GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENT

redevelopment **ready**
communities®

A tool for Michigan communities looking to clearly articulate development processes by creating a guide to development.

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

INTRODUCTION

The guide to development includes a snapshot overview of the development review process in your municipality. The guide explains the review processes, policies, steps, and other relevant information for applicants. Links to web pages and contact information are provided throughout the document for easy access to the most up-to-date forms, applications, and all other pertinent information. The final section summarizes the economic incentive programs used by the municipality.

The guide is general and does not remove the responsibility of an investor to speak with staff or obtain professional guidance. Each case is unique and may require modification of the general process. The document is not intended to include all the requirements of ordinances or codes, nor is it a replacement for the zoning ordinance or other local ordinances. You should direct applicants to review the specific ordinances and talk to responsible staff about their projects as applicable.

A community's guide to development can be demonstrated in book/paper format, or in the form of a well-organized webpage(s) online. In either case, the guide to development must be accessible online. This document is intended to assist a community's staff in creating a guide to development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The guide to development's intent is to help residents/developers/investors understand the review and approval processes by clearly articulating your municipality's requirements. The guide should apply to any sized project and all applicants, whether they are a single-family homeowner or a professional developer.
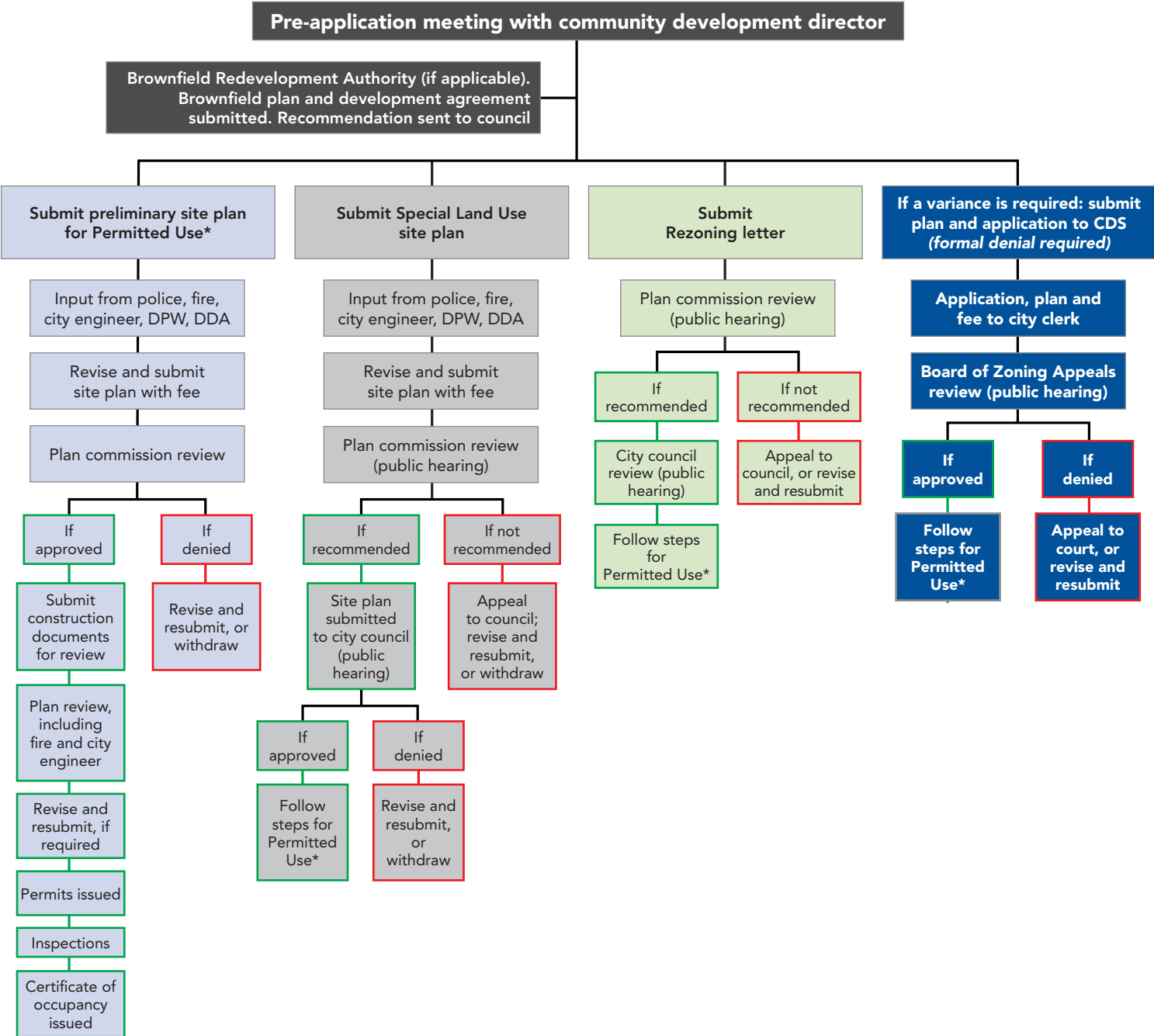
The checklist can ensure you have included applicable information in your guide to development to meet RRC best practices.

Completed	Not applicable	A CHECKLIST
☐	☐	**General Information**
☐	☐	Contact Information Table
☐	☐	Approval Authorities Table
☐	☐	Meeting Schedules
☐	☐	Pre-application Meeting Procedures
☐	☐	Community Vision: Planning
☐	☐	Zoning
☐	☐	Zoning Map
☐	☐	Zoning Table of Uses
☐	☐	Notification Procedures
☐	☐	**Land Use Application**
☐	☐	Fee Schedule
☐	☐	Site Plan Application
☐	☐	Site Plan Application Requirements
☐	☐	Zoning Compliance
☐	☐	Development Review Process
☐	☐	Development Review Process Flowchart
☐	☐	Rezoning Process and Application
☐	☐	Variance Process and Application
☐	☐	Special Land Use Process and Application
☐	☐	Permitting and Inspections Requirements and Applications
☐	☐	**Single-family Improvements**
☐	☐	**Multi-family Improvements**
☐	☐	**Financial Assistance Tools**
☐	☐	**Design Guidelines**

Provide an introduction and instructions for your readers. An introduction of the development review process should include a synopsis and the layout of the document. Flowcharts can visually aid readers *(see Example 1)*.

Tell readers what they can generally expect from the development review process, such as the requirement for site plan review. Mention the opportunity and requirements for public participation and link users to your community's public participation plan.

Pre-application meeting with community development director

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (if applicable). Brownfield plan and development agreement submitted. Recommendation sent to council

Submit preliminary site plan for Permitted Use*	Submit Special Land Use site plan	Submit Rezoning letter	If a variance is required: submit plan and application to CDS *(formal denial required)*
Input from police, fire, city engineer, DPW, DDA	Input from police, fire, city engineer, DPW, DDA	Plan commission review (public hearing)	Application, plan and fee to city clerk
Revise and submit site plan with fee	Revise and submit site plan with fee		Board of Zoning Appeals review (public hearing)
Plan commission review	Plan commission review (public hearing)		

Submit preliminary site plan for Permitted Use*

- Plan commission review
  - If approved
    - Submit construction documents for review
    - Plan review, including fire and city engineer
    - Revise and resubmit, if required
    - Permits issued
    - Inspections
    - Certificate of occupancy issued
  - If denied
    - Revise and resubmit, or withdraw

Submit Special Land Use site plan

- Plan commission review (public hearing)
  - If recommended
    - Site plan submitted to city council (public hearing)
      - If approved
        - Follow steps for Permitted Use*
      - If denied
        - Revise and resubmit, or withdraw
  - If not recommended
    - Appeal to council; revise and resubmit, or withdraw

Submit Rezoning letter

- Plan commission review (public hearing)
  - If recommended
    - City council review (public hearing)
    - Follow steps for Permitted Use*
  - If not recommended
    - Appeal to council, or revise and resubmit

If a variance is required: submit plan and application to CDS (formal denial required)

- Board of Zoning Appeals review (public hearing)
  - If approved
    - Follow steps for Permitted Use*
  - If denied
    - Appeal to court, or revise and resubmit

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CONTACT INFO

This section clearly details applicable departments, staff, contact information and duties. It should be written as a quick reference guide, preferably in an easy-to-read table *(see Example 2).*

Example 2: Contact information table

Department name	Key contact	Title	Telephone #	E-mail address	Primary responsibilities

Include the following:

a. Municipality
    i. Website
    ii. Address
    iii. Phone number
    iv. Hours of operation

b. Staff *(Create a table, see Example 2 above)*
    i. Department name
    ii. Key contacts
    iii. Titles
    iv. Telephone and email
    v. Primary responsibilities

c. Boards & Commissions *(This can be a separate table)*
    i. Board
    ii. Responsibility
    iii. Meeting information: Date/time/location

Include responsibilities such as: zoning compliance, economic development assistance/site selection, building permits, water & sewer, business licenses, outdoor dining, rental licenses, and others to easily direct applicants to different development aspects

REVIEWING BODIES FOR DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS & TIMELINE

The guide should explain how and when each staff member is involved in the development review process. It is helpful to include a link to a use matrix that specifies whether site plans can be approved administratively, by the planning commission, or the governing body.

Most zoning ordinances incorporate these tables in the site plan review chapter. If yours does not have one, a table should be created that matches up the type of project with the review authority that will have the ultimate decision making power. Suggestions include: type of activity (remodel, addition, new construction), size of project, or a projects use. This table should make it easy for an applicant to understand the thresholds for each project that would trigger additional review and identify the approving authority (administrative, planning commission, legislative body).

A "Table of Approval Authorities" identifies a community's various land use applications and their approving authorities *(Example 3, below)*. It is important to make sure users are also familiar with the zoning ordinance, so that they are aware that exceptions can be made in certain situations. For example, often, the building official can use his discretion to recommend that a proposal be viewed by a planning commission, even if it could be approved administratively.

Example 2: Table of approval authorities

	Planning Commission Approval	Governing Body Approval	Zoning Board of Appeals	Administrative Approval
Rezoning		X		
Planned Unit Development		X		
Special Land use	X[1]			
Site Plan	X[1]			X[2]
Zoning Compliance				X
Variance			X	
1 Some planning commissions make a recommendation to the governing body related to special land use and site plan approvals; please revise to meet specific ordinance requirements. 2 Some site plans may be administratively approved; revise to meet specific ordinance requirements.				

MASTER PLAN

It is important that your master plan is made available online. A master plan describes a community's vision and is frequently referred to by residents and potential investors. Readers of the master plan should be informed that the future land use map and zoning plan serve as the basis for all land use decisions. Your guide to development should recommend prospective developers review the master plan to ensure their proposal is consistent with the community's vision. It should be made clear that the master plan is the guiding document and the zoning ordinance establishes land use law.

ADDITIONAL PLANS

Many communities have supplements to their master plans, such as transportation plans and downtown development plans. List the plans, describe their applicability and provide links to the documents.

Master Plan: *Insert Link*
Future Land Use Map: *Insert Link*
Sub-area Plan(s): *Insert Link*

ZONING ORDINANCE

The guide to development should include a link to your zoning ordinance and zoning map. A reference to the site plan review chapter of the ordinance is useful to have here, but make sure not to rely on the ordinance to convey all important information to applicants. Ordinance language can be confusing, so we will use the next section to detail the site plan review and zoning amendment processes in more clear language.

A lot of ordinances provide a table of uses. A copy of this table or a link to it can be provided here. The table of uses helps property owners and prospective property owners identify the uses permitted in each zoning district. If your municipality does not have a table of uses, now is the time to create one!

Zoning Ordinance: *Insert Link*
Zoning Map: *Insert Link*
Zoning Table of Uses: *Insert Link*

MICHIGAN ZONING ENABLING ACT

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) is the state legislation that creates and restricts zoning regulations in Michigan. Importantly, it requires certain notification and public hearings processes. The zoning ordinance may identify the same requirements as the state legislation or it could require additional requirements. Make sure to properly identify correct notification procedures for each type of application in the land use applications section.

STATE REQUIRED NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES:

A notice shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation and mailed or hand delivered to the subject property and all persons owning property within 300 feet of the boundary of the subject property at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing. Occupants within apartment buildings must also be notified if the apartment has less than 12 units.

The notice shall:
• Describe the nature of the request.
• Identify any property that is the subject of the request, including all street addresses contained upon the property, or other means of parcel identification.
• State when and where the request will be considered.
• Indicate when and where written comments will be received concerning this request.

This section is designed to provide an overview of each type of land use application. It should be recognized that the overview does not preempt or supersede any part of the zoning ordinance. Each of the types of applications should be detailed in your zoning ordinance. Review the zoning ordinance for standards, requirements, and procedures as they will vary from community to community. These are suggested components to make your process efficient and effective. Wile they may not be part of your process now, these overviews should be considered to compliment your existing application process.

ZONING COMPLIANCE

The purpose of a zoning compliance or determination is to ensure the proposed use, building, structure and lot all conform to the requirements of the zoning ordinance. This is the first step in the development review process. It is important to determine compliance first in order to know the next steps to take.

Zoning Compliance/Determinations Application:
                                                        Insert Link

PRE-APPLICATION

A pre-application meeting is a great way to make sure applicants are on the right track. Let readers know how to schedule a pre-application meeting, what to bring, and what to expect from this meeting. Let the user know that these meetings are not mandatory but a useful and productive step in the development review process.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Site Plan Review is required to ensure that your community develops in an orderly fashion in conformance with the zoning ordinance. Refer to the table of uses to help users identify the uses and projects that require site plan review. Let applicants know how to apply, what is required in the application, and the procedure.

The procedural detail should include the following:
a. Submittal/administrative review, time frame
b. Design review or other applicable requirements
c. Planning commission review and action
d. Final site plan review submittal
e. Effect and expiration of approval—time limits and work completion
f. Amendment and violations

Site Plan Review Application: *Insert Link*
Table of Uses: *Insert Link*

ZONING AMENDMENTS/REZONING

When a property owner wants to use land in a way that is not permitted by the existing zoning of the property, the owner must request to rezone the property to a classification that permits the desired use. Detail the process, the specific criteria and standards for review, application requirements and links, and the procedure for approval. Rezoning requests require a public hearing and proper notification; make sure you highlight this as a step in procedure.

Zoning Amendment Application: *Insert Link*

SPECIAL LAND USE

Some uses in a district are not permitted by right, but may be allowable as a special or conditional use due to certain characteristics of the use. These uses may require additional review and discretionary decisions by the planning commission based on standards and regulations provided for in the zoning ordinance. Refer to the table of uses to help users identify the uses that require a special land use permit. Provide a link to the chapter in the zoning ordinance that specifies specific use standards for special uses. Let applicants know how standards and criteria are reviewed for compliance and what information they should provide in their application.

Detail the procedure for special land use review including, time frames, public noticing requirements, review and approval authorities, expiration of approval, revocation and appeals. Let applicants know that site plan review is an additional requirement of special land use approval. A flow chart is a good way to easily portray the review process.

Special Land Use Application: *Insert Link*
Table of Uses: *Insert Link*
Special Uses Specific Criteria: *Insert Link*

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The planned unit development, or PUD, is a mechanism provided by the MZEA to allow flexibility in zoning requirements for certain projects. Explain the intent of the PUD to help developers identify whether this is a good option or not for them. PUDs typically have a various standards and criteria an applicant has to meet; state these or provide a link to the applicable requirements. The PUD process typically is multi-phased, requires a public hearing, and requires approval from the governing body. Review your zoning ordinance for accuracy in describing the process and requirements for approval.

As the PUD runs with the land, it is important to describe the effect of approval and modification procedures.

PUD Application: *Insert Link*

SPECIAL MEETINGS

Outline the process for special meetings, including timelines and notification requirements.

VARIANCES AND APPEALS

Commonly, applicants do not understand the importance of appropriately responding to criteria of variance application criteria. This section of the guide is a great opportunity to describe the criteria and their importance in grating a variance.

Describe the application requirements, process (including timelines) and requirements for public noticing.
1. Standards and criteria
2. Application
3. Public Noticing
4. ZBA review and action
5. Public hearing
6. Effect of approval and denial

BUILDING PERMITS

Building permits are required for a variety of projects, ranging from single-family residential pool projects to commercial construction. Identify the different types of building permits your municipality issues, the application requirements for each, schedules and authorities for review, procedures, and who to contact for assistance. Be sure to identify details of inspections, and permit validity.

BUILDING OCCUPANCY

In this section, specify the requirements and procedures for rental licenses, business licenses, liquor licenses, and certificates of occupancy.

INCENTIVE TOOLS

List the different types of incentives your municipality offers, such as Brownfield Redevelopment, façade programs, tax abatements, property assessed financing, and others. Let users know the requirements needed for the incentives, how the incentives work, and who to contact for more information.

DESIGN GUIDELINES OR FORM-BASED CODE

Provide information on design guidelines or adopted form based codes. *Insert Link*