GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENT

Approval Authorities | Application Process | Review Procedure

Updated November 2025

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KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

City Manager's Office

Erik Tungate, City Manager | (248) 691-7402 | etungate@oakparkmi.gov

Adam Owczarzak, Deputy City Manager | (248)691-7401 | aowczarzak@oakparkmi.gov

Municipal Services

Kimberly Marrone , Director| (248) 691-7404 | kmarrone@oakparkmi.gov

Dan Fairless, Deputy Director | (248) 691-7456 | dfairless@oakparkmi.gov

Economic Development, Planning, and Zoning

Salam Habhab, Economic Development & Planning Specialist |(248) 691-7455 |shabhab@oakparkmi.gov

Engineering

Dan Samuel, Engineering Technician II | (248) 691-7452| dsamuel@oakparkmi.gov

Building

Jeff Wren, Building Official| (248) 691-7570 | jwren@oakparkmi.gov

Assessing

Assessor | (248) 691-7550 | wcaassessing@oakparkmi.gov

Finance Department

Saundra Crawford, Director | (248) 691-7491 | scrawford@oakparkmi.gov

Corridor Improvement Authority

Michelle Bishop, Manager of Authorities | (248) 691-2350 | mbishop@oakparkmi.gov

Department of Public Works

Dave DeCoster, Director | (248) 691-7465 | ddecoster@oakparkmi.gov

Scott LeMarbe, Deputy Director | (248) 691-7492 |slemarbe@oakparkmi.gov

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

City Council	
Meets on the first and Third Monday of each month, 7:00 pm	City Clerk: Ed Norris, (248) 691-7541
Planning Commission	
Meets on the first Monday of every month, 6:00 pm	Staff Liaison: Kimberly Marrone, (248) 691-7404 Salam Habhab, (248) 691-7455
Zoning Board of Appeals	
Meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month, 7:00 pm	Staff Liaison: Kimberly Marrone, (248) 691-7404 Salam Habhab, (248) 691-7455
Corridor Improvement Authority	
CIA meets on the third Thursday of each month, noon	Staff Liaison: Michelle Bishop, (248) 691-2350
Brownfield Authority	
Meets on an as needed basis at least once annually	Staff Liaison: Kimberly Marrone, (248) 691-7404 Michelle Bishop, (248) 691-2350
Recreation Commission	
Meets on the third Wednesday of every month, 7:00 pm	Staff Liaison: Laurie Stasiak, (248) 691-7576

APPROVAL AUTHORITIES TABLE

It is important that developers and residents understand the different local authorities who will approve or decline submitted applications. While the application and approval process can be discussed with the City Economic Development and Planning Department at pre-development meetings, this table provides a general view of what local authorities will be reviewing their applications.

APPROVING AUTHORITIES

ZONING OR PERMIT APPLICATIONS

APPROVAL AUTHORITIES TABLE	City Planning Department	Municipal Services Department	Planning Commission	Zoning Board of Appeals	City Council
Administrative Review (Sketch Plan)	X				
Site Plan Review			X		
Conditional Land Use	X		X		
Special Land Use			X		
Planned Development Area			X (Recommendation)		X (Approval)
Rezoning and Ordinance Amendment			X (Recommendation)		X (Approval)
Variance, Adm. Appeals, and Interpretation				X	
Building, Electrical, and other Construction Permits		X			

PLANNING AND ZONING

Master Plan

The City of Oak Park Master Plan serves an extension of the community's vision and goals for planning and land use. While the document doesn't explicitly regulate development in the City, it provides insight into what improvements or projects residents and business owners want to see in their community. The Master Plan is updated once every five years, keeping the document current with the perspectives of community stakeholders.

Applications of larger developments such as planned development area and special land uses require locations, design, and uses compliant with the Master Plan. It is highly encouraged for developers to review the plan to ensure their proposed construction aligns with the community's vision for the City of Oak Park.

The current Master Plan can be found on the City website at

Click here to view the City of Oak Park Master Plan 2020

Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance regulates the usage of properties and buildings while determining the parameters for new construction, redevelopment or significant change in use in the City of Oak Park. Regulations can apply City-wide, or be specific to the designated zoning district. If you have any questions regarding the Zoning Ordinance, please contact Salam Habhab (248) 691-7455, or by email at shabhab@oakparkmi.gov.

To view the full Zoning Ordinance, please see:

Click here to view the City of Oak Park Zoning Ordinance & Amendments

Zoning Map

The zoning map displays the different zoning districts that are established in the City of Oak Park. Zoning districts regulate specific uses, designs, and layouts for developments. Please consult the zoning map to determine what uses may be permitted at your site. To view the zoning map, please see:

Click here to view the City of Oak Park Zoning Map

PLANNING AND ZONING

Zoning Schedule of Uses, Area, Height, and Placement Requirements

The Zoning Ordinance has information on the permitted uses for each zoning district in both residential and non-residential/mixed use zones, as well as requirements/restrictions on development dimensions and lot sizes. Reading the Zoning Ordinance will help developers better understand the functions permitted for sites in each zoning district. For questions regarding the schedule of uses, area, height, and placement requirements, please contact Salam Habhab (248) 691-7455, or by email at shabhab@oakparkmi.gov

For information on residential districts, see the following sections in the Zoning Ordinance:

Article 2 Division 2 Residential Districts

For information on commercial, industrial, and mixed use districts, see the following sections in the Zoning Ordinance:

Article 2 Division 3 Commercial, Office and Mixed Use Districts

Article 2 Division 4 Industrial Districts

For additional standards that are applicable to all zoning districts, such as landscaping, lighting, and parking requirements, see the following sections in the Zoning Ordinance:

Article 3 Division 1 General Provisions

Article 3 Division 2 Architectural Building Standards

Article 4 Division 1 Off-Street Parking & Loading

Article 4 Division 2 Access and Circulation

Article 4 Division 3 Landscaping

Article 4 Division 4 Signs

Article 4 Division 5 Lighting

PLANNING AND ZONING

Fee Schedule

The fee schedule, located on the City of Oak Park Fee Schedule webpage, provides the costs for applications submitted for Planning approval.

Pre-Development Meetings

While not required, applicants are encouraged to meet with City staff for a conceptual review meeting prior to beginning the development process. Pre-development meetings serve to communicate clear expectations for application packages and inform the developer or key representative of specific regulations they need to meet in all steps of the application, review, and development process. With transparent and predictable expectations, developers can save time and money in creating an application package that is complete and ready for review, and it can help to promote a smooth approval process once the formal application is submitted. This is also an opportunity to explore large-scale matters like infrastructure needs, qualifications for tax abatements, tax implications of developments, and incentives that might be available through local, county, or state programs. Key staff as may be appropriate will be included in the meeting. To the extent permitted by the Freedom of Information Act, these conversations will be kept confidential until the owner is ready to submit formal documents.

The Pre-Development Meeting Guidelines can be found on the City's Website:

Pre-Development Meeting Guidelines

For more information or to schedule a meeting, please contact Salam Habhab (248) 691-7455, or by email at shabhab@oakparkmi.gov.

Design Guidelines

The City of Oak Park Zoning Ordinance promotes creative and cohesive architectural design to enhance the visual environment of the City. Maintaining quality design will have positive impacts on the site being developed and surrounding properties and help to maintain the City's sense of place. Quality architecture and harmonious aesthetics among sites will help to improve and retain property values, encourage investment for businesses, and maintain a positive image for the City's various industrial and commercial districts.

Article 3, Division 2 of the Zoning Ordinance includes architectural and design requirements that apply to all developments.

PLANNING AND ZONING

Notification Procedures

When certain development actions require a notification procedure compliant with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended), the City of Oak Park will publish notifications in a newspaper of general circulation and mail notification to the subject property and all persons owning property within 300 feet of the boundary of the subject property at least 15 days before the hearing. All occupants of apartment buildings within the 300 ft. Notices will describe the nature of the request or application review, identify subject property, state where and how the request or application review is being considered, and will indicate how written responses are being collected for the public hearing.

Other Helpful Planning and Zoning Links

Economic Development and Planning Department page

Boards & Commissions page

Planning Commission page

Zoning Board of Appeals page

Business License Application

SITE PLANS

Why are site plans required?

To ensure orderly development, a consistent level of quality in the community, harmonious relationship between building usages, and compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan, all development proposals must undergo site plan review and approval by the appropriate local authorities. Site plans provide general information on the property to be developed, details on the existing conditions of the property, and plans for proposed development, engineering, and building details.

Who approves site plans, and what is the process of approval?

Different uses and construction may require different levels of review, as detailed in *Article 5, Division 1 Site Plan Review* of the Zoning Ordinance. Some uses or projects are subject to review and approval only from City Administration. Larger buildings, special uses, planned development area projects, and other larger-scale construction projects are subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission, and in some cases, City Council.

Site plan review procedures, submittal requirements, and standards can be found in *Article 5, Division 1 Site Plan Review Requirements & Procedures* of the Zoning Ordinance.

A key resources for those applying for site plan review and approval is the Site Plan Application Packet. The packet includes:

- A checklist of required information and data for a site plan submittal
- Application for Site Plan Approval
- Other applicable documents such as Environmental Protection Screening, Turning Performance Analysis, and SEMCOG Non-Residential Development Project Form.

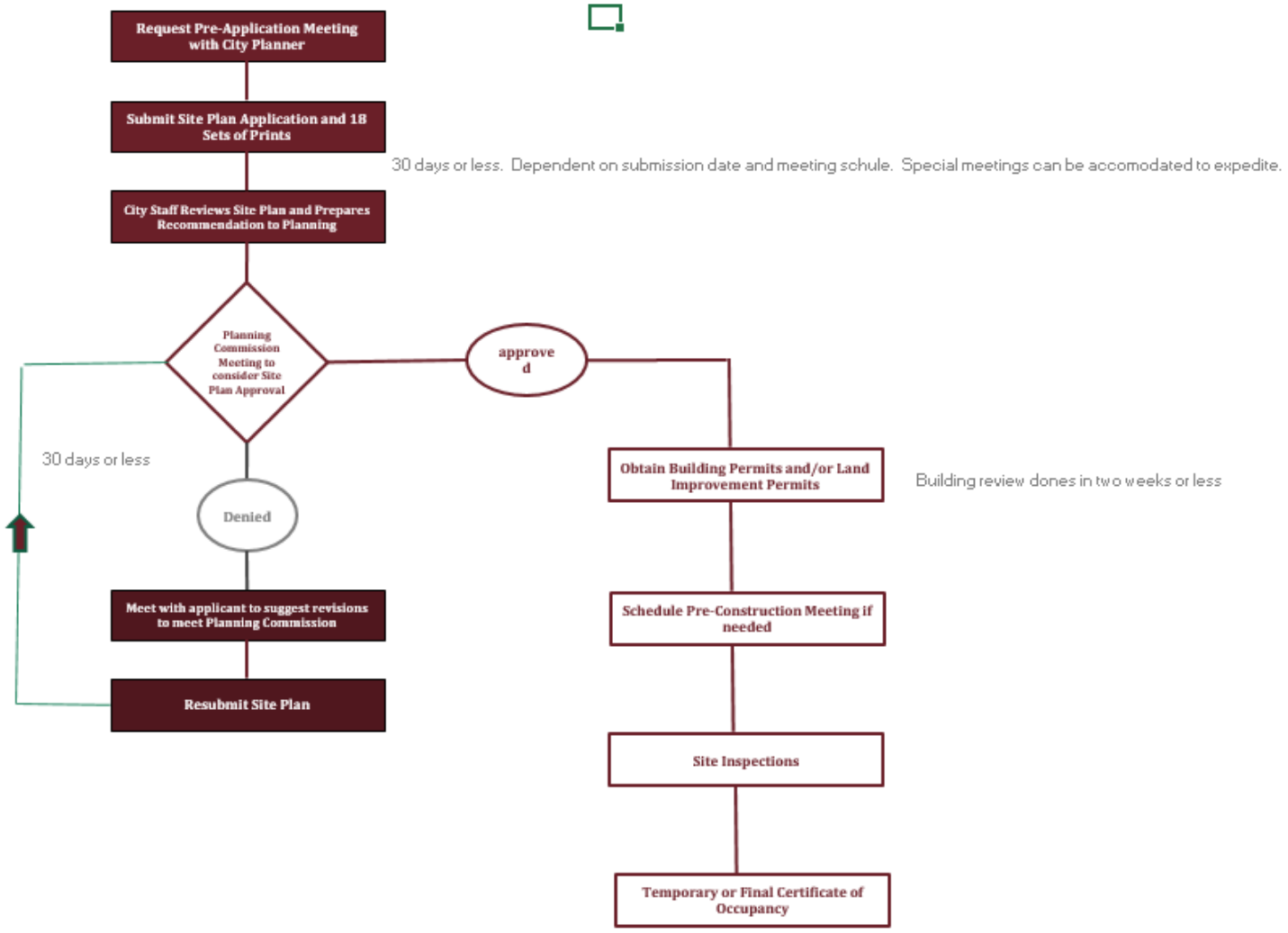
Site plan approval will be granted to site plans that are fully completed, adhere to the Zoning Ordinance and all other applicable City code, and are compatible with other uses of land in the vicinity. The City shall review the site plan for completeness, and shall obtain comments, as deemed necessary, from City departments or consultants. For more information on the approval process, view the relevant Zoning Ordinance sections in Article *5, Division 1 Site Plan Review Requirements and Procedures.*

How long does approval last?

Site plan approval is valid for a period of eighteen (18) months from the date of Planning Commission approval. Upon written application filed prior to the termination of the eighteen (18) month review period, the City Planner may authorize a single extension of the time limit for approval of a site plan for a further period of not more than 12 months. Such extension shall only be granted based on evidence from the applicant that the development has a likelihood of commencing construction within the extension period, the length of which shall be determined by the City Planner but which shall not exceed 12 months.

SITE PLANS

Oak Park Site Plan Application Process



SKETCH PLANS (ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL)

When is an administrative site plan required?

Not all projects require full site plan submittal and review. Some plans are eligible for sketch plan review and administrative approval. *Article 5 Division 1 Site Plan Review* in the Zoning Ordinance details what projects are eligible for sketch plan review.

Who approves administrative site plans, and what is the process of approval?

Projects eligible for administrative plan review are reviewed by the City Planner. The review may also include review by Building Official, Fire Marshall, DPW Department and the City's Engineer.

Sketch plan procedures, submittal requirements, and standards can be found in *Article 5, Division 1 Site Plan Review Requirements & Procedures* of the Zoning Ordinance.

Following submittal of an administrative site plan review for Planning Department review, the Planning Department will review and contact the applicant with any changes or with an approval within one month.

A fee will accompany the administrative site plan review. Please view the Planning Fee Schedule for more information.

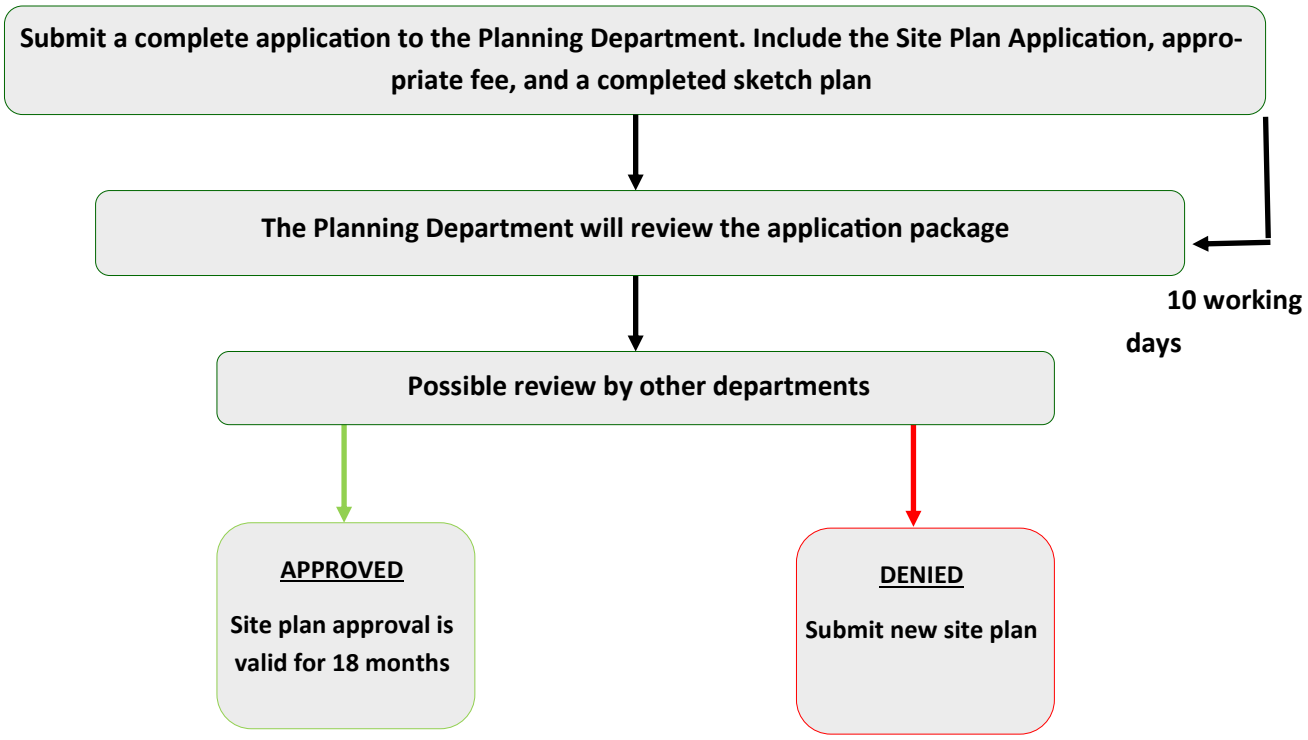
How long does approval last?

Sketch Plan approval is valid for a period of eighteen (18) months from the date of approval. Upon written application filed prior to the termination of the eighteen (18) month review period, the City Planner may authorize a single extension of the time limit for approval of a site plan for a further period of not more than 12 months. Such extension shall only be granted based on evidence from the applicant that the development has a likelihood of commencing construction within the extension period, the length of which shall be determined by the City Planner but which shall not exceed 12 months.

SKETCH PLANS (ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL)

Administrative Site Plan Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval): **30 Days**



SPECIAL LAND USE

What is a special land use permit?

Special land use permits are required for developments that may have uses consistent with the zoning district it occupies but have elements or features that are not suitable for every location within the zoning district. These elements could include increased traffic flow, odor, noise, or other nuisance effects.

How do I know if my project requires special land use approval?

The Zoning Ordinance includes a Schedule of Uses chart for each zoning district that details which uses are permitted, special land uses, or not permitted. Because of the case-by-case nature of the permit, it is highly recommended developers meet with the City for a pre-development meeting to determine whether a special land use application will be necessary and associated procedure and requirements.

How do I apply?

Standards for special land uses, including procedures, general and specific standards can be found in *Article 5, Division 4 Special Land Uses* of the Zoning Ordinance. A site plan is required to be submitted, in line with site plan review requirements, with the Special Land Use application.

The Site Plan Application can be found on the City's website.

A fee will accompany the special land use review. Please view the Fee Schedule or Site Plan Application for more information.

What is the approval process?

Once a complete application package is received, public notice will be distributed and a public hearing will be set. The Planning Commission will then hold a public hearing on the application, and can choose to approve, approve with conditions, or decline the application based on the submitted materials and public comment. For more details on procedures and standards, please review the relevant sections in *Article 5, Division 4 Special Land uses* of the Zoning Ordinance.

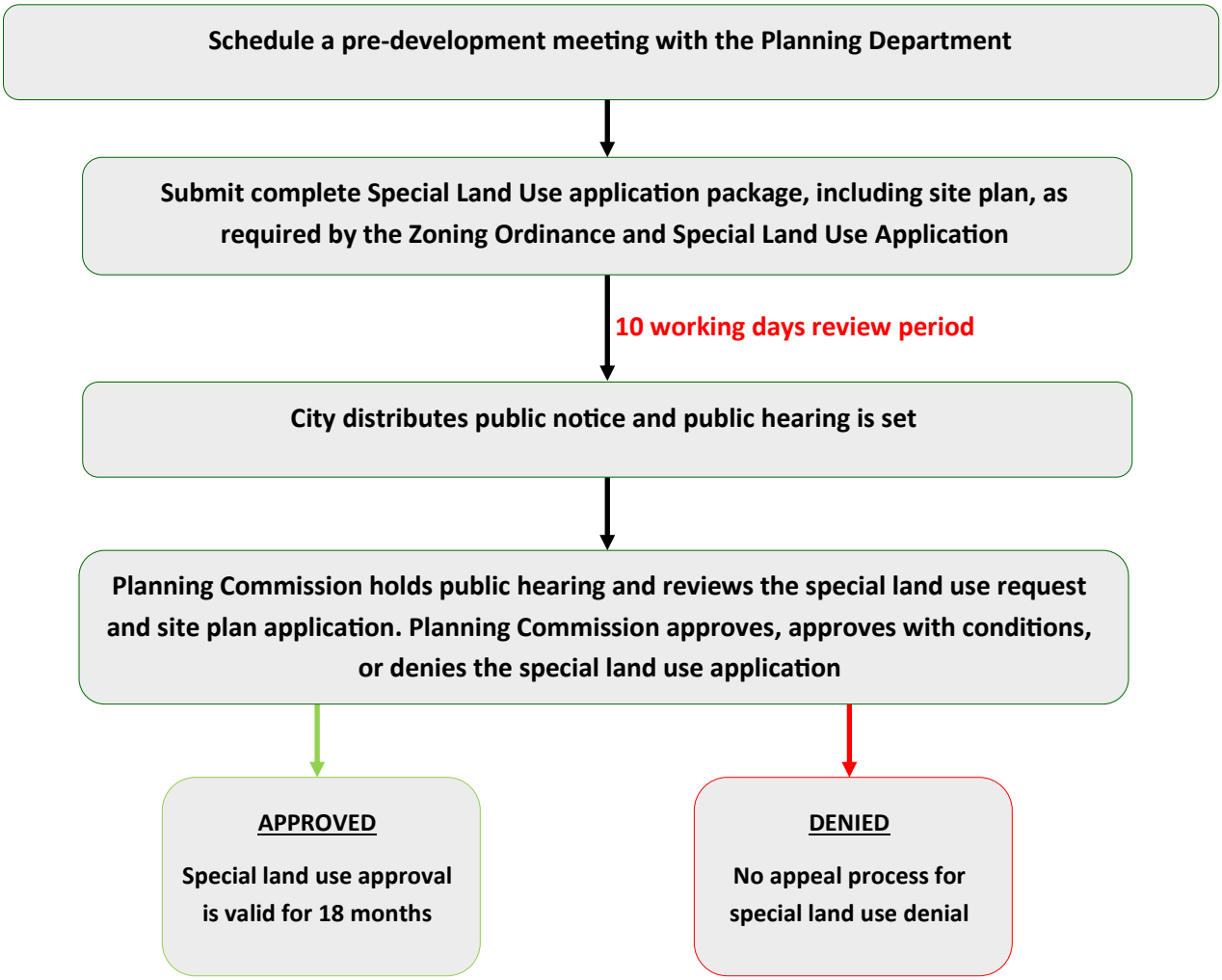
How long does approval last?

Special land use approval is valid for a period of eighteen (18) months from the date of Planning Commission approval. An extension may be authorized upon written application prior to expiration. Upon written application prior to expiration, the Planning Commission may authorize a single extension of the time limit for a further period of not more than one year, such extension shall only be granted based on evidence from the applicant that the development has a reasonable likelihood commencing construction within the one year extension.

SPECIAL LAND USE

Special Land Use Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval by designated body): **6 weeks***



* Requires public hearing, for which a 15-day publication notice is required. This is reflected in the estimated timeframe.

REZONING

Who can initiate a rezoning?

An amendment to change zoning district boundaries can be launched by property owners (or residents with the permission of the property owners), Planning Commission, or City Council.

What is needed to initiate a rezoning?

An amendment (initiated by a developer) is initiated by contacting the Planning Department. Standards for rezoning, including application procedure, rezoning procedure, and criteria for rezoning can be found in *Article 6, Division 4 Rezoning* of the Zoning Ordinance.

The Rezoning Application can be found on the City's website.

A fee will accompany the rezoning review. Please view the Fee Schedule for more information.

A pre-application conference with the Planning Department is recommended to discuss the level of detail and analysis that is involved in the rezoning application and *Article 6, Division 4.*

What is the review process?

After a petition to rezone is submitted to the City, it is considered at a Planning Commission meeting, where a public hearing is held. Notice will be sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet and published in a local newspaper. The Planning Commission will review and recommend approval or denial of the amendment. The proposed amendment and Planning Commission's recommendation will then be reviewed by City Council, who will vote to approve, modify, or deny. The action of City Council is final.

Factors that could go into the Planning Commission's recommendation and the City Council's review In considering any petition for an amendment to the official zoning map (rezoning), the following criteria in making its findings, recommendations, and decision:

- Consistency with the goals, policies and Future Land Use Map of the City of Oak Park Master Plan, including any subarea or corridor studies. If conditions have changed since the City of Oak Park Master Plan was adopted, the consistency with recent development trends in the area.
- Compatibility of the site's physical, geological, hydrological and other environmental features with the potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning district.
- The compatibility of all the potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning district with surrounding uses and zoning in terms of land suitability, impacts on the environment, density, nature of use, traffic impacts, aesthetics, infrastructure, and potential influence on property values.

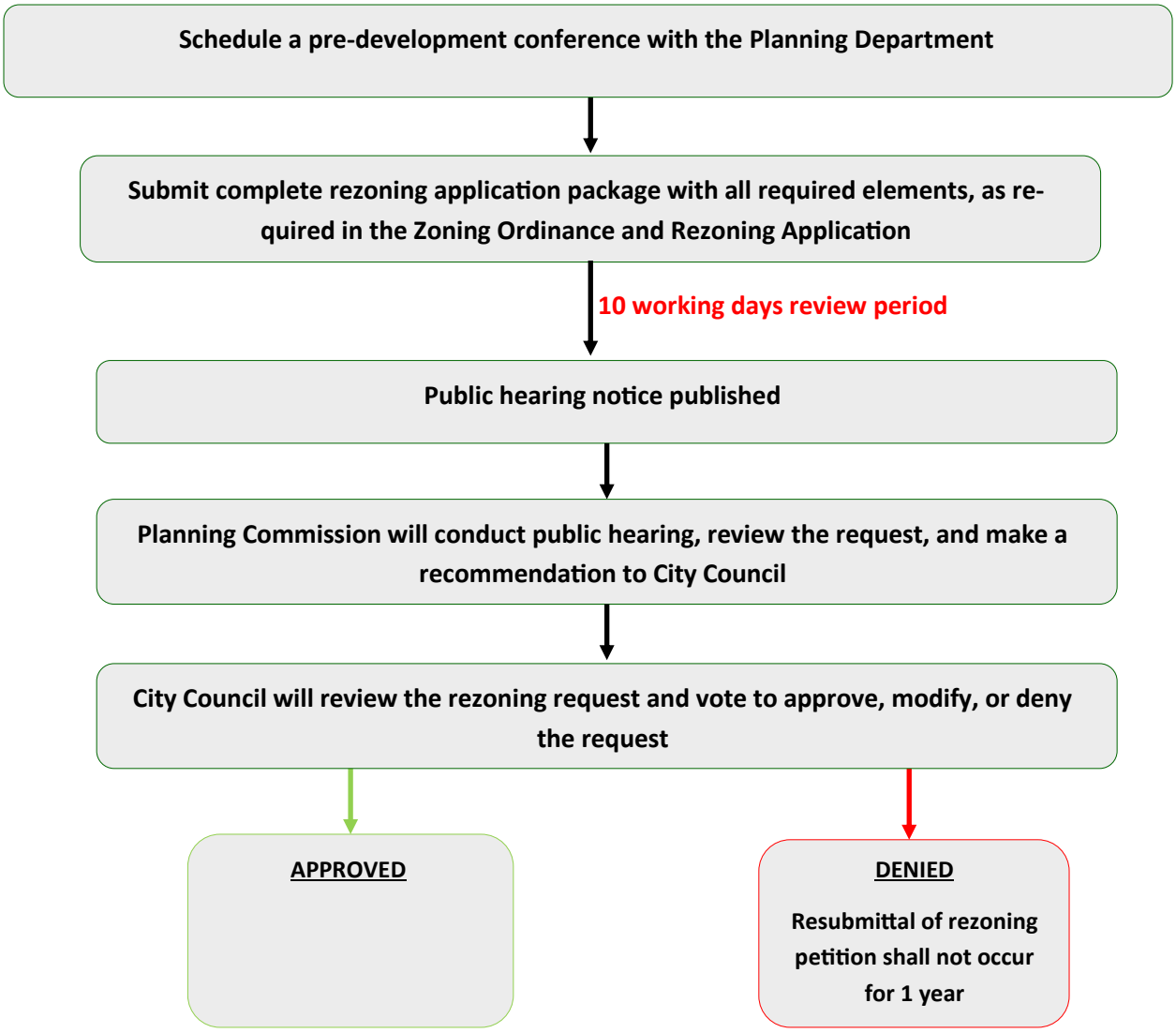
REZONING

- The capacity of city infrastructure and services sufficient to accommodate the uses permitted in the requested district without compromising the "health, safety and welfare" of the City.
- The apparent demand for the types of uses permitted in the requested zoning district in the City in relation to the amount of land in the City currently zoned to accommodate the demand.
- Where a rezoning is reasonable given the above criteria, a determination shall be made that the requested zoning district is more appropriate than another district or amending the list of permitted or special land uses within a district.

REZONING

Rezoning Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval by designated body): **6-9 weeks***



* Requires public hearing, for which a 15-day publication notice is required. This is reflected in the estimated timeframe.

ZONING COMPLIANCE (BUSINESS LICENSE)

What is a Zoning Compliance?

Zoning compliance serve as certification that the new business or changes to a site meet the zoning requirements and are a permitted use as detailed in the Zoning Ordinance. The City of Oak Park utilizes a business license to ensure that licensed businesses comply with safety codes to provide a safe environment for employees and customers as well as verify the site meets the zoning requirements and is a permitted use. A license also allows a business to opt into being listed on the City website and to be contacted for networking events.

Licenses are mandatory per City Code (Article 2, Licenses Generally), and are to be renewed annually.
If you own or represent a City of Oak Park business and want more information about obtaining or renewing a license, click the appropriate link below. Business License administration is available 8:00 am-5:00 pm Mon. -Thurs. and every other Fri. 8 a.m.—4 p.m. (closed on City holidays).

If you have any questions about any aspect of the licensing process, please contact us:

- By phone at (248) 691-7450
- In person at 14300 Oak Park Blvd.

How do I apply?

The application begins by completing a Business License Application that can be found on the City's website. The Planning Department will determine if it meets the zoning requirements and is an allowed use. Once the Planning Department approves or approves with conditions the applicant then must schedule a business license application with the Building Official and Fire Marshall. To schedule the inspections the applicant can contact the Technical and Planning Department at (248)691-7450. The business license application fee is paid at time of scheduling inspections. The business license is a requirement every year for a business to operate in the City and runs on a calendar year basis.

What is the review process?

The City Planner will review the application package for completeness and adherence to the Zoning Ordinance. The Building Official and Fire Marshall will conduct inspections after issuing zoning compliance approval to ensure that construction has remained compliant with regulations listed in the Zoning Ordinance. Once approved they recommend to City Council the approval of the business license.

ZONING COMPLIANCE (BUSINESS LICENSE)

Do I need zoning compliance for repairs or modifications?

Zoning compliance is not required for alterations which do not result in change in height, floor area, lot coverage, location of walls or other structural alterations. Further, facial alterations, installation of siding, windows, doors, shingles and replacements of existing or deteriorated materials and ordinary maintenance repairs made on all dwellings and their related outbuildings do not need zoning compliance. However, these modifications may still require building permits or other county, state, or federal permits. For more information or questions on improvements and required review, please contact the Technical and Planning Department.

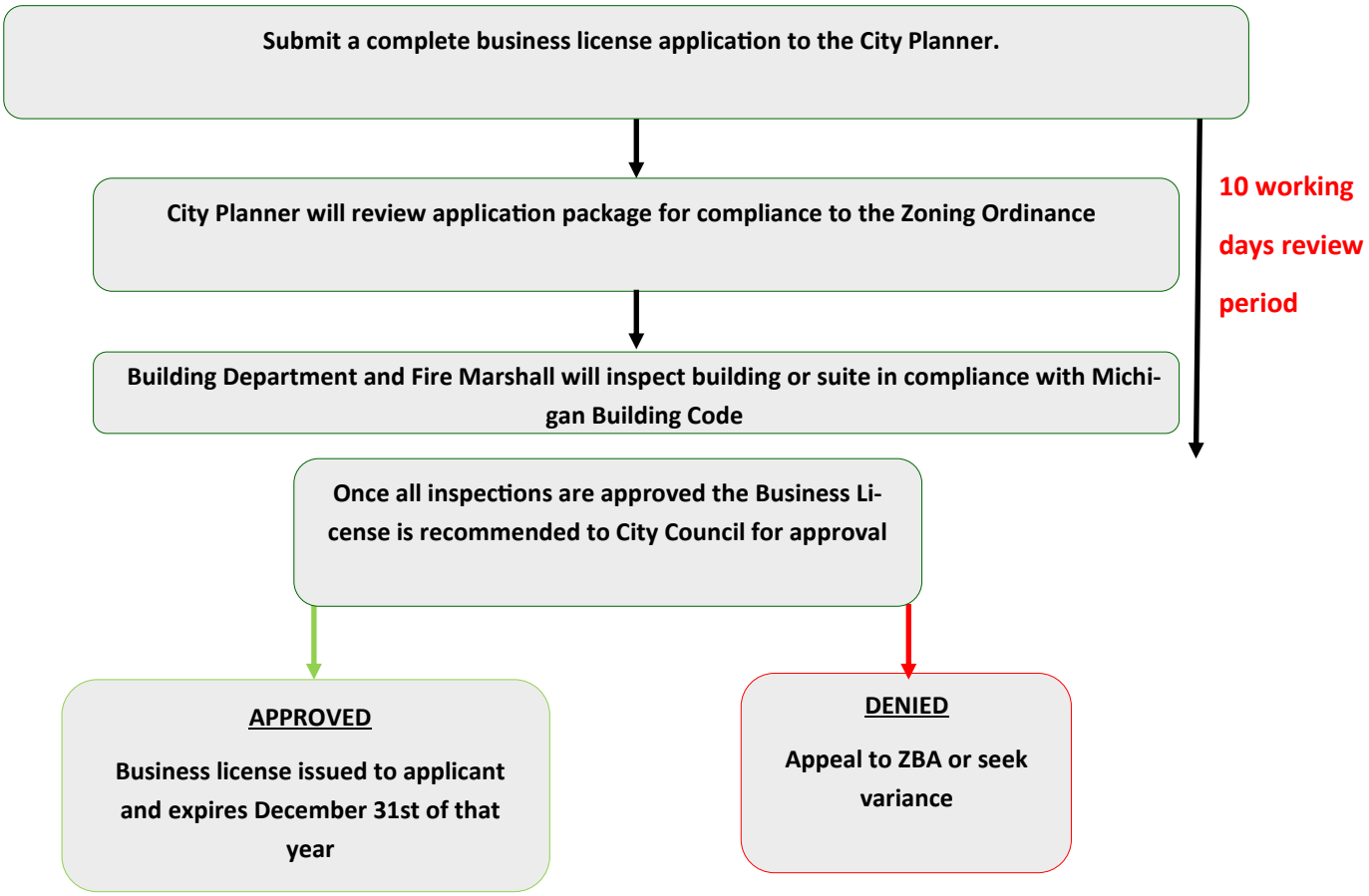
When does the business license expire?

Once approved, the business license is valid till December 31st and will need to be renewed annually.

ZONING COMPLIANCE (BUSINESS LICENSE)

Business License Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval by designated body): **10 working days**



PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

What is a planned unit development (PUD)?

The PUD standards are provided as a design option, intended to permit flexibility in the regulation of land development; to encourage innovation in land use, form of ownership (such as condominiums), and variety in design, layout, and type of structures constructed; to achieve economy and efficiency in the use of land; to preserve significant natural, historical, and architectural features and open space; to promote efficient provision of public services and utilities; to minimize adverse traffic impacts; to provide better housing, employment, and shopping opportunities particularly suited to residents of the City; to encourage development of convenient recreational facilities; and to encourage the use and improvement of existing sites when the uniform regulations contained in other zoning districts alone do not provide adequate protection and safeguards for the site or its surrounding areas.

What are the requirements for a planned unit development?

PUD standards are "overlay" zoning standards that apply to properties simultaneously with those of the underlying zoning district. Because planned development areas are permitted greater flexibility in design, structure, and capacity than traditional zoning districts, successfully applying the overlay to PUD requires greater commitment and action from the applicant to uphold the community vision. This could entail many things, including preserving natural features, creating open spaces and greenway corridors, mixing land uses and housing types, renovating or removing blight, and more.

In order to quality for PUD approval, the applicant must demonstrate that a list of qualifying conditions is met. These conditions can be found in *Article 5, Division 2 Planned Unit Development* of the Zoning Ordinance.

What are the benefits of a planned unit development?

PUD standards may allow the City to relax or waive one or more of the requirements of the underlying district. The use of the PUD also allows the developer the opportunity to mix compatible uses or residential types on a single property, allows clustering to reduce construction costs, and may enhance marketability through the preservation of significant natural, historical, and architectural features.

How do I apply for a PUD?

Prior to submitting a formal application, a concept plan for the proposed PUD project shall be presented to the Planning Department for their comments. This is not a formal review or approval, and is intended to flag issues and concerns to be resolved before a formal submittal is made.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

What is the approval process?

The application process for a PUD involves a three (3) step process including: an optional pre-application workshop; review of a preliminary (conceptual) site plan by both the Planning Commission and City Council; and review of a final PUD site plan by the Planning Commission.

The City attorney will prepare a PUD agreement that when approved by City Council, shall be entered into by the City and the applicant.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

Planned Unit Development Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval by designated body): **12-16 weeks***

Conceptual plan pre application presentation to Planning Department and Planning Commission for feedback

Optional

Submit complete Preliminary PUD Site Plan application package, as required by the Zoning Ordinance

10 working days review period

Planning Commission reviews preliminary PUD site plan request, holds a public hearing, and makes a recommendation to City Council. The Planning Commission can request additional materials or recommend conditions/ modifications

City Council reviews the preliminary PUD site plan request, holds a public hearing, and takes final action on the site plan submittal

APPROVED

City attorney prepares PUD agreement, to be entered into after City Council approval

DENIED

Appeals cannot be made to BZA. Modifications can only be granted by the Planning Commission.

Submit complete Final PUD Site Plan application package, as required by the Zoning Ordinance

10 working days review period

Planning Commission reviews final PUD site plan and takes final action

APPROVED

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

DENIED

Submit revised final PUD site plan for administrative approval

*Requires public hearing, for which a 15-day publication notice is required. This is reflected in the estimated timeframe.

DIMENSIONAL VARIANCES

What is a dimensional variance?

A dimensional, or non-use, variances are permissions or approvals of specific features and measurements on a property that are not aligned with the standards set in the zoning ordinance.

Who grants a dimensional variance?

Dimensional variances may be granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals after submission of a completed variance application and a public hearing in accordance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. A concurring vote of a majority of members of the board is required to grant the variance. The variance granted will be the minimum required to permit the applicant full use of their site while still considering the zoning ordinance regulations.

What are the requirements for a dimensional variance?

Non-use variances may be allowed only in cases where the applicant shows there is reasonable evidence of practical difficulty and that the following conditions are met, as noted in *Article 6 Division 3* of the Zoning Ordinance:

- Strict compliance with restrictions governing area, setback, frontage, height, bulk, density or other "non-use" matters will unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose or will be unnecessarily burdensome. The variance will do substantial justice to the applicant, as well as to other property owners.
- A lesser variance than that requested will not give substantial relief to the applicant and/or be consistent with justice to other property owners.
- The need for the variance is due to unique circumstances or conditions peculiar to the property and not generally applicable in the area or to other properties in the same zoning district such as exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography or area.
- The problem and resulting need for the variance has not been self-created by the applicant and/or the applicant's predecessor may or may not be considered depending upon whether the practical difficulty would have existed regardless of the action.
- The variance will not alter the essential character of the area. In determining whether the effect the variance will have on the character of the area, the established type and pattern of land uses in the area and the natural characteristics of the site and surrounding area will be considered.
- The granting of the variance will not materially impair the intent and purpose of this Ordinance.

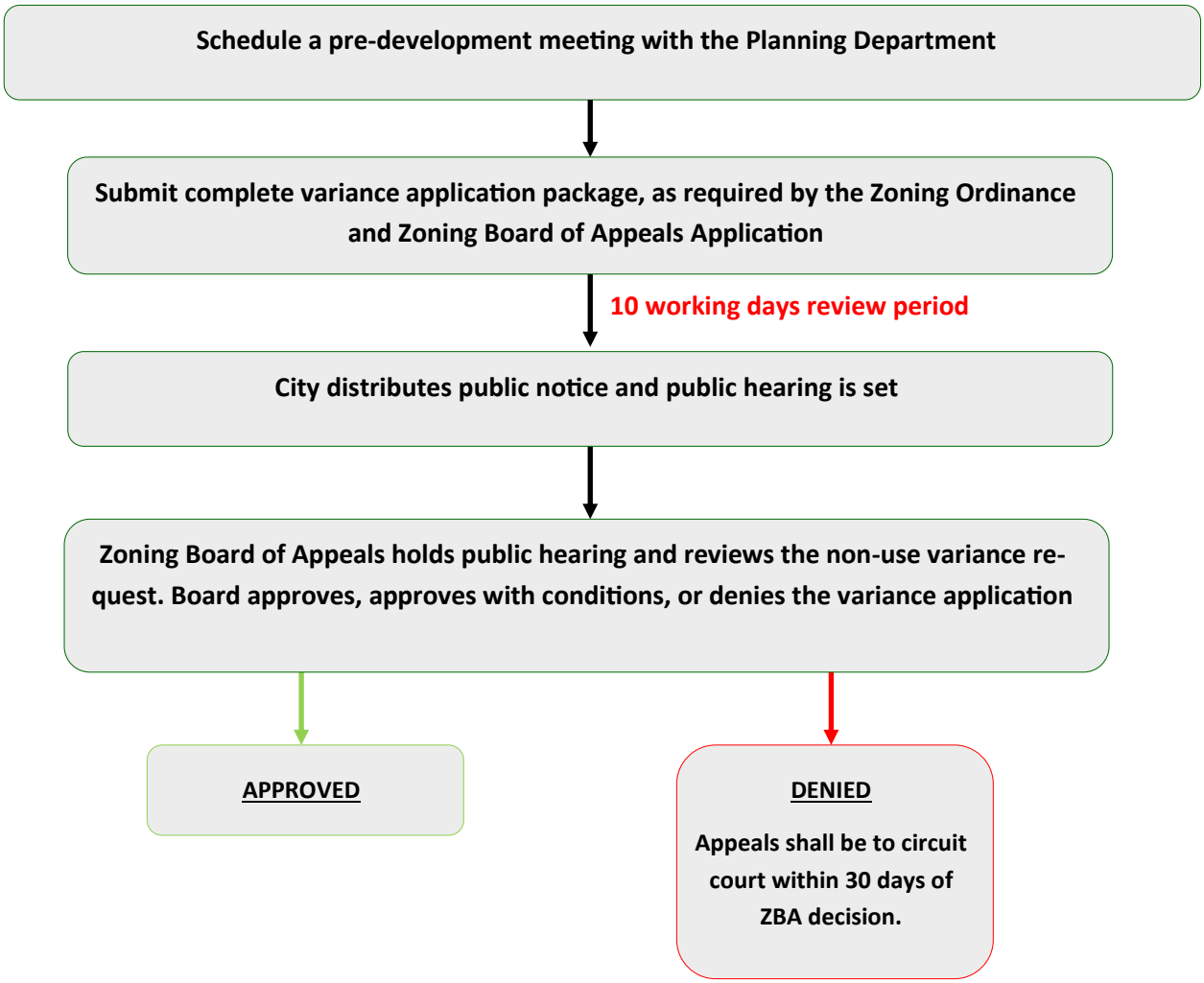
How do I apply for a dimensional variance?

Standards for dimensional or non-use variances, including criteria and process, can be found in *Article 6 Division 3* of the Zoning Ordinance. Prior to submitting an application, the applicant should meet with the City Planner to determine if a dimensional variance is needed. After receiving the variance application, public notice will be distributed. The Board of Zoning Appeals will review the request, hold a public hearing, and decide to approve, approve with conditions deemed reasonable, or deny the dimensional variance request.

DIMENSIONAL VARIANCES

Dimensional Variance Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval by designated body): **4 weeks***



* Requires public hearing, for which a 15-day publication notice is required. This is reflected in the estimated timeframe.

USE VARIANCES

What is a use variance?

Use variances are granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals for properties that cannot be used for purposes as permitted in the zoning district.

Who grants a use variance?

Use variances may be granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals after submission of a completed variance application and a public hearing in accordance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. The variance granted will be the minimum required to permit the applicant full use of their site while still considering the Zoning Ordinance regulations.

What are the requirements for a use variance?

Use variances may be allowed only in cases where the applicant shows there is evidence of unnecessary hardship and that the following conditions are met:

- The property cannot be reasonably used for any purpose permitted in the zoning district without the variance.
- The need for the variance is due to unique circumstances peculiar to the property and not generally applicable in the area or to other properties in the same zoning district. The applicant must prove that there are certain features or conditions of the land that are not generally applicable throughout the zone and that these features make it unreasonable to develop the property without some adjustment.
- The problem and resulting need for the variance has not been self-created by the applicant and/or the applicant's predecessors.
- The variance will not alter the essential character of the area. In determining whether the effect the variance will have on the character of the area, the established type and pattern of land uses in the area and the natural characteristics of the site and surrounding area will be considered.

How do I apply for a use variance?

Standards for dimensional or non-use variances, including criteria and process, can be found in *Article 6 Division 3* of the Zoning Ordinance. Prior to submitting an application, the applicant should meet with the City Planner to determine if a dimensional variance is needed. After receiving the variance application, public notice will be distributed. The Board of Zoning Appeals will review the request, hold a public hearing, and decide to approve, approve with conditions deemed reasonable, or deny the dimensional variance request.

USE VARIANCES

What is the approval process?

Prior to submitting an application, the applicant should meet with the City Planner to discuss the use variance. After receiving the variance application, public notice will be distributed. The Zoning Board of Appeals will review the request and hold a public hearing. During the public hearing, the applicant will have the burden of proof before the Zoning Board of Appeals and must adequately display a use variance is warranted. The hearing will begin with the community representatives presenting on the zoning regulations involved. Then, the applicant will present their evidence and expert witnesses supporting their claim that a use variance is warranted. Witnesses may be required to attend, with the purpose of the ZBA asking questions regarding their testimony.

Interested persons attending the hearing will also have an opportunity to present their perspective and evidence on the use variance, to which the applicant may respond. A continuation may occur if the public hearing on the use variance is not completed within the given meeting time.

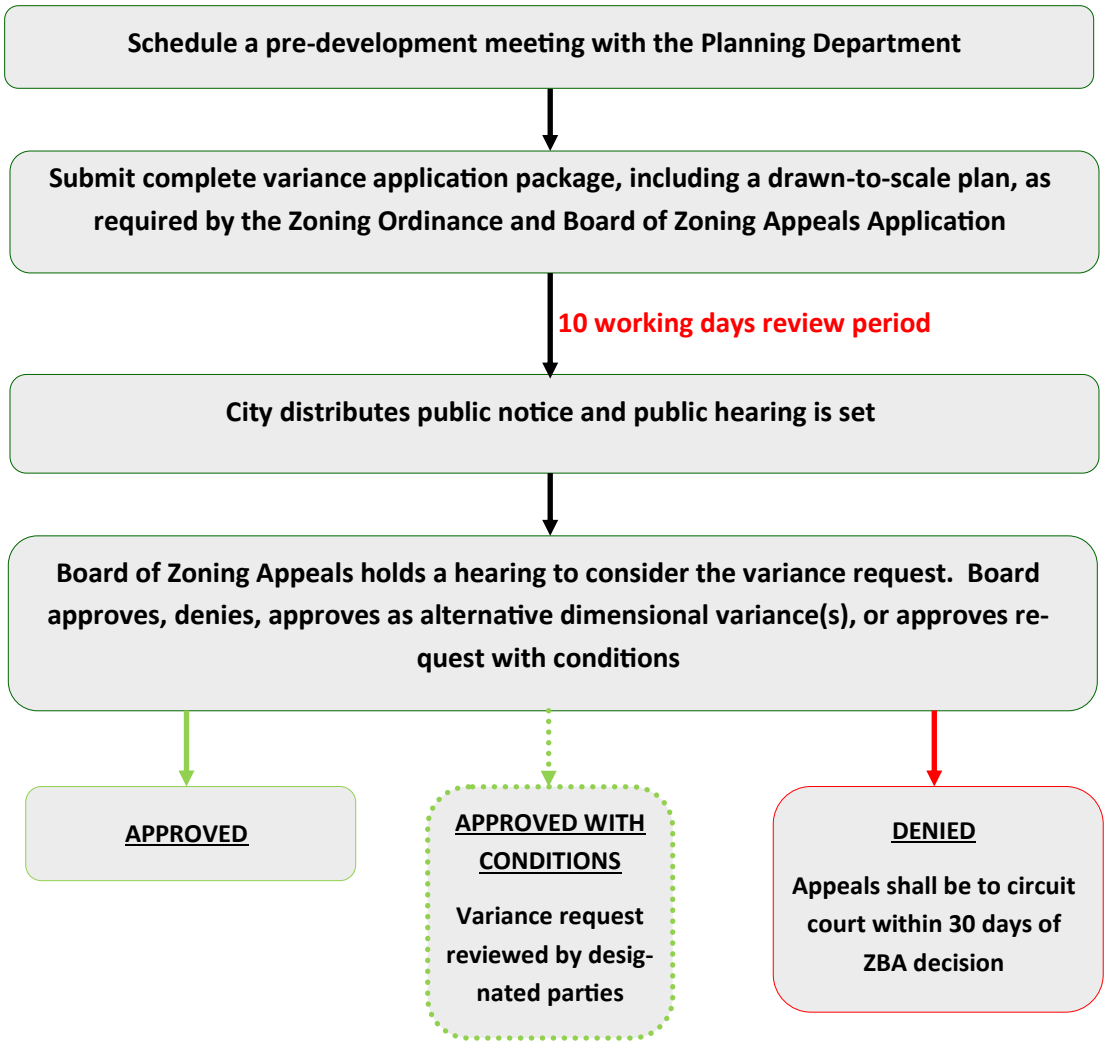
The Zoning Board of Appeals may make its decision to grant or deny the use variance at the end of the meeting, or schedule a date for its decision, depending on whether review of presented evidence is necessary for members. If the ZBA decides to grant a variance to the applicant, it will do so in a manner that is most compliant with established ordinances. The variance can be in the form of a use variance, as applied for, or dimensional variances that will permit property to function in its allowed use. Conditions may be imposed on the variance.

A use variance can only be allowed by the ZBA in a case where there is evidence of unnecessary hardship and that a list of conditions are met, including that the property cannot be reasonably used for uses permitted in the zoning district, that unusual conditions of the specific parcel created these barriers of use, that the character of the neighborhood will be unaffected by the use variance, that infrastructure and public services are unaffected by the potential use variance, and that the practical difficulty creating the need for the variance is not self-created.

USE VARIANCES

Use Variance Application and Review Flowchart

General estimated timeframe (from submittal to City to approval by designated body): **4 weeks***



* Requires public hearing, for which a 15-day publication notice is required. This is reflected in the estimated timeframe.

BUILDING PERMITS

Who approves construction permits such as building, electrical, and plumbing?

All permitting and inspections regarding construction and utilities are approved and scheduled by the Technical and Planning Department.

What is required to apply?

Certain documents and information are required to be submitted with the building permit application. Information required for all buildings permits include the address of the job site, zoning compliance, a complete signed application by the proper applicant, a set of construction plans, and permits including electrical, plumbing, and mechanical/heating. There may be further information including additional permits and certifications depending on the architecture and materials of the structure, its geographic location, or environmental factors possibly impacted by the construction. Fees accompany each permit. Municipal Services Department documents, including applications, can be found in the City's website.

Where can I find out more about inspections?

Permit type	When is it required?
Building Permit	Constructing, enlarging, altering, repairing, moving, demolishing or changing the occupancy of a building or structure.
Electrical Permit	Installing new electrical wiring, equipment, or altering electrical wiring.
Plumbing Permit	Installing new plumbing fixtures or altering present ones.
Mechanical Permit	Installing new mechanical/heating fixtures or altering present ones.
Soil Erosion Permit (Oakland County)	Moving or changing earth within 500 ft. of a lake or stream, changes that occur over 1 acre, and gravel operations within 500 ft. of a lake or stream or over 1 acre in size.

Inspections will be required at multiple points throughout the project, for each permit issued. Inspection scheduling is a responsibility of the developer, and should occur when the work is ready for inspection. City inspectors will perform the mandatory inspections a reasonable amount of time after the request for inspection has been made.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Industrial Facility Tax (IFT) Abatement

To encourage greater industrial development and spur manufacturing opportunities for developers, business owners, and laborers, the City of Oak Park offers tax incentives for development involving industrial-based businesses. These incentives can be applied in the expansion of pre-existing facilities, renovation of aging facilities, and constructing of new facilities, per PA 198 of 1974. The Industrial Facilities Exemption certificate can provide property tax abatement for a maximum of 12 years, based on the criteria determined by the City. For more information contact Municipal Services Director, Kimberly Marrone (248) 691-7404, or by email at kmarrone@oakparkmi.gov.

Brownfield Tax Increment Financing

Brownfield Tax Increment Financing, through PA 381 of 1996, allows developers to receive reimbursement on environmental and non-environmental redevelopment activities. Brownfields are properties and or sites that are contaminated, blighted, functionally obsolete or hold historic value. Reimbursement for costs associated with redeveloping brownfields occurs through the collection of incremental state and local taxes as the taxable value of the property increases through the revitalization process. To benefit from brownfield TIFs, developers will need to work with the City of Oak Park to produce a workplan for state review (Michigan Strategic Fund for non-environmental activities, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for environmental activities).

To learn more about the Brownfield Program, initial evaluations, and work plan development, please contact the Municipal Services Director, Kimberly Marrone (248) 691-7404, or by email at kmarrone@oakparkmi.gov.

Obsolete Property Rehabilitation

Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act provides for a tax incentive to encourage the redevelopment of obsolete buildings that are contaminated, blighted or functionally obsolete. The goal is to rehabilitate older buildings into vibrant commercial and mixed-use project. Fact Sheet Oak Park Guidelines can be found on the City's website.

Commercial Redevelopment Act

PA 255 Commercial Redevelopment Act - This program encourages the replacement, restoration and new construction of eligible commercial property by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 12 years. Fact Sheet

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Commercial Rehabilitation Act

PA 210 Commercial Rehabilitation Act - This program encourages rehabilitation of eligible commercial property 15 years or older by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 10 years. The primary purpose of the facility must be for operation of a commercial business enterprise or multifamily residential use. Fact Sheet

Neighborhood Enterprise Zone

The Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Act (Act 147 of 1992, as amended)(the "Act) provides a tax incentive for a defined period of time for new construction or substantial rehabilitation of residential structures, and under certain circumstances, for rental apartments. The stated purpose of the legislation is to: improve the housing stock in distressed or declining urban areas where little or no new construction is occurring and where housing is in need of repair. The legislation is intended to spur residential investment where it might not otherwise occur. Properties benefiting from a Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ) exemption must be located within an NEZ established by the City Council. The Act provides for the establishment of Geographic NEZs or Project Specific NEZs. Fact Sheet

Corridor Improvement Authority Façade Grant Program

The City of Oak Park CIA created the Façade Grant Program to encourage private investments in the City's commercial corridors. The program is designed to encourage redevelopment, revitalization, and rehabilitation of buildings in the areas designated in the CIA.

The program is intended to enhance the aesthetics of the CIA District and assist property owners in rehabilitating and upgrading the facades and exterior features of their buildings. For more information, please contact Michelle Bishop (248) 691-2350, or by email at mbishop@oakparkmi.gov.

Other Incentive Opportunities

In addition to the options listed above, the City is always looking at new and existing tools to support economic development. Other opportunities may involve public infrastructure assistance, partnership opportunities, and other creative options. With that in mind, please reach out to Municipal Services Director, Kimberly Marrone (248) 691-7404, or by email at kmarrone@oakparkmi.gov to discuss your project, what assistance you need, and to discuss how the City can be a partner in making your project happen.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Oakland County Economic Development

Oakland County is the economic center for the state of Michigan, providing leading-edge services and programs that help the county continue to make the transition to the economies of the future. These initiatives spearhead a positive business environment and maintain job growth and a high quality of life for our citizens. Oakland County offers a variety of services, including:

Small Business Loans	Business Grants	Workforce Development
Regional Facts/Statistics	Federal Contracting	International Business Development
Legal and Financial Education	Business Networking	Economic Forecasting

For more information about programs and services from Oakland County Economic Development, contact info@advantageoakland.com, or (248) 858-0720.

Detroit Regional Partnership

The Detroit Regional Partnership offers confidential, no-cost assistance to domestic and international companies interested in investing in the 11-county Detroit Region. They specialize in helping companies understand and access the competitive advantages of our region. The DRP works with companies and site selectors to help manage your projects, navigate our real estate market, and support your transition into the Metropolitan Detroit community. With resources in site selection, project management, regional data, talent assessments, and regional networking, the DRP and the City of Oak Park work together to ensure your business will be successful here.

For more information, head over to www.detroitregionalpartnership.com

Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), in collaboration with its economic development partners, markets Michigan as the place to do business, assists businesses in their growth strategies and fosters the growth of vibrant communities across the state. The MEDC provides a variety of services:

Export and International Trade	Access to Business Capital	Startup and Entrepreneurial Support
Mobility and Electrification	Defense Industry Connections	Federal Contracting Assistance
Site Selection	Business Development Incentives	Talent Development Incentives

For more information, head over to www.michiganbusiness.org

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Oak Park Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)

The City of Oak Park has been actively pursuing ways to create vibrant corridors. For years, the disinvestment in the commercial corridors in Oak Park has created a need for revitalization. The purpose of this plan is to maintain and upgrade the economic viability of the designated corridors for a period of twenty years. This plan will not be renewed.

The City Council, determining that it is necessary in the best interest of the public to halt property value deterioration and increase property tax valuation where possible in its business districts, to eliminate the causes of deterioration and to promote economic growth, hereby declares its intention to and hereby does create and provide for the operation of the City of Oak Park Corridor Improvement Authority, pursuant to Act No.280, 2005, MCL 125.2871 et seq. as amended, of the State of Michigan. In the adopted Resolution No. CM-09-356-15 approving the creation of the Corridor Improvement Authority ("CIA"), the Board was established and the TIF and Development Plans were created. The plans set forth guidelines for which the city will be able to undergo extensive streetscape projects consisting of a road diet, pocket parks, and bike lanes along the Nine Mile Corridor, Façade Grant Funding, Parking Lot creation/Improvements, Marketing, Events, Landscaping, and more. The cost of these projects will be financed through tax increment financing and grant funding and therefore requires a descriptive plan of attack.

The plan states that the duration of the development and tax increment financing plan shall be from 2016-2036. The Corridor Improvement Authority will make any existing final debt service payments during the 2034-2035 fiscal year. Therefore the development and tax increment financing plans will expire on July 1, 2036. The plan will serve as a catalyst for a number of improvements within the commercial districts and corridors.

If you have any questions or are interested in volunteering for the CIA please feel free to reach out to Michelle Bishop (248)691–2350, or by email at mbishop@oakparkmi.gov.

Additional information can be found on the City website Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)