

# Evaluate Site Plan Review Requirements

## City Council Discussion – July 6, 2020

The following ideas were discussed by the City Council on July 6, 2020:

- Some of our local architects and developers pointed out that for small projects our planning process is costly and cumbersome
- Handful of modest projects can't be done because it's too cumbersome, difficulty, lengthy to go through the process
- These factors contribute to favoring larger developers making larger buildings
- Adjustments could help with historic preservation and climate goals
- Adjustments could support reuses of smaller buildings
- Consider/recognize that some projects are so small they shouldn't have to go through the site plan process
- Streamlining recommendations are excellent

## Adopted City Council Resolution – July 6, 2020

### A Resolution Directing the Planning Commission and City Administrator to Evaluate Section 5.29.6 Site Plans of Chapter 55 – Unified Development Code and Propose Amendments to Adjust Site Plan Authority Thresholds and Improve the Communication of Requirements

Whereas, The Purpose of Chapter 55 – Unified Development Code is to require City review and approval of the Development of certain Buildings, Structures, land uses, and the creation of new Lots, all of which can have significant economic, social, and environmental impact on the community as a whole and on adjacent parcels and land uses;

Whereas, Section 5.29.6 supports this purpose by stipulating that a site plan is required to construct, install or place any Building or site improvement or remove or disturb any Natural Features in accordance with the requirements and standards in this chapter;

Whereas, Section 5.29.6 further describes exemptions, authorities, and content that is required to satisfy City expectations toward the purpose;

Whereas, Section 5.29.6 is organized in a manner that requires the potential consultation and reference of numerous subsections to determine the requirements and authority for approval of some site plans and corresponding development;

Whereas, The existing standards and requirements for Site Plan submission and authority for approval can serve as a detriment at times of incremental improvements, reuse of existing buildings or sites, or create other barriers toward investment in the City;

Whereas, The existing standards and requirements are simultaneously seeking to advance City goals to ensure infrastructure, natural features, and other community attributes are not adversely impacted by proposed development or redevelopment;

RESOLVED, That the City Council directs the City Administrator and Planning Commission evaluate potential amendments to Section 5.29.6 of Chapter 55 – The Unified Development Code, and any

relating sections to consider site plan requirement and authority thresholds, and improved communication of requirements;

RESOLVED, That the City Council directs the Community Services Administrator to assemble an advisory workgroup to provide input and feedback on the amendments developed in response to this Resolution;

RESOLVED, That such amendments will be based in comparisons to other communities, analysis of past site plan projects in the City, and an approach that maintains a higher authority and process burden for larger projects involving policy decisions compared to smaller, more modest development proposals;

RESOLVED, That proposed Amendments consider and recommend changes to Section 5.29.6 Site Plans that amend thresholds for development proposals and or site alterations by amending approval authorities for such projects to reduce the time and level of authorization to facilitate such projects;

RESOLVED, That proposed Amendments additionally consider and recommend changes to Section 5.29.6 Site Plans that improve usability and more effectively communicate types of projects and the corresponding process and/or authority requirements; and

RESOLVED That proposed Amendments will be presented to the City Council by December 31, 2020.

#### Planning Commission Working Session – July 14, 2020

Discussion of proposed evaluation/review:

- Consider thresholds based on scale of project
  - How do other communities establish levels of review
    - Emphasize Michigan community examples
    - Detroit – No site plan review for 12 units or less
    - Visual examples of projects in reference communities
  - Review last five years of projects; How would any adjustments have impacted those proposals?
- Should modification remove any self-reporting of scale factors that determine different levels?
- Citizen Participation should remain at current levels even if threshold adjustments occur.
- Matrix/table approach – What items are required to meet current standards/What items could remain out of compliance?
- Consider context – Commercial site plan in a commercial area may require lower standard than commercial site plan in a residential area.
- Use, square feet, number of homes, environmental impacts, floodplains; variety of factors could determine thresholds for review/approval
- Think about procedures independent of requirements

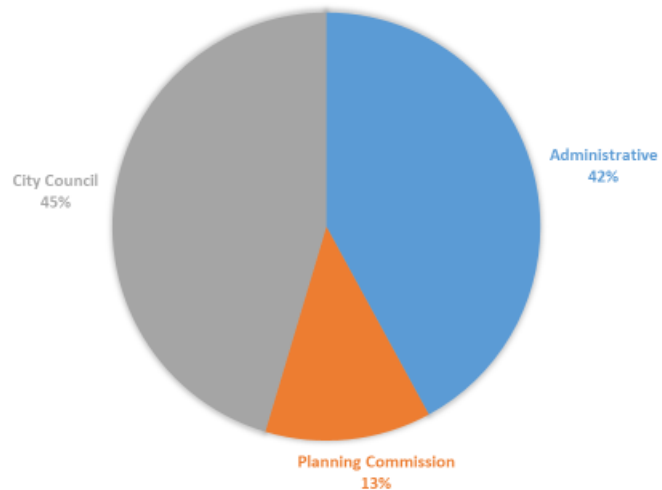
#### Ordinance Revisions Committee – July 28, 2020

Overview of existing regulations (summary of current thresholds in UDC).

History of Site Plans:

## Submitted Site Plans – 10 Year History

- 390 Total Submitted Site Plans
  - 164 for Administrative Approval (42%)
  - 49 for Planning Commission Approval (13%)
  - 177 for City Council Approval (45%)



### Ordinance Revisions Committee – September 22, 2020

- Draft table for discussion/presentation of thresholds attached.
- Staff will provide overview of Detroit, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Traverse City, East Lansing, Ypsilanti comparisons. Discussion of other communities to review/consider.
- Development standards listing – evaluation applicability changes