



# GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENT CITY OF PONTIAC

*Created 2019*

---

The Guide to Development includes a snapshot overview of the development review process in the City of Pontiac. The document explains the review process, policies, steps, and other relevant information for applicants. Links to web pages are provided throughout the document for easy access to the most up-to-date forms, applications, and more information.

This document is not intended to include all of the requirements of the City Ordinances or Codes, nor is it a replacement for the Zoning Ordinance or other local ordinances. Applicants should review the specific ordinances and talk to responsible staff about their development projects.

---

**Table of Contents**

Contact Information..... 3  
    Contact Quick Reference ..... 3  
The Development Review Process..... 4  
Reviewing Bodies for Development Applications & Timeline..... 5  
Pre-Application Meeting..... 6  
Community Vision: The Master Plan..... 7  
Zoning Information ..... 7  
Table of Uses..... 7  
Site Plan and Special Use Permit Review Process..... 8  
    Requirements & Applications ..... 8  
    Review Process..... 8  
        Preliminary Staff Report and Administrative Approval..... 11  
        Planning Commission Review and Action ..... 11  
        City Council Review and Action..... 12  
        Final Site Plan Submittal and Review ..... 12  
        Time limit of approval and work completion..... 12  
Downtown Design Guidelines..... 13  
Variance Review Process ..... 13  
Permits..... 13  
Incentives & Resources ..... 13

## Contact Information

The City of Pontiac website (<http://www.pontiac.mi.us>) contains maps, applications, the City’s Zoning Code and Master Plan, and much more. The [Economic Development Website](#) link provides quick access to .....

[Community Development](#) website provides links to the Building Department & Planning Division permits, applications, incentives and resources.

CITY OF PONTIAC  
 Department of Building Safety & Planning  
 Planning Division  
 47450 Woodward Ave, Pontiac MI 48342  
 T: 248.758.2800  
 F: 248.758.2827

## Contact Quick Reference

Assignment	Staff	Department	Phone Number	Email
Financial Opportunities & Incentives, Economic Development Assistance	Rachel Loughrin	Economic Development		RLoughrin@pontiac.mi.us
General Development Zoning districts & Requirements, Site selection	Donovan Smith	Planning Division	(248)758-2815	Dsmith@Pontiac.Mi.Us
Downtown/Main Street Pontiac	Danielle Waters			
Right-of-Way (Public Land) & Stormwater, Engineering	John Balint	Department of Public Works		
Building & Trade Permits		Building & Safety		
Business Licensing	Tammy Cooper	Planning Division		TCooper@Pontiac.Mi.Us
Code Enforcement	Patrick Brzozowski	Planning Division		PBrzozowski@Pontiac.Mi.Us
Water Mains & Sewer		Water Resource Commission		

## The Development Review Process

The following outlines the development review process. The guide describes the relevant reviewing bodies for planning and development projects in the City and includes estimated timelines for such proposals. It outlines the planning and zoning approval process and the applications and other materials needed. This is followed by an overview of the approval process of other permits and licenses necessary throughout the development project, including building and construction permits, rental licenses, and building licenses.

In addition, the document includes business assistance information and the review process for Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Personal Property Tax Abatement, and Industrial Facilities Exemption applications. It includes an overview of TIF and the review process for the development of publicly-owned properties.

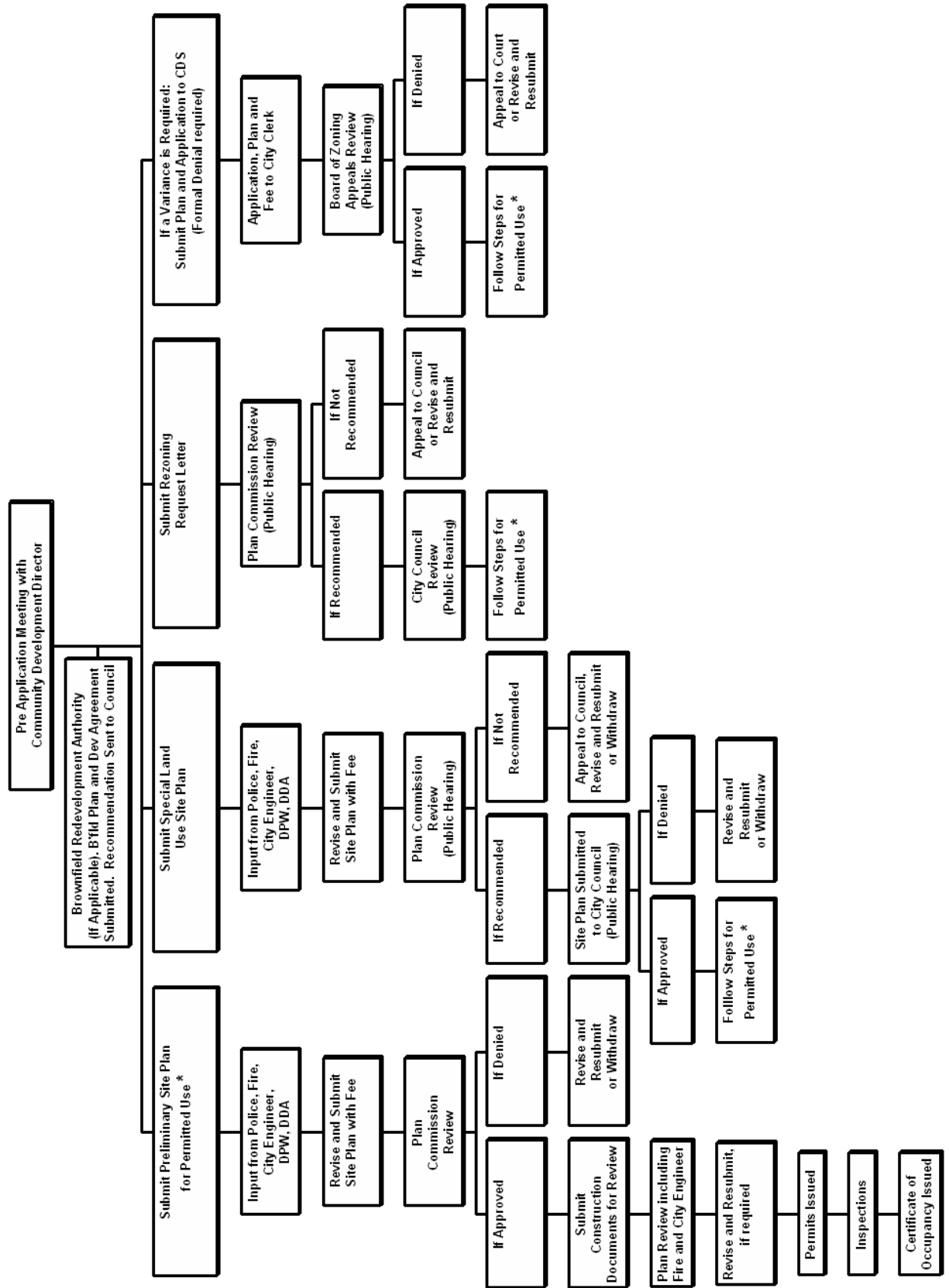
The flowchart covers planning and zoning applications. These applications require a multi-step review process, including staff review, various commission and board reviews, public hearings and Planning Commission (PC) review, and City Council (CC) review and action. In addition, the flowchart includes the building and construction permits that need to be obtained in order to implement the approved project.

The flowchart shown on the next page outlines the development approval process followed in the City of Pontiac. The diagram includes required and recommended meetings and actions, and outlines the boards and commissions required to review development applications. Depending on the nature of the project, multiple city departments will review the proposed project.

In general, most building construction and land modifications require a site plan application and depending on the use may also require a special use permit. A special use permit could also be required where a simple change of use is proposed for a building where no construction is occurring. A single project could require both a site plan and a special use permit application or just one or the other.

The guide describes also the numerous opportunities for public participation in the development review process. In addition, the Public Participation Plan (P3), attached, outlines the City's methods for public participation and engagement.

# Development Review Process Flowchart



## Reviewing Bodies for Development Applications & Timeline

The City's Zoning Code outlines the procedures for development applications. Depending on the nature and location of the project, select City boards and commissions will review the project. These groups are advisory boards to the City Council and provide recommendations to the CC. [Click here for a complete list of boards and commissions and more information about these entities.](#) [Click here for the City's calendar.](#) The relevant boards and commissions are described below, including meeting dates and times. Meetings take place at City Hall unless noted.

- **Zoning Board of Appeals** interprets and grants variances from provisions of the zoning code; conducts hearings and resolves disputes regarding decisions of the zoning official.
  - Third Monday at 7:00pm
- **Historic District Commission** interprets and grants alterations to buildings and structures in the Pontiac Historic Districts.
  - Second Tuesday at 6:00pm
- **Planning Commission** creates and updates the Master Plan and reviews rezoning requests, site plans, special use permits, and other land use applications.
  - First Monday at 6:30pm

The timeline for the approval process of development applications depends on the schedule of each board and commission that needs to review the project, the public notice requirements in each case, and the publication time for media release. In general, the entire approval process could take 30 to 90 days for a site plan application.

## Pre-Application Meeting

The prospective developer(s) or representative(s) of an entity wishing to (re)develop a property in the City is encouraged to meet with the City's Community and Economic Development Director prior to when the official application is submitted. Contact Donovan Smith at 248-758-2815 to schedule a pre-application consultation.

Depending on the type and scale of the project, it may be helpful to submit conceptual drawings to the Planning Division prior to the conceptual meeting for staff to review in advance. Drawings may be dispersed to other appropriate departments, such as fire or building, for review and comments. Applicable staff from other departments may also attend the conceptual meeting, though it is optional.

During this meeting, the developer may outline the proposed development idea and any initial conceptual architectural designs available. The staff will provide the developer with background

information on the site, previous plans submitted, the community vision for the site, an overall opinion of the proposed idea, and a description of the approval process and timeline.

Also during this meeting, especially for larger projects, the City staff may encourage the developer to seek the opinion of the community most affected by the proposed project. City staff can provide contact information for relevant neighborhood associations and other groups of interest. Staff may attend those meetings in order to answer questions from the community with regard to zoning regulations and the Master Plan as it relates to the proposed project.

## Community Vision: The Master Plan

The Master Plan is one of the primary tools used by the City of Pontiac's City Council, boards and commissions, and the staff that make decisions affecting the future land use of the community. A Master Plan is a broad based policy document for the physical, economic, and social development of the city as it relates to land use. It has a long-range perspective that provides a coordinated approach to making important decisions.

Prospective developers should review the City's Master Plan to make sure the proposed project helps fulfill the goals of the plan. The plan can be found [here](#).

### [City of Pontiac 2014 Master Plan](#)

Additional plans have been created to supplement the Master Plan.

- [Pontiac Moving Forward](#)
- [Pontiac Parks & Recreation Plan](#)
- [Pontiac Complete Streets](#)

## Zoning Information

Click **Zoning Ordinance** to access the City's Zoning Ordinance and **Zoning Map** to access the City's Zoning Map.

The [table of uses](#) can be found in the Zoning Ordinance, Section 2.05. Use the table to determine whether the use is permitted, not permitted, or permitted by Special Land Use by zoning district. Use the Zoning Map, Section 2.04 of the Zoning Ordinance, to determine the locations of zoning districts.

For general questions related to zoning, contact Donovan Smith, (248)758-2815, [Dsmith@Pontiac.mi.us](mailto:Dsmith@Pontiac.mi.us).

Planning and zoning applications (Zoning Compliance Requests, Site Plan Review Applications, Special Land Use Requests, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Historic District Commission Applications) can be found [here](#).

## Site Plan and Special Use Permit Review Process

### Requirements & Applications

Site plan and special use permit approvals involve first submitting the following documents to the Community and Economic Development Department:

- [A completed application form](#)
- The required written information
- A signed copy of the checklist
- Four (4) folded copies of conforming plans
- The required application fee
- Proof of property ownership
- A complete legal description of the property

Applications must be received three (3) weeks prior to the date of the Planning Commission meeting in order to be placed on the Commission's agenda. Plan submission requires four (4) sets of plans and a CD with all application materials. Plan documents must be accurate and legible, drawn to a scale no less than 1" = 50'. The Director may also request copies of all plans and drawings in a reduced size format.

The required site plan elements are detailed in the application form. Consult Article 11 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#) to determine when a project requires site plan review. Some projects may qualify for administrative review.

### Special Meetings

Special meetings for Board of Zoning Appeals, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Planning Commission can be requested by contacting Barb Miller at (248)336-4366.

### Review Process

After the complete application is submitted, the CED Department will distribute site plans to the following City departments for review and comment: Building, Fire, Police, and the Department of Public Works. Plans may be submitted to additional internal and external agencies, such as DTE, MDOT, or Consumer's Energy, as needed.

The city council, planning commission or community development director have the authority to review and to approve, approve with conditions, or deny site plan applications in accordance with the table below.



## Uses Requiring Site Plan Review

<b>Uses Requiring Site Plan Review</b>			
<b>Activity/Use</b>	<b>Planning Commission</b>	<b>City Council</b>	<b>CDD</b>
<b>New Construction</b>			
Single-family or two-family dwelling (up to 3 units)	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Single-family or two-family dwelling (over 3 units, on platted lots)	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Subdivisions (requiring land divisions)	<b>Recommend</b>	<b>Approve</b>	--
Multiple-family dwellings	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Any non-residential building, structure or use	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Public utility or essential service buildings or structures, telephone exchange buildings, electric transformer stations & substations, gas regulator stations, natural gas distribution or storage facilities	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Special land use	<b>Recommend</b>	<b>Approve</b>	--
Planned unit development (PUDs)	<b>Recommend</b>	<b>Approve</b>	--
<b>Expansion/Modification to Existing Building</b>			
Expansion of a single-family or two-family dwelling	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Expansion of a multiple-family building or development	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Alteration or expansion involving less than 10% of the floor area of an existing structure or is no greater than 3,000 sq. ft. whichever is less, provided that the alteration or expansion does not affect parking requirements	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Alteration or expansion involving more than 10% of the floor area of an existing structure or is greater than 3,000 sq. ft. whichever is less, or any alteration or expansion that affects parking requirements	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Expansion/intensification of a special land use	<b>Recommend</b>	<b>Approve</b>	--

<b>Uses Requiring Site Plan Review</b>			
<b>Activity/Use</b>	<b>Planning Commission</b>	<b>City Council</b>	<b>CDD</b>
<b>Change In Use</b>			
Change of land or building to a more intensive use, as determined by the director, that may involve substantial change in parking, traffic flow, hours of operation, public services, effluent discharge, or substantial alteration of the physical character of the site	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Reuse of an existing building where no building expansion is proposed, if the director determines the new use is similar or less intense in terms of parking, traffic generation, drainage, utility needs, noise, aesthetics & other external effects	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Change in use to a special land use	<b>Recommend</b>	<b>Approve</b>	--
Temporary uses, buildings, & structures	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
<b>Accessory Structures &amp; Site Improvements</b>			
Accessory structures/buildings	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Change in building height that does not add floor area	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Infrastructure and paving improvements including sidewalks and pathways	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Outdoor storage, sales & display	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Non-structural architectural design changes to non-residential uses	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
New off-street parking lot	<b>Approve</b>	--	--
Modification, resurfacing or expansion of existing off-street parking, stacking spaces or loading and unloading areas less than 10%	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Modification, resurfacing or expansion of existing off-street parking, stacking spaces or loading and unloading areas more than 10%	<b>Approve</b>	--	--

<b>Uses Requiring Site Plan Review</b>			
<b>Activity/Use</b>	<b>Planning</b>		
	<b>Commission</b>	<b>City Council</b>	<b>CDD</b>
Construction, relocation or erection of signs, screening walls, fences, walls, waste receptacles, sidewalks, antennas, lights, poles, cooling/heating or other mechanical equipment	--	--	<b>Approve</b>
Modifications to comply with accessibility requirements	--	--	<b>Approve</b>

**Preliminary Staff Report and Administrative Approval**

After the CED staff has received input from the police, fire, engineering, and building officials, a preliminary staff report on the application will be prepared. The report indicates the proposed project’s compliance with all of the applicable city, state, and federal laws, ordinances, and codes.

The applicant may request to be added to a Planning Commission agenda to discuss the site plan and project, free of charge, anytime prior to receiving a staff report determining site plan compliance.

If all site plan requirements are met, the site plan shall be approved, approved with conditions, or denied within 90 days of receipt of the completed application. The final report is prepared by the planning and zoning staff which will recommend action on the application including any conditions that would ensure compliance with policies and regulations.

Depending on the activity or use, per the table above, approval is dependent upon the authority as designated. If administrative approval is applicable, the CED director has the discretion to forward any site plan submitted to the Planning Commission for final determination. CED staff will approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application submitted for administrative approval. If administrative approval is denied, the applicant may submit the site plan to the Planning Commission. If approval is needed from the Planning Commission or City Council, the staff report will be

**Planning Commission Review and Action**

The Planning Commission can approve, approve with conditions, or deny the site plan. After reviewing the staff report and hearing public comment, the Planning Commission will determine whether additional information is needed in order to provide the City Council with a recommendation, if needed to be approved by them. Completed site plans need to be submitted three (3) weeks prior to a meeting to be considered for the agenda.

The planning commission will review the site plan application and may suggest and/or require modifications to the proposed site plan or require additional information, which must be completed and resubmitted for approval within 60 days. The time limit may be extended upon a written requires by the applicant and approval by the planning commission.

### **City Council Review and Action**

Special Land Use, PUDs, and subdivisions require approval from City Council, based upon recommendation from the Planning Commission. After the Planning Commission takes action, an application for special land use requires to be introduced and a public hearing be set at the next regular City Council meeting following the Planning Commission's action.

### **Final Site Plan Submittal and Review**

Once the application receives final action, the applicant submits a final site plan to the CED. The final site plan incorporates any conditions of approval. If applicable, the applicant would also secure and submit copies of all required zoning variances, permits or approvals from other agencies. The approvals include:

1. The city engineer reviews and approves the grading, clearing and site construction elements of the final site plan.
2. After engineer approval, CED staff determines if the final site plan continues to comply with the City Council approval. If so, certified copies of the final site plan are forwarded to the building official and the city engineer. If not, they will require site plan modification.
3. After engineer approval and all required zoning variances, permits and approvals have been secured, the CED director may certify those portions of the final site plan. The CED director may defer action on other elements, such as landscaping and site lighting, plans that may be submitted and approved at a later date. However, a landscape plan is not final until the CED director signs the plan as approved and no final certificate of occupancy will be approved until the landscaping plan is installed and approved by the CED director or an approved cash bond is provided for the unfinished landscape installation.
4. Upon receipt of the certified site plan, or a portion thereof, the city engineer and/or building official may issue required construction permits in accordance with other applicable city codes and procedures.
5. If the building official issues a temporary occupancy permit before all required site improvements have been completed, the building official may require that a cash deposit, certified check or irrevocable bank letter of credit in the amount equal to the city engineer's estimated cost of the uncompleted improvements be deposited with the City to insure the timely completion of the required improvements.

### **Time limit of approval and work completion**

The site plan or special use permit approval remains valid for 12 months from the date of its approval. If work has not begun within the 12-month limit, the approval shall automatically become null and void and all rights under the site plan approval lapse. Requests to extend the 12-month limit can be made up to one month prior to expiration, written and submitted to the CED department. The Planning Commission may authorize a single extension of the time limit of not more than 12 months.

Once a building permit is obtained and work on the proposed development site has begun, the work must be completed within 24 months otherwise the approval becomes null and void. A request to extend the time limit can be submitted to the building official and they can grant a 12 month extension for a good cause.

## Design Guidelines

### Downtown design guidelines

See the [appearance review ordinance](#) for design guidelines for proposals within the [downtown district](#). Completed [applications](#) are to be returned to the DDA Director at 149 W. Nine Mile Road, Pontiac. Questions can be directed to Cristina Sheppard-Decious at 248-546-1632. Applicants will be contacted for an appointment or clarification of application within 30 days of submission. Applications are reviewed by the Appearance Review Committee, which meets twice a month. Contact the DDA or visit their [website](#) for more information.

### Architectural compatibility and design guidelines

Architectural compatibility and design guidelines are provided within the Zoning Ordinance and can be found online, [here](#).

## Variance Review Process

Use variances are not allowed in the City of Pontiac. Dimensional variances and sign variances are allowed. Variance requests are subject to a specific set of requirements identified in [Article 18 of the Zoning Ordinance](#).

Applications are available online, [here](#).

## Rezoning

The requirements and process for standard and conditional rezoning are available in the [Zoning Ordinance, Article XIV](#). Property owners may initiate a rezoning process by submitting an application found online, [here](#). All proposed amendments shall be referred to the Planning Commission for public hearing and recommendation prior to consideration by City Council.

## Permits

For permits, applications, and fee schedules, please visit the [Permit & Application Center](#).

## Incentives & Resources

The City of Pontiac's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority provides incentives to businesses who redevelop contaminated, blighted and functionally obsolete sites to facilitate the reuse of the properties.

Incentives can include paying for cleanup-related costs such as demolition, site preparation, public infrastructure and lead and asbestos abatement, as well as environmental remediation.

Other incentives and resources can be found [online](#).