, location relative to each other and to Eight Mile Boulevard, and due to their deep and narrow configurations.” <i>(Article III, Division 7)</i>
O-1 Office	“To accommodate various types of administrative and professional office uses, as well as certain related personal service businesses. These uses can serve as transitional uses between more intensive land uses and less intensive residential uses.” <i>(Article III, Division 4)</i>

Zoning District	Definition (Intent)
M-1 Industrial Park	“To provide locations for development within a planned industrial park subdivision on independent parcels. It is intended that permitted activities or operations produce no external impacts that are detrimental in any way to other uses in the district or to properties in adjoining districts. Permitted uses should be compatible with nearby residential or commercial uses.” <i>(Article III, Division 8)</i>

<p>M-2 Light Industrial</p>	<p>“To provide locations for industrial development on independent parcels. It is intended that permitted activities or operations produce no external impacts that are detrimental in any way to other uses in the district or to properties in adjoining districts. Permitted uses should be compatible with nearby residential, commercial, and industrial uses.” <i>(Article III, Division 9)</i></p>
<p>PP Public Property</p>	<p>“To accommodate public areas available to the residents and businesses of the township. This district provides areas for off-street parking as an incidental use to an abutting commercial, office, or industrial use and preserves areas of dedicated open space.” <i>(Article III, Division 11)</i></p>
<p>PD Planned Development</p>	<p>“To permit planned development for the purposes of: (1) Encouraging innovation in land use planning and development; (2) Achieving a higher quality of development than would otherwise be achieved; (3) Encouraging assembly of lots and redevelopment of outdated commercial corridors; (4) Encouraging infill development on sites that would be difficult to develop according to conventional standards because of the shape, size, abutting development, accessibility, or other features of the site; (5) Providing enhanced housing, employment, and shopping opportunities; (6) Providing a development framework that promotes appropriate business activity that significantly improves the economic viability of the township; (7) Ensuring compatibility of design and function between neighboring properties; (8) Encouraging development that is consistent with the township's master plan.” <i>(Article III, Division 10)</i></p>

The latest map can be found on [the Planning & Building website](#).

6 | Boards and Commissions

You will need to meet with different government bodies throughout the development process, as detailed later in this guide (see Chapter 9). Below are the relevant bodies and their regular meeting information. Please check the meeting schedule found on the Township's [homepage](#) to confirm the dates and times are still correct.

Board/Commission	Responsibilities	Meeting Date / Time / Location
Board of Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves special use applications • Approves rezonings • Makes changes to the Zoning Ordinance • Executes purchase agreement and land sales of Township-owned property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Thursday of Month • 6:30 pm • 21131 Garden Lane Ferndale, MI 48220 (Gymnasium)
Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves site plan applications • Reviews and tentatively approves special use permits • Reviews rezonings • Makes recommendations on changes to the Zoning Ordinance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Tuesday of Month • 6:30 pm • 21131 Garden Lane, Ferndale, MI 48220 (Room 210)
Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interprets and grants variances from provisions of the Zoning Ordinance • Conducts appeals hearings on specific types of disputes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Tuesday of Month (as needed) • 5:30 pm • 21131 Garden Lane, Ferndale, MI 48220 (Room 210)

7 | Resources for Starting and Growing a Small Business

Although this Handbook concentrates on the pre-development and development stages of projects, it's also important to know how to start your own business. Below, you'll find additional educational information to help you start, fund, and effectively manage a small or medium-sized business in Royal Oak Township.

7.1 Royal Oak Township

- [Seven-Step Guide to Open a Business in Royal Oak Township](#)
- The [Oakland County website](#) provides resources and personalized assistance to aid in retaining, expanding, and launching a new business in Oakland County. These include:
 - [Business Development Services](#)
 - [Business Plan Template and Guide](#)
 - [Marketing Plan](#)

7.2 Michigan

- [Michigan Economic Development Corporation](#) (MEDC) offers resources and tailored support to help you start a new business in the State of Michigan, including:
 - [Small Business Resources and Assistance](#)
 - [Michigan Small Business Development Center's Guide to Starting A New Business](#)
 - Connections to small business leaders and organizations
 - Information about in-state financing incentives
 - **For developers:** [MiPlace's Developer Toolkit](#) and [Build MI Community Grant Initiative](#)

8 | Financial Incentives for Development and Workforce Programs

8.1 Royal Oak Township

If you are looking to purchase land currently owned by the Township, please contact [Donovan Smith](#) at the Planning Department. Land inquiries of township-owned land may be sold at a discounted rate.

8.2 Oakland County

[Oakland County Brownfield Program](#)

8.3 MEDC

MEDC's [Building Strong Communities](#)

[Michigan Community Revitalization Program \(MCRP\)](#)

8.4 Workforce Programs

[Michigan Works! Association](#)

[Michigan Economic Development Corporation \(MEDC\) Small Business Resources](#)

9 | The Pre-Development Process (Before Purchasing)

9.1 Do Your Homework

As you consider developing in Royal Oak Township, be sure to follow these key steps:

1. Search for Sites that Fit Your Concept

Understand the type and goal of the development project(s) you or your organization plan to complete. Is the project for-profit or community-driven? Are you looking to rehab a property or occupy a structure in good condition?

2. Contact the Owner and Visit the Site

Learn about the history of the property, its rent roll, property taxes, current conditions, purchase price, yearly expenses, etc.

3. Verify Current Zoning

- a. Before proceeding with any project, contact the Planning Department via phone or email to ensure that your intended structure or use complies with local laws (the Royal Oak Township Zoning Ordinance). You can request a Zoning Compliance letter from the Township, which will outline the relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance and confirm whether your proposed land use is permissible.
- b. Contact Donovan Smith at (248) 596-0920 or email dsmith@mcka.com to get more information on zoning compliance.

4. Conduct Background Research

- a. Title Search: A title search is generally performed by a title company, which will provide all legal documents associated with the property history (master deed, liens, easements, etc.).

- b. Local Records: Contact Royal Oak Township Hall to obtain available records of that property from the Planning and Building Departments to learn more about the property's history.
- c. County Records: Visit the Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds Office (1200 North Telegraph Road Building 12E Pontiac, MI 48341) to obtain the most recent records for the property, past sales, and a recent survey of the property. You may also contact Oakland County's Equalization Division for all assessment-related questions.

5. Assemble your Development Team

- a. As a developer, you'll juggle multiple roles, such as strategist, tactician, logician, and financier. Each of these responsibilities demands focus, creativity, problem-solving skills, and leadership qualities.
- b. To navigate the complexities of development, you need a team of experts to support you throughout the process. You will be the leader, but your team will work to help implement the various components of your plan.
- c. While each parcel and project may call for different team members, an engineer always plays a prominent role, as well as an architect, who can draw up plans for a development project.
- d. If you do not have an architect or engineer on your team already, get familiar with local real estate and construction companies. Check out [LinkedIn](#) or resources like Home Advisor's "[How to Hire an Architect](#)." You can also ask your municipality and/or other developers in the area for referrals (a list of firms that have submitted projects over the last year).
- e. As you assemble your team, tap into your network of community contacts, colleagues, and peers. Ask the following questions of prospective team members: 1) Is your type of project within their area of expertise? 2) What is their track record? 3) Are they certified? 4) Are they cost-effective?

9.2 Development Team

Please see the table below, which describes the team members you need to make your project a reality. Please note the developer is responsible for hiring all team members.

Team Member	Role
Owner/Developer	Creates the project vision and identifies the target market. Assembles and manages team members as they perform their duties.
Civil Engineer	Designs the plans for grading, soil management, and utilities (i.e., roads, stormwater, water, and waste-water management plans)
Realtor/Broker	Represents the buyer (you) in transactions. Conducts market research, pursues leads, negotiates deals, handles contracts and titles, and ensures compliance with laws.
Attorney	Handles legal issues associated with the development. Protects property rights and assists in processing entitlements.
Designer/Architect	Designs the building plans for your development. Often prepares the concept plan in the early stages of the project.
Construction Expert	Provides expertise in budgeting, managing timelines, and ensuring compliance with regulations and safety codes.
Lender	Provides financing for the project. (A single project can involve multiple lenders.)
Community	Provides insight on current needs/wants that the developer can fulfill.
Environmental Specialist	Conducts environmental impact assessment to determine if there is any contamination on the site. An unsatisfactory environmental impact report could help you decide not to purchase an unsuitable parcel.
Landscape Architect	Designs the landscaping plan for your development. Effective landscaping may be your most important sales tool.

9.3 Due Diligence (usually 60-90 days)

1. Purchase Agreement

- a. Before you buy a property, you'll often sign a Purchase Agreement. This document is a contract that lays out the terms of the sale between you (the buyer) and the seller. It includes information like the property address and price, and it outlines any conditions that need to be met before the sale is final. The Purchase Agreement also specifies the rights and obligations of the buyer and seller.
- b. Every Purchase Agreement includes a *due diligence* period. Due diligence is the process of investigating the physical and financial condition (liens or property taxes) of the property to gather as much information as possible before deciding to purchase.

2. “Pre-Application” Meeting with Township Representatives

- a. You can meet with the Township Planner, Township Engineer, Building Clerk, and Planning Commission for free before starting your project. This meeting will help you identify any roadblocks before you get started. For smaller projects, you can simply meet with the Township Planner and Building Clerk.

3. Environmental Assessment of the Property

- a. If the property is contaminated, you will need an environmental assessment. To test the property for contamination, you will need the consent of the property owner. If they are supportive of this process, they will help and/or authorize you to test the property to determine the level of contamination on the site and even allow you to carry out a topographic survey. If they are less supportive, they will allow you to test the property, but will likely impose a stricter timeline for you to complete your testing within the due diligence timeframe. This might prevent you from carrying out a more comprehensive environmental assessment of the property.
- b. To perform an environmental assessment, you will need to contract an

outside company by researching Phase 1 Environmental Assessment companies online.

4. Having the Property Surveyed

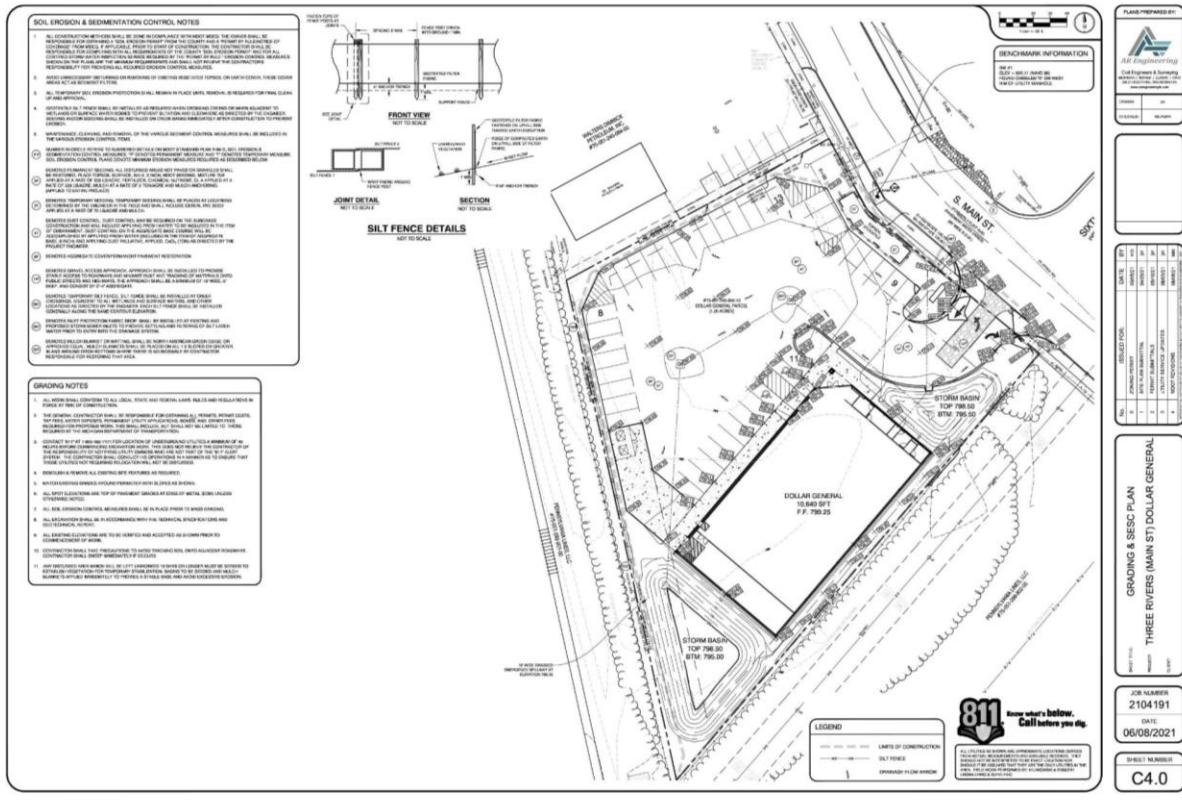
- a. To create a site plan, you will need a survey of the property. Check with the [Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds](#) to see if a current survey already exists. If not, you will have to hire a licensed and insured surveyor to examine the property. Michigan has a professional society for land surveyors. You can look for certified surveyors on the [National Society of Professional Surveyors website](#). You can also ask local real estate agents for their recommendations.

10 | The Development Process

10.1 Introduction to Development

A site plan is the core component of any new construction project. Developing a site plan is necessary to ensure that the proposed changes align with existing uses and benefit the community and businesses. A site plan is a detailed document that outlines the current conditions of your site and your planned modifications. It typically includes a scaled map of the property showing the following (plus more):

- Property lines
- Location of existing trees and vegetation
- Existing and proposed buildings
- Driveway entry and exit locations, roadways, and sidewalks
- Utility poles and power lines
- Fencing
- Other on-site structures, such as sheds, generators, etc.



An example site retail site plan by the City of Three Rivers, MI | Source: Three Rivers Michigan

In addition to the site plan, your project may require some additional steps, as covered in Section 9.1a of this guide.

The table below outlines the responsibilities of different boards, commissions, and individuals who will evaluate your application.

Plan	Board of Trustees	Planning Commission	Zoning Board of Appeals	Township Staff
Site Plan (regular)	-	Approves/Denies	-	Recommends
Site Plan (minor)	-	-	-	Approves/Denies

Rezoning and Conditional Rezoning	Approves/Denies	Recommends	-	Recommends
Special Land Use	Approves/Denies*	Approves/Denies*	-	Recommends
Variances/Appeals	-	-	Approves/Denies	Recommends
Planned Development	Approves/Denies	Recommends	-	Recommends
Zoning Compliance Verification	-	-	-	Approves/Denies

** If the Board of Trustees has not made a decision within 30 calendar days, the Planning Commission's decision will be final.*

10.1a Site Plan Review

** This is a summary of the process and should not be relied upon exclusively for your decision-making. For comprehensive information, please consult the [online ordinance](#), or reach out to the Township directly.*

A site plan review is required prior to construction/occupancy when a project involves:

- Construction of any new structure.
- Change in an existing use of land or structure that affects any requirement.
- Any other building or development activities, such as:
 - Alteration to structure to create additional floor space for buildings other than single-family dwellings.
- Any development that, if approved, would create shared access, parking, open space, or similar features. This includes projects like single-family site condominiums, where one parcel is divided to allow multiple detached single-family homes.
- Development of non-single-family residential uses in single-family districts.
- Any change in land use or change in the use of a structure could affect compliance with the current standards.
- The development or construction of any accessory uses or structures, except for uses or structures that are accessory to a single-family dwelling.

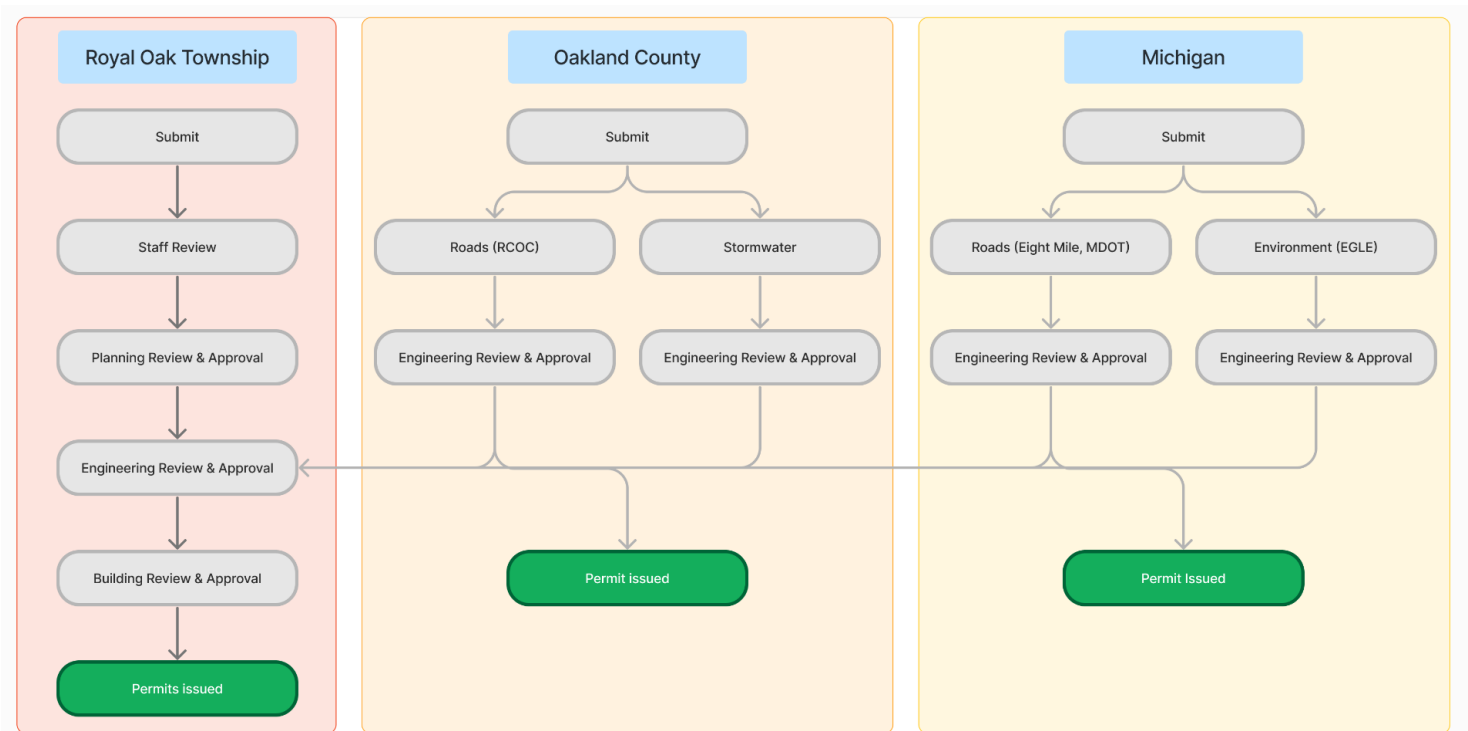
A site plan is not needed for the following (although a Zoning or Building Department permit may still be required):

- Construction, moving or relating, or other structurally altering a single- or two-family home, including any accessory structures.
- Removing soil.
- A change in the ownership of land or a structure.
- A change in the existing use of a structure to a new, but similar use is allowed in the zoning district, provided that no modification to the site is proposed.

County and State Involvement

Some projects must be reviewed by the County and or State. The Township Planner and Engineer will advise you during your pre-application meeting on whether you need to reach out to the County and State. See the diagram below for an overview of the Township, County, and State site plan approval process, which usually occurs simultaneously.

The Overall Site Plan Review Process



10.2 Township Process - Site Plan Review

Types of Site Plan Review

There are two types of site plan review in Royal Oak Township: **regular** and **minor**. Regular site plan review follows the flow chart process outlined below, and regular site plans are always reviewed by the Planning Commission. Minor site plan review is expedited, and minor site plans may be reviewed by Planning and Building Department staff only.

The following types of projects are eligible for **minor** site plan review:

- An addition to an existing building that increases or decreases the floor space by less than 25% of the existing total floor area up to a maximum of 3,000 ft².
- Re-occupancy of a building by a similar use.
- Changes to building height that do not add an additional floor.
- Additions or alterations to the landscape plan or landscape materials.
- Relocating or resizing utility supply lines or service connections.
- Relocating or screening the trash receptacle.
- Alterations to the internal parking layout of an off-street lot in which the total number of available spaces is unchanged.

Construction of a new building or structure, adding or deleting parking spaces, increasing stories of a building, and introducing additional curb cuts onto a public road are examples of modifications that are **NOT** considered minor.

Site Plan Submission

Remember that you should schedule a pre-application meeting with Township staff to discuss your application and identify roadblocks before you submit your site plan. To start the review process, you will need to submit the following materials to the Township:

1. Three completed and signed copies of the application for site plan review.
2. 14 individually folded copies of the site plan (or 3 copies, if it is considered a minor site plan). The site plan must include all of the required information listed in [Section 32-79 of the Zoning Ordinance](#).
3. Evidence that the plan has been submitted for review to County, State, and Federal agencies, including but not limited to the County Road Commission and the County Drain Commissioner.
4. A check for the [planning review fee](#), which can be calculated using the Township's fee schedule. This is separate from any Engineering or Building fees.

Note: all materials must be submitted at least 30 calendar days prior to the Planning Commission meeting at which the review will occur. If your site plan requires revisions, you may be moved to a later meeting date.

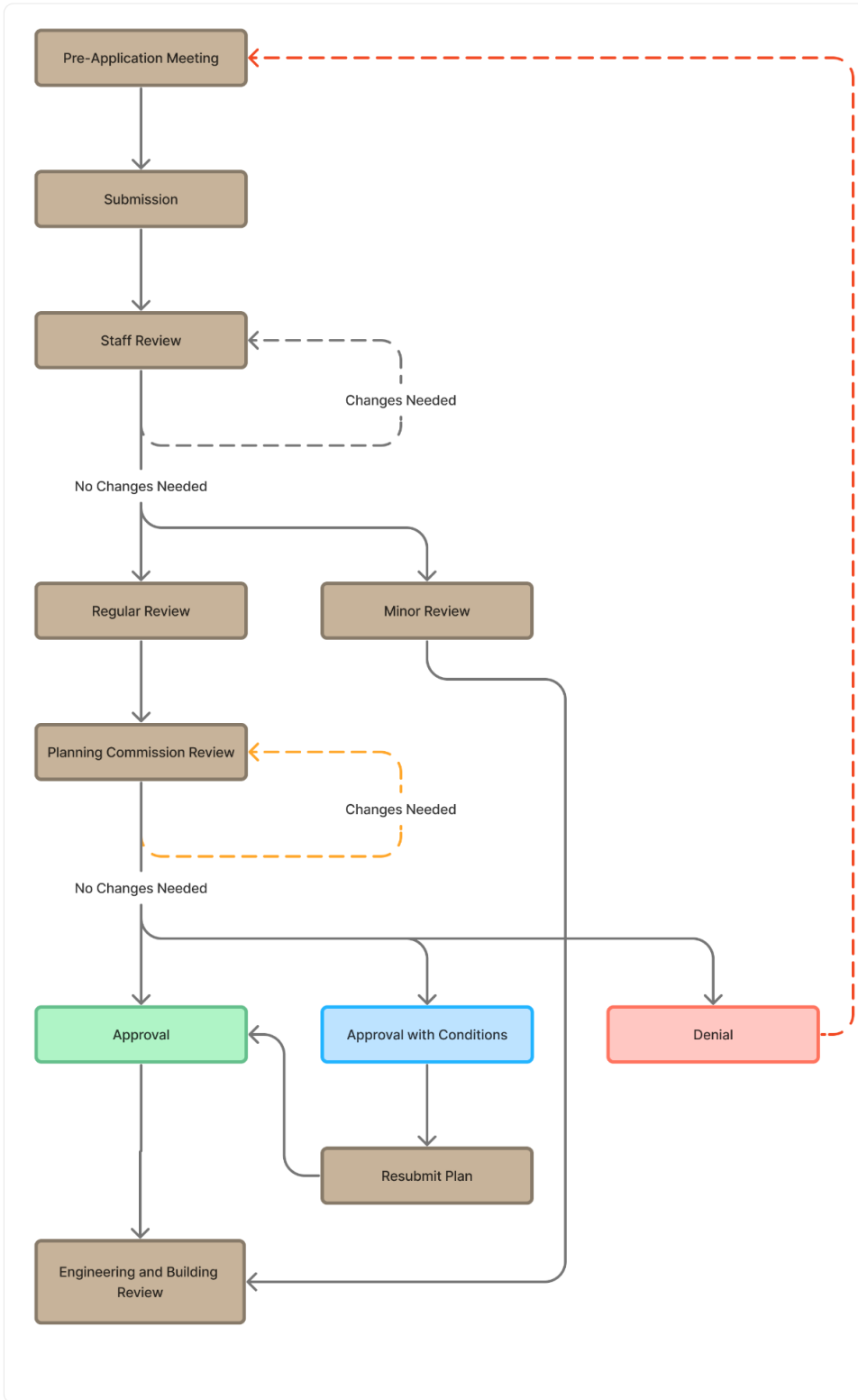
Site Plan Process

After you submit your application materials, your application will go through several rounds of review to ensure it meets all local zoning and building regulations and other applicable laws.

- 1) **Staff review:** The Planning and Zoning Administrator will review your application to ensure that it complies with the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable laws. If changes are required, you will revise your site plan and re-submit for another review. Once all issues have been resolved:
 - a) **Minor** - the Planning and Zoning Administrator approves your site plan, and you can go to the Building Department Review and Permitting.

- b) **Regular** - your application is placed on the agenda for the next Planning Commission meeting.
- 2) **Initial review:** The Planning Commission will review and discuss the findings of the Planning and Zoning Administrator.
- 3) **Request for revisions:** The Planning Commission may ask the applicant to revise the plans or provide more information. The applicant must submit the revised plans and pay all review fees before formal action is taken.
- 4) **Submission of plans for final review:** If changes are required, copies of the revised plan must be submitted to the Planning Commission.
- 5) **Final action:** Outcomes:
 - a) **Approval:** Proceed to engineering and building review.
 - b) **Approval with conditions:** You must submit a revised plan with a revision date indicating the changes made.
 - c) **Denial:** This might occur because your plan does not comply with the standards and regulations, or your application requires extensive revision to comply with standards.
- 6) After site plan approval, proceed to the final Engineering Department and Building Department review process.

Site Plan Approval Process



10.3 County and State Process - Site Plan Review

You should start discussing your proposed plans with Oakland County and the State of Michigan to determine which forms/permits are required. If a County or State review is required, submit your site plan as soon as possible, since these reviews can take a long time. Remember, you can always revise your submission if necessary. The Township Engineer cannot approve your plans until you have obtained all County and State approvals.

Oakland County

- 1) *Stormwater process*: For all stormwater processes, please refer to [Oakland County's Water Commission](#). You can also reach out via email (wrc@oakgov.com) to determine what you will need to provide.
- 2) *Roadway process*: For permits regarding roadways, please refer to the [Road Commission for County](#). You can also reach out via email (permits@rcoc.org).

State Review

- 1) You will need to perform an initial evaluation with the [EGLE Permit Information checklist](#) to identify the permits required from EGLE. Please reach out to the Township Engineer to figure out what you may need.

10.4 Other Development Approvals

10.4a Rezoning Review

As explained in Chapter 5 of this guide, zoning is the process municipalities use to categorize land into different districts. Each zoning district has its own set of permitted and prohibited land uses. Every parcel of land within the Township is assigned to a specific zone, according to the Zoning Map. If an applicant wishes to change the zoning district assigned to their land, they can apply for a “rezoning.”

A rezoning occurs through a legislative process. The property owner initiates a rezoning request, the Planning Commission evaluates the request and makes a recommendation, and the Board of Trustees decides whether to approve or deny it.

Rezoning Request Submission

You should schedule a pre-application meeting with Township staff to discuss your application and identify roadblocks. This meeting is not required, but it is highly recommended. To request a rezoning, you need to submit the following materials to the Township:

- Three completed and signed copies of the application for rezoning review.
- 14 individually folded copies of the rezoning proposal.
- Any forms and supplemental data required by the Planning Commission, Board of Trustees, or Township staff (you will be informed of additional items that may be needed during your pre-application meeting).

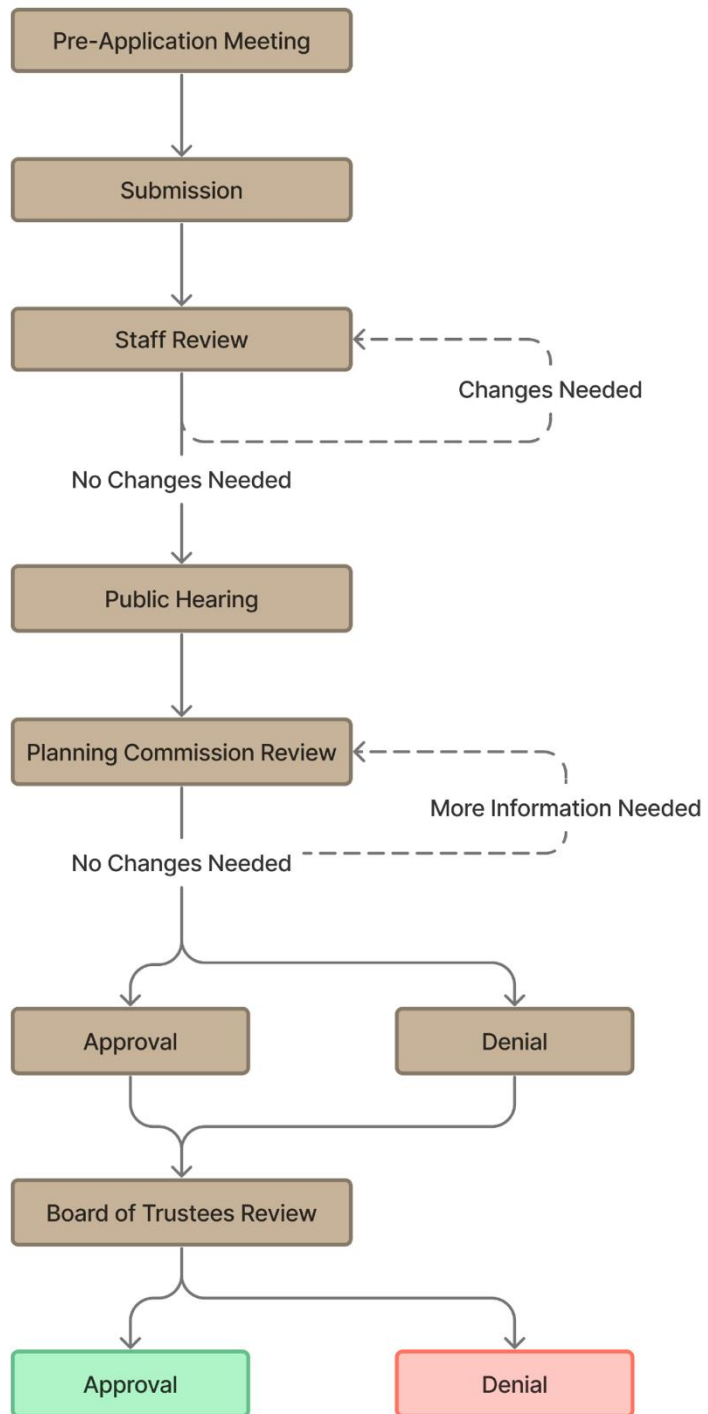
Note: You must submit all materials at least 30 days before the Planning Commission meeting at which the application will be reviewed. If your application requires revisions, it may be discussed at a later meeting.

Rezoning Review Process

1. **Staff review:** The Planning Administrator will review your application to ensure that it complies with the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable laws. If changes are required, you will revise your application and re-submit it for another review. Once all issues have been resolved, your application is placed on the agenda of the Planning Commission.
2. **Planning Commission public hearing:** The Commission will hold a public hearing at which members of the public may comment on your application. All property owners and residents within 300 feet of your property will be notified.
3. **Initial review:** The Planning Commission will review and discuss the findings of the Planning and Zoning Administrator, the results of the public hearing, and the application.

4. **Request for revisions:** The Planning Commission may ask you to provide more information. You must submit the revised plans and pay all review fees before formal action is taken.
5. **Revision and submission to the Planning Commission:** After any revisions, you will submit the application to the Planning Administrator.
6. **Planning Commission determination:** The Commission will review the application for rezoning and make a decision:
 - a. **Recommended Approval:** The Commission recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the application.
 - b. **Recommended Denial:** The Commission recommends that the Board of Trustees denies the application.
7. **Submission to Board of Trustees for review:**
 - a. **Board of Trustee determination:** The Board will consider the Planning Commission's decision, staff recommendations, and the public hearing results. They will then make one of the following decisions:
 - i. **Approval:** the Board finds that the rezoning complies with all applicable standards within the Zoning Ordinance and conducts a first and second reading of the rezoning.
 - ii. **Denial:** the Board finds that the rezoning request does not comply with all the standards within the Zoning Ordinance.

Rezoning Approval Process



10.4b Conditional Rezoning Review Process

Sometimes, it may be beneficial to attach voluntary conditions to your rezoning application. For example, you can voluntarily limit the land uses in the zoning district you want to rezone for to exclude nuisance uses. You might limit development to a dessert shop instead of a gas station or any other commercial use. In such cases, you can opt for conditional rezoning, where you voluntarily agree to place conditions on your application. The conditions are completely up to you, but they should be reasonably connected to the Township's approval criteria for a rezoning.

Make sure that your proposal has the conditions related to the use and/or development of the land in writing. Although you can self-impose conditions at any time during the rezoning process, it is better to do this in the beginning of this process.

10.4c Special Land Use Review

A special land use is a use that potentially could negatively impact neighboring properties if it is not properly controlled. For instance, schools or daycare centers in residential districts can generate congestion during pick-up/drop-off times.

Applications are reviewed by both the Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees. You must submit a site plan along with your special land use application. Your special land use application will be reviewed first, followed immediately by your site plan application. This is because the special use must be approved before the site plan can be reviewed and approved.

Special Land Use Submission

Before you submit your application for a special use permit, you should schedule a pre-application meeting with Township staff to discuss your application and identify roadblocks. This meeting is not required, but it is highly recommended. To start the review process, you will need to submit the following materials to the Township:

- Three completed and signed copies of the application for special use review.
- A complete site plan application (see Section 9.1 above for details).

- 14 individually folded copies of the special use plans (a site plan combined with a narrative description of your use).
- Any forms and supplemental data required by the Planning Commission, Board of Trustees, or Township staff (you will be informed of additional items that may be needed during your pre-application meeting).

Note: You must submit all materials at least 30 days before the Planning Commission meeting at which the application will be reviewed. If your application requires revisions, it may be considered at a later meeting date.

Special Land Use Review Process

1. **Staff review:** The Planning and Zoning Administrator will review your application to ensure that it complies with the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable laws. If changes are required, you must revise your site plan and re-submit it for another review. Once all issues have been resolved, your application will be placed on the agenda of the Planning Commission.
2. **Planning Commission Public Hearing:** The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing where members of the public may comment on the proposed special use. All property owners and residents within 300 ft of the proposed property will be notified prior to the meeting.
3. **Initial review:** The Planning Commission will then review and discuss the findings of the Planning and Zoning Administrator, the results of the public hearing, and the application.
4. **Request for revisions:** The Planning Administrator may ask to revise the plans or provide more information. You must then submit the revised plans and pay all review fees before formal action is taken.
5. **Revision and submission to the Planning Commission:** After any revisions, you will then submit all the plans and application to the Planning Administrator.
6. **Planning Commission determination:** The Commission will review the application for special use and make a decision:
 - Approval – the special use meets all requirements.

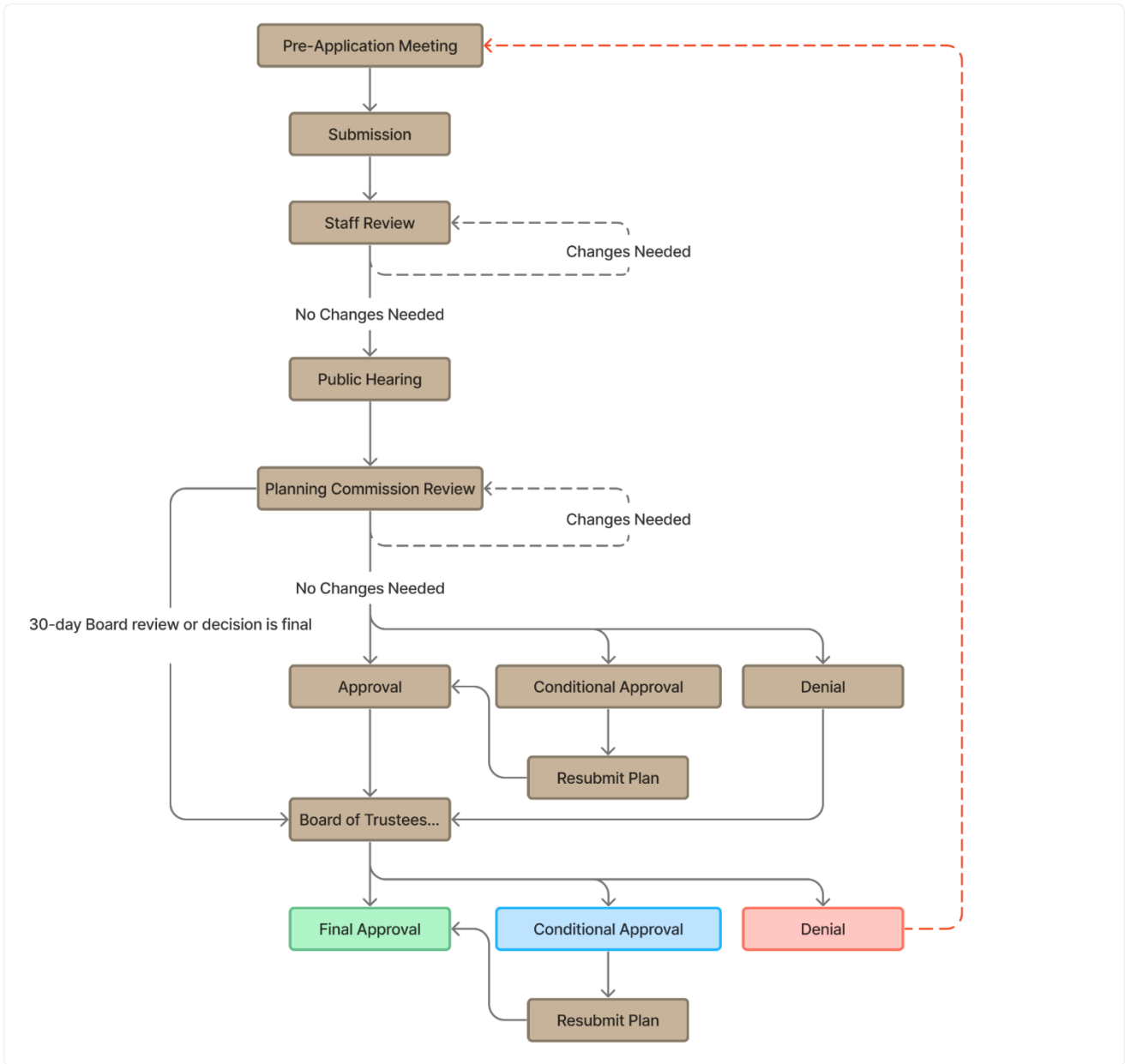
- Approval with conditions – the Commission may impose considerations upon your special use, requiring you to revise your plans to make them more compatible with the neighborhood or to fix minor errors.
- Denial – the Commission deems your special use harmful to the community and denies your application.

7. **Submission to Board of Trustees for review:** The Board will have 30 calendar days to review the Planning Commission’s decision. If no decision is made, the decision made by the Planning Commission will be final.

- **Board of Trustee Public Hearing:** The Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing if it chooses to review the application.
- **Board of Trustee determination:** Following the public hearing, the Board will consider the Planning Commission’s decision, staff recommendations, and the public hearing results. It will then make a decision:
 - i. **Approval:** special use complies with existing regulations.
 - ii. **Approval with conditions:** the Board may impose considerations upon your special use, requiring you to revise your plans to make them more compatible with the neighborhood or to fix minor errors.
 - iii. **Denial:** the Board deems your special use harmful to the community and denies your application.

Any conditions placed on approval must be designed to comply with local, state, and federal laws, promote efficient land use, prevent negative impacts on surrounding properties, protect natural resources, and support the township's land use objectives.

Special Land Use Process



10.4d Variance Review

A variance is a legal way for property owners to ask for a break from or relaxation of a part of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) looks at requests for variances.

Variance Submission

For a variance submission, you are required to submit your site plan to the Planning Commission. It is highly recommended that you schedule a pre-application meeting with Township staff to discuss your application and identify roadblocks.

To apply for a variance, you need to clarify why you're appealing, provide a notarized signature from the property owner or their representative, and detail which sections of the standards you're seeking a variance from and to what degree.

To start the review process, you will need to submit the following materials to the Township:

1. Three completed and signed copies of the application for a variance.
2. 10 individually folded copies of the sketch plan. The sketch plan must include all of the required information listed in Section 32-156 of the Zoning Ordinance.
3. A check for the review fee, which can be calculated using the Township's fee schedule. This is separate from any Engineering or Building fees.

Note: You must submit all materials to the Building Official at least 30 calendar days before the ZBA meeting at which the review will occur. If your site plan requires revisions, the ZBA will review your application in a later meeting.

Variance Review Process

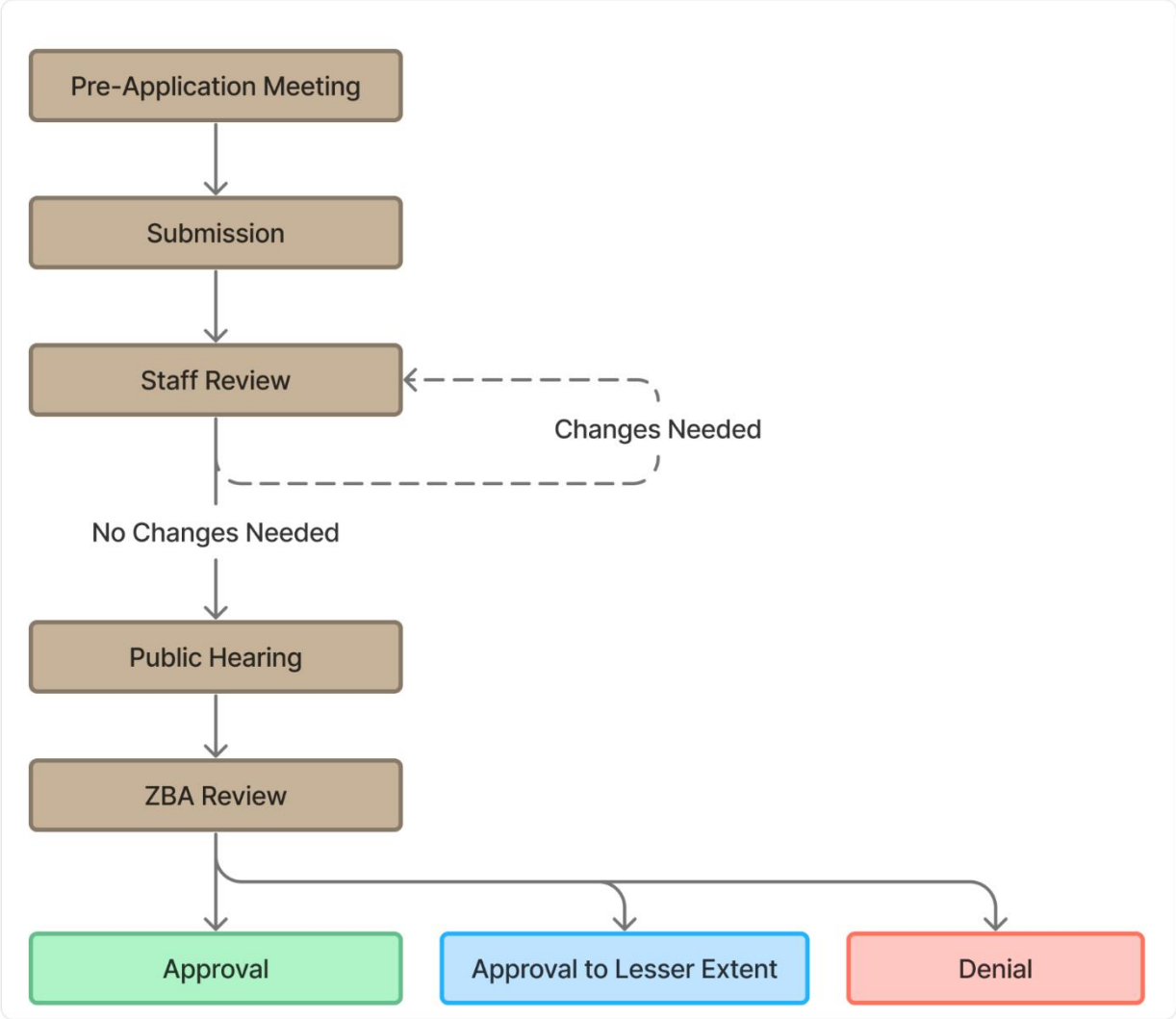
1. **Staff review:** The Planning and Zoning Administrator will review your variance application to ensure that it complies with the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable laws. If changes are required, you will revise your site plan and re-submit it for another review. Once all issues have been resolved, your application is placed on the agenda for the next ZBA meeting.

2. **ZBA public hearing:** The ZBA will hold a public hearing, at which members of the public may comment on your application. All property owners and residents within 300 ft of your property will be notified.
3. **Initial review:** The ZBA will review and discuss the findings of the Planning and Zoning Administrator, the results of the public hearing, and the application.
4. **Review and decision by ZBA:**
 - **Approve:** the ZBA approves the variance as presented.
 - **Approve to a Lesser Extent:** the ZBA approves the variance but to a lesser extent.
 - **Deny:** the ZBA denies the variance, finding that it does not meet the criteria for approval.

Conditions on a variance of a lesser extent must be designed to maintain public safety and welfare, property rights, land values, neighborhood values, orderly development, traffic flow, relationship to adjacent land uses, supply of light and air to adjacent properties, and overall sense of peace.

The ZBA is also responsible for reviewing Substitutions of Nonconforming Uses, which follow the same general procedure. For more information, please review the [ZBA Application Form](#).

Variance Process



10.4e Planned Development Review

A Planned Development (PD) is a zoning classification that enables more innovative and versatile land use planning than conventional zoning methods. PDs are often used for extensive mixed-use projects that blend different types of land uses, including residential, commercial, and recreational. A PD is an agreement between a developer and the municipality. In return for the ability to design the project with greater flexibility, the developer commits to offering a public benefit or amenity, such as a sidewalk that will accommodate increased foot traffic.

A PD application consists of two parts, which are submitted together:

1. A site plan application
2. A rezoning application

However, you will only need to submit one application form - the PD application form.

Consider pursuing a Planned Development if you have any of the following goals:

- To mix land uses together on a single site.
- To offer diverse design and layout options.
- To ensure efficient and economical utilization of land, natural resources, energy, and public and utility services.
- To promote open spaces and incorporate public space into your project.
- To offer unique housing options, including workforce housing.
- To provide employment, service, and shopping opportunities that cater to the needs of the township and nearby communities' residents.

PD Submission

Before you submit your application for a planned development, you should schedule a pre-application meeting with Township staff to discuss your application and identify roadblocks. This meeting is not required, but it is highly recommended. To start the review process, you will need to submit the following materials to the Township:

- Three completed and signed copies of the application for special use review.
- A complete site plan application (see Section 9.1 above for details).
- 14 individually folded copies of the special use plans (i.e. Site plan combined with a narrative description about your use).
- Any forms and supplemental data required by the Planning Commission, Board of Trustees, or Township staff (you will be informed of additional items that may be needed during your pre-application meeting).

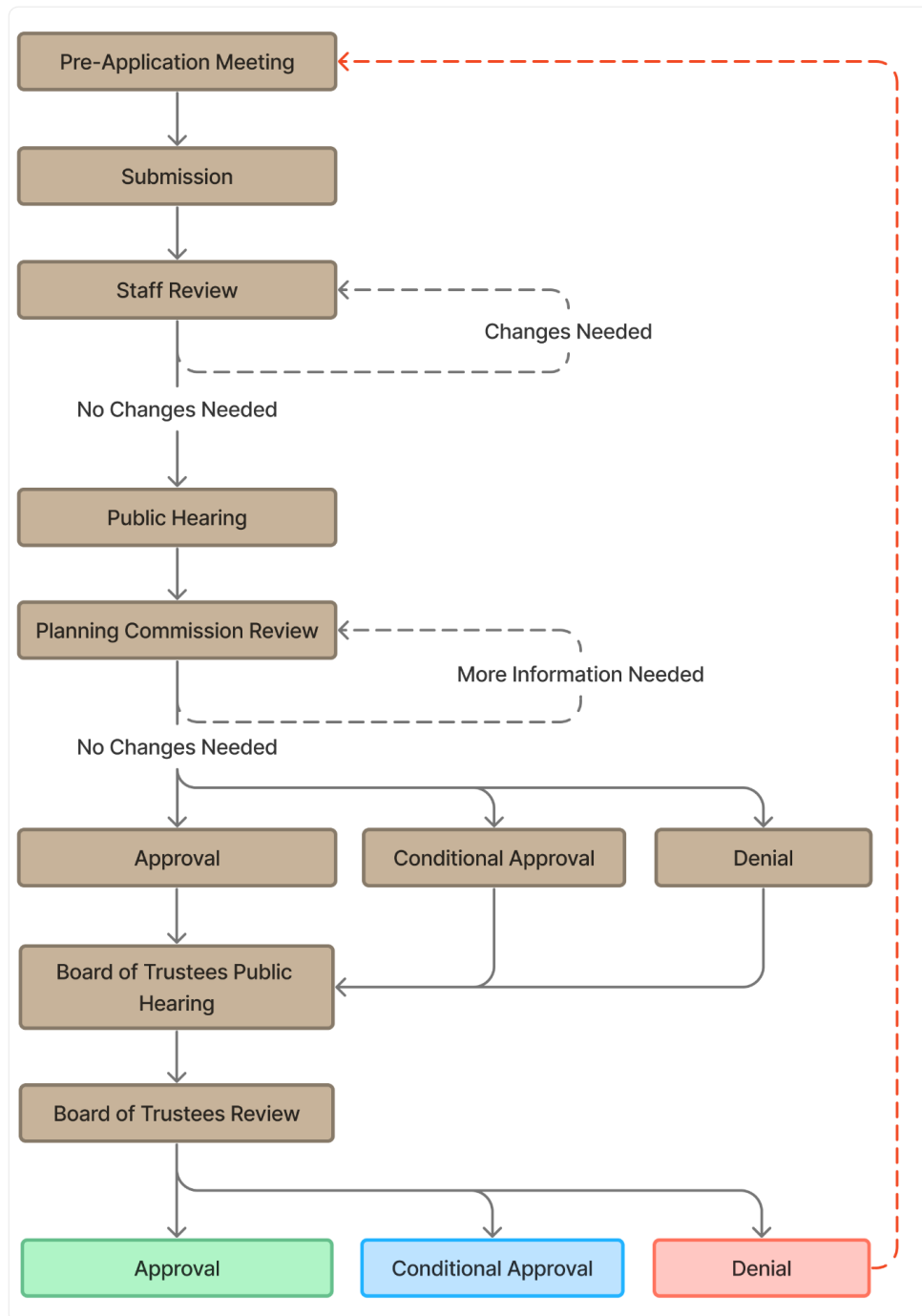
Note: You must submit all materials at least 30 days before the Planning Commission meeting at which the application will be reviewed. If your application requires revisions, it may be considered at a later meeting.

PD Review Process

1. **Staff review:** The Planning and Zoning Administrator, Township Engineer, and Fire Department will all review your application to ensure that it complies with all local and state laws. Each staff member will write a formal recommendation. If changes are required, you will revise your PD plan and re-submit it for another review. Once all issues have been resolved, your application is placed on the agenda for the next Planning Commission meeting.
2. **Submission of revised planned development application:** You will then need to revise and submit your plans to the planning commission.
3. **Planning Commission Public Hearing:** The Commission will hold a public hearing at which members of the public may comment on your application. All property owners and residents within 300 ft of your property will be notified.

4. **Initial review:** The Planning Commission will review and discuss the findings of the Township staff, the results of the public hearing, and the application.
5. **Request for revisions:** The Planning Commission may ask you to revise the plans or provide more information. You must submit the revised plans and pay all review fees before formal action is taken.
6. **Revision and resubmission to the Planning Commission:** After any revisions, you will then submit all the plans and application to the Planning Commission.
7. **Planning Commission's determination:** The Commission reviews the application and recommends that the Board of Trustees do one of the following:
 - Approval
 - Approval with conditions
 - Denial
8. **Revision and submission to the Board of Trustees:** If any outstanding revisions are required, you must submit the revised plans and pay all review fees before formal action is taken. After the Township staff confirm the revisions, the application will be placed on the agenda for the next Board of Trustee meeting.
9. **Board of Trustee Public Hearing:** The Board of Trustees will hold a second public hearing.
10. **Board of Trustees Decision:** The Board will approve, approve with conditions, or deny a planned development proposal.
 - Approval
 - Approval with conditions
 - Denial

Planned Development



Process

11 | Final Engineering, and Building Review Process

11.1 Engineering Review

After your site plan is approved and you have received all other relevant permits (special use, variance, etc.), your application will move on to Engineering and Building review. These are administrative reviews that do not involve any boards or commissions.

Engineering plans are more detailed versions of site plans, containing additional information like soil support calculations for the building, utility capacity details, precise pipe measurements, and diagrams. The Engineering Department and Fire Department will conduct an administrative review of your engineering plans to verify compliance with all relevant engineering and safety standards.

Any development constructed along a County road right-of-way requires additional engineering approval from the [Road Commission for Oakland County](#). Additionally, you must submit a [drain-use permit](#) related to stormwater management, also obtained from Oakland County.

New homes are processed through the Building Department. The home design process is as follows:

1. Survey
2. Plot plan
3. Architectural drawings
4. Submission

11.2 Building Review / Permitting

After completing your engineering review, you will need to submit your complete construction plans to the Building Department. This is the first step toward obtaining permits. The Township's Building Ordinances and all building permit applications can be

found on the [Building Department](#) page on the Township's website, under the Services, Planning and Building tab. The Building Department uses the most current [Michigan Building Code](#) when reviewing applications. You should contact the Building Department at (248-965-3582) or

bldgadmin@royaloaktwp.com to discuss any permits your project may need and the requirements of each permit application before submitting your building permit applications. You will need to obtain all building permits prior to starting construction.

The Building Department will review your full construction plans and let you know if any issues need to be corrected. Once your plans have been revised and approved by the Building Department, you can apply for construction permits.

For a comprehensive list of permits, please visit the website [here](#).

11.2a Required Permit Application Materials

To submit a permit application, you must provide the following:

1. The application form, signed and dated by the property owner and the agent.
Indicate which of the following two options applies to your project:
 - a. All residential one- and two-family construction
 - b. **or** all other construction (commercial, industrial, or all other construction: commercial/industrial/multi-family).
2. A copy of the approved construction plan.
3. An application fee must be paid to the Building Department. The fee amount depends on the value of your construction. You should provide the value of all construction work, including all finished work.

11.3 Utility Notification (MISS DIG 811)

Before starting construction, it is important to know where underground utilities may be located on your site. Call 811 or (800) 482-7171, or go to www.missdig811.org, to request service to locate underground utility lines.

12 | Business Licensing Process

If you are starting a new business, you will need to apply for a business license. This is true for businesses that are moving into an existing building, changing locations, or starting from scratch.

To receive a business license approval, you must fill out the [Building Permit Application](#) with all relevant business information. Deliver the application and all fees to Township Hall at [21131 Gardenlane, 2nd Floor, Ferndale MI 48220](#). If your business will be occupying an existing building and using it for a new type of business, you will also need to fill out a [Re-Use/Re-Occupancy Certificate Application](#). All applications must receive Building Official Approval. If this is a new Business License, both the Planning and Zoning Departments must approve the application.

Please refer to the [Business Quick Guide](#) and [Business License Inspection Checklist](#) for additional information on opening a business. Refer to the Township's adopted [fee schedule](#) for all fee amounts. The basic steps are summarized here:

Zoning

Before moving in or signing a lease to operate a business, one must verify that the proposed zoning use is allowed in the building. Please call the Planning Department at 248-596-0920 to check the acceptable uses.

More FAQs about Zoning can be found on the [Planning & Building webpage](#).

Apply for All Applications

See licensing information in Chapter 8.

Zoning Review

The Planning Department will review your application to make sure it complies with Zoning Ordinance requirements. If necessary, the Department will contact you or perform a site visit for more information.

Once approved, the Planning Department will automatically forward the application to the Building Department to start the inspection process. If it is denied or more information is needed for approval, you will be notified immediately.

Building and Fire Inspections

The Building Clerk will reach out to you to schedule an on-site inspection by the Building Department and Fire Department to ensure compliance with fire safety, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and building construction requirements. If there are any violations or issues, the Building Clerk will provide you with a report that lists each item for you to fix.

Apply for Required Permits

If you receive violations, you may be required, depending on the violation, to apply for construction permits through the Building Department to resolve the violation. If you are making changes to the interior or exterior of the building, parking lot, or paved areas, or constructing any new structure or building, you will need a permit. All permit applications are submitted to the Building Department.

Final Building and Fire Inspections

Once all revisions are resolved, you must notify the Building Clerk that you are ready for a re-inspection. The Clerk will then schedule a re-inspection, and the Building Department and Fire Department will inspect the site again. If you have resolved all violations, they will then issue approval.

13: Glossary

Term	Definition
Accessory Use	A function or building subordinate to the main use of a building or land, situated on the same plot, serving a purpose typically ancillary to the principal building or land use.
Adaptive Reuse	The process of reusing an existing structure for a purpose other than it was originally designed or built for.
Board of Trustees	The legislative unit of the township; the Board of Trustees are elected officials that serve four-year terms. There are seven people on the board: three administrative officials (Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer) and four Trustees.
Building Permit	A legal authorization granted by a government or other regulatory body before the construction of a new or existing building can occur.
Charter Township	A type of local government, with certain powers granted to it such as zoning or raising taxes. Townships generally have less population than cities and fewer local government staff.
Due Diligence	A buyer's investigation of a property. This can be completed before making an offer or between entering into the contract and closing, known as a due diligence period. If any defects are found in or around the property, the purchase may be canceled, or the problem resolved.
Environmental Assessment	The evaluation of the environmental liability of an asset. The Environmental Site Assessment or ESA process includes a site inspection, a review of historical records of the property, and review of records available at government agencies.
Land Use	A classification to describe the activities that are practiced in a given place. For example, a park is for recreational use.
Master Plan	A document written and adopted by a local Planning Commission to create a vision for the future of a community. Master Plans help guide how communities will plan for land use development and preservation.
Planned Development (PD)	A type of zoning approval that allows for flexibility in land use planning. PDs are typically used for mixed-use developments that incorporate a variety of uses such as residential, commercial, and recreational.
Property Survey	An assessment to determine the land boundaries of a property.

Term	Definition
Rezoning (Zoning Amendment)	A change to a specific section to the zoning code that will change the zoning district of a property.
Site Plan	A document that details existing or proposed conditions on a site.
Special Land Use	Conditional land uses for a specific zoning district. The City authorizes conditional uses through a special land use permit. These permits contain conditions to protect the public welfare, community, and general welfare of the environment.
Title	A legal document that proves ownership of a property or asset.
Zoning	A legislative act that divides the city into separate districts to regulate land use within them. Each zoning district has allowable and prohibited land uses.
Zoning Ordinance	A local law that regulates land use.

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