



Site Plan Review

Site Plan Review is administered by the City-Parish Planning Commission. Site Plan Review involves the examination of certain site and development plans to ensure that structures and uses within East Baton Rouge Parish are properly related to the proposed site and surrounding properties.

Site Plan Review can alleviate problems due to poor design and incompatible land uses. The process establishes a framework where residents, developers, governmental agencies and planning professionals can communicate and resolve issues concerning the proposed site and its surrounding properties. To ensure quality development, Site Plan Review requirements include specifications on structural height, electrical/sewerage utilities, drainage, yard dimensions, traffic circulation, servitude and the location and/or orientation of the building, air conditioning units, loading facilities and pedestrian walkways in relation to adjacent properties.

In 1995, at the request of the City-Parish Planning Commission, a committee was formed to revise and update the existing Site Plan Review requirements, and to further update the "Site Plan Checklist." The committee consisted of members representing residents, the development community and the Metropolitan Council, and was assisted by the City-Parish Planning Commission Staff.

The Site Plan Review Committee's tasks included the interpretation of existing requirements; determinations on deficiencies within the existing requirements; research on Site Plan Review processes and planning concepts from other cities; and preparation of recommendations to the Planning Commission. The committee also consulted with the Baton Rouge Growth Coalition, local engineers, and the Louisiana Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for professional guidance and input on current site plan issues in Baton Rouge.

The committee examined the applicability of the existing Site Plan Review process for developments or tracts of land located in the City-Parish, specifically looking at the following questions:

- 1) Which developments are required to participate in the Site Plan Review process?

- 2) In what manner and by whom are the plans to be reviewed?
- 3) How shall the public be notified and solicited for comments on the proposed site?
- 4) To what extent should the Staff Site Plan Checklist be revised?

These questions were answered through several months of Site Plan Review Committee meetings in 1995. In October 1995, the committee presented Site Plan Review revisions and amendments to the City-Parish Planning Commission. Following Planning Commission approval, the Metropolitan Council adopted the revisions in November 1995. The Site Plan Review provisions are included in the Unified Development Code (UDC), and became effective on January 1, 1996.

First Threshold

The Site Plan Review process now includes two separate "thresholds" for site plan approval. The thresholds are minimum size and development standards that determine if a project must go through Site Plan Review, and which process it must go through. The two thresholds are designed to speed up the application process for building permits on large-scale projects.

All projects equal to or in excess of the following thresholds must be submitted for Site Plan Review:

- 1) Projects with 75 residential units, offices, shops, stores or other uses;
- 2) Buildings containing 30,000 square feet or more;
- 3) Additions to buildings of 30,000 square feet or greater in which the addition is 20 percent or more of the aggregate floor area. (If a building is 30,000 square feet, a Site Plan Review is necessary for an addition of 6,000 square feet or greater.)

Second Threshold

A second threshold has been established which requires a different Site Plan Review process. The second threshold requirements are for:

- 1) Projects of 100 residential units, offices, shops, stores or other uses;
- 2) Buildings containing 50,000 square feet or more;
- 3) Additions to buildings of 50,000 square feet or greater in which the addition is 20 percent or more of the

aggregate floor area. (If a building is 50,000 square feet, the second threshold is met for an addition of 10,000 square feet or greater.)

First Threshold Process

Developers with projects meeting the requirements of the first threshold, but not the second threshold, need only Planning Commission Staff approval of the site plan. The proposed site plan must be submitted to the Planning Commission Staff for review, and it must conform to Site Plan Checklist specifications. If the project does not meet specifications and the developer wishes not to conform with Staff recommendations to improve the site plan, an appeal may be filed with the Planning Commission. No public hearing is required.

Second Threshold Process

Developers with projects equal to or surpassing the requirements of the second threshold must obtain Planning Commission approval. Second threshold projects must be submitted to the Planning Commission Staff for Site Plan Review, and they will be subject to the Site Plan Checklist. Following Staff review and approval, the plans go before the Planning Commission. A public hearing is required.

Public Notification and Input

Planning Commission staff notifies all properties owners within 150 feet of Site Plans exceeding the second threshold.

Public notification allows for the community to comment on a project proposal, and for the Planning Commission and its Staff to consider public input for revisions to site plans. This process of public input was chosen by the Site Plan Review Committee as an approach to resolving controversial community issues relative to land use. This process of public notification has had wide and successful use in other major cities.

Site Plan Checklist

The Site Plan Checklist was developed by the Site Plan Review Committee with assistance from the Planning Commission Staff, and local engineers and developers who were invited to participate in development of the list. Subject to the Site Plan Checklist requirements are all projects which are equal to or in excess of any of the threshold requirements previously listed. Applicants will be required to provide the requested site plan information in order to assist the Planning Commission Staff in the determination of the project's validity.

The Site Plan Checklist guides applicants through the Site Plan Review process by listing all information required on or with site plans. Among required checklist items are a vicinity map, a planning summary, a legal description, drainage impact studies, a stormwater management plan, sewage treatment, existing site features, adjoining property information, proposed plan, circulation/parking, streets, and a structures and landscape plan. Based on guidelines developed by the City-Parish Department of Public Works, a "Limited" or "Comprehensive" Traffic Impact Statement will be required.

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