



# Guide to Development

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## City of Vassar Contact Information

### **Mailing Address**

287 E Huron Ave  
Vassar, MI 48768

### **Website**

[www.cityofvassar.org](http://www.cityofvassar.org)

### **Email**

[amcarthur@cityofvassar.org](mailto:amcarthur@cityofvassar.org)

### **Phone**

(989) 823-8517

### **Fax**

(989) 823-3315

## Key Development Contacts

### City Manager & Zoning Administrator

Andrew Niedzinski: (989) 823-8517/ [citymanager@cityofvassar.org](mailto:citymanager@cityofvassar.org)

### City Clerk/Treasurer

Merri Lemke: (989) 823-8517/ [mlemcke@cityofvassar.org](mailto:mlemcke@cityofvassar.org)

### Public Works

Ryan Stein: (989) 823-8517/ [rstein@cityofvassar.org](mailto:rstein@cityofvassar.org)

### Police Department

Ben Guile: (989) 823-8517)

### Fire Department

Mike Rogers: (989) 823-8517/ [MRogers@cityofvassar.org](mailto:MRogers@cityofvassar.org)

### Assessor

Dave Kern: (989) 239-6619

### Building Department and Inspections (Tuscola County)

SAFEbuilt: (989) 262-4546/ [tuscolapermit@safebuilt.com](mailto:tuscolapermit@safebuilt.com)

## Partner Organizations

[Vassar Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation](#)

## Utility Providers

Electric: [DTE Energy](#)

Gas: [Consumer's Energy](#) (800-805-0490)

Water & Sewer: [City of Vassar](#) (989) 823-8517

Trash Service – [Republic Services](#)

## Boards & Commissions

### **Approval Authorities**

The City of Vassar’s staff and different boards and commissions all play a part in the development process. It is important that residents, business owners, and developers understand who holds approval authority over the different applications and stages of this process. This table provides a general understanding who makes recommendations [O] and who provides the final approval [X]

	Zoning Administrator	Planning Commission	Zoning Board of Appeals	Downtown Development Authority	Economic Development Corporation	City Council
Zoning Permit	X					
Site Plan Review (Single-Household Residential)	X					
Site Plan Review (All Others)	O	X				
Special Land Use		X				
Planned Unit Development		O				X
Rezoning/Ordinance Amendment		O				X
Variance			X			
Appeal			X			
Development Incentive	O	O		O		X

**Regularly Scheduled Meetings**

All regularly scheduled meetings take place in the Council Chambers of Vassar City Hall, located at 287 E Huron Ave during regular business hours.

**City Council**

First Monday of the Month at 7:00pm.

**Planning Commission**

Third Monday of the Month at 6:30pm.

**Downtown Development Authority**

Second Wednesday of the Month at 8:00am.

**Economic Development Corporation**

Third Thursday of the Month at 7:00pm.

**Special Meetings**

**Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)**

The ZBA schedules a meeting when necessary. To request a meeting of the ZBA, a completed application and fee are required. Requested meetings must comply with local and state laws regarding public notices.

## Development Resources

### **Zoning Ordinance & Map**

The City of Vassar’s Zoning Ordinance regulates the development and usage of properties and buildings within city limits. Regulations may apply to the entire city or to specific, designated zoning districts, which may be found on the zoning map. To view the full zoning ordinance, please see the [insert chapter of the zoning ordinance] on the City’s website. Please consult the City Manager with any questions.

### **Master Plan**

The City’s Master Plan summarizes the community vision for Vassar’s future and guides local policy regarding development and redevelopment. In addition to compiling demographics and characteristics, as well as identifying opportunities and goals for the community, the Master Plan provides a Future Land Use map, that serves as the basis for rezoning properties to align development with the community’s interests. The 2022 Master Plan is available on the City’s website and is updated once every five years.

### **Capital Improvement Plan**

The City’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a tool approved by the City Council and utilized by City staff to coordinate the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements, such as roads and water utility infrastructure, over a six-year period. This document is revised annually, typically in March, and may be found on the City’s “Vassar Citizen’s Financial Guide” page.

### **Fee Schedule**

The Fee Schedule available on the City’s website, provides the fees and other costs associated with applications and other development processes. The fee schedule is generally updated in March of each year by the City Council and runs through the next fiscal year.

### **Development Incentives Policy**

The City Council has adopted a Development Incentive Policy, which sets the criteria in applying for and guides the Council’s decision in approving a tax abatement (after a district has been established) or other incentive. The City of Vassar established a Commercial Redevelopment District in the Downtown, streamlining the process to applying for a tax abatement in that area. Developers may request the establishment of tax abatement districts under either the IFT or CRD acts.

For more information on the policy, or to obtain an application, visit the City’s website or contact the City Manager.

### **Applications & Forms**

The city provides development applications and forms online and at the City Offices. For more information or clarification on any of the following applications, please contact the City Manager.

- Zoning Permit Application
- Special Land Use Permit Application
- Zoning Board of Appeals Application
- Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment and Rezoning Petition
- Development Incentives Application
- Signage Permit Application
- Fencing Permit Application
- Tree Removal Permit Application

## **Building Permits**

Developers are eligible to seek a building permit once obtain a Zoning Permit from the City of Vassar. Tuscola County has contracted with SAFEBuilt for all building permits. SAFEBuilt may be contacted at (989) 262-4546 or [tuscolapermits@safebuilt.com](mailto:tuscolapermits@safebuilt.com).

## **Business Licenses**

### **Doing Business As/Assumed Name**

The [Tuscola County Clerk](#) offers an online Business Registration Certificate. For more information, contact the Tuscola County Clerk's office at (989) 672-3780 or [clerk@tuscolacounty.org](mailto:clerk@tuscolacounty.org).

### **State Business Licenses**

The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) handles business licensing on a state-level, including corporations, limited liability companies, limited liability partnerships, and non-profit corporations. For more information, contact LARA at (517) 335-9700.

### **Sales Tax Licensing**

The Michigan Department of Treasury provides both online registration and fillable forms for sales tax licensing. For more information, contact the Treasury's General Information Hotline at (517) 335-7508 or the Treasury Sales and Use Tax Hotline at (517) 636-6925.

### **Liquor License**

The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) handles liquor licensing for businesses. For more information, contact MLCC at (866) 813-0011 or [LARA-MLCC-Licensing-Information@michigan.gov](mailto:LARA-MLCC-Licensing-Information@michigan.gov).

### **Food Licensing**

The Tuscola County Health Department (TCHD) manages licensing for food businesses within the county. For more information, contact TCHD at (989) 673-7490.

### **Marihuana Licensing**

Both medicinal and recreational marihuana facilities are allowed in the City of Vassar. Per the Vassar City Code of Ordinances, the city may grant licenses for both recreational and medicinal marihuana facilities within the Vassar Industrial Park. For more information and an application for a marihuana license, please contact the City Manager at (989) 823-8517 or email at [citymanager@cityofvassar.org](mailto:citymanager@cityofvassar.org).

## Paths to Development

### Conceptual Review Meeting

Prior to submitting a Zoning Permit Application, Zoning Board of Appeals Application, or any other permit, prospective applicants are encouraged to meet with the City Manager for a conceptual review of the project. These meetings are free of charge and provide an opportunity for an informal consultation of the project with City staff to identify any barriers and opportunities prior to applicants investing substantial time and resources into a formal site plan draft and review. To schedule a conceptual review meeting, contact the [City Manager](#).

### Zoning Permit Applications

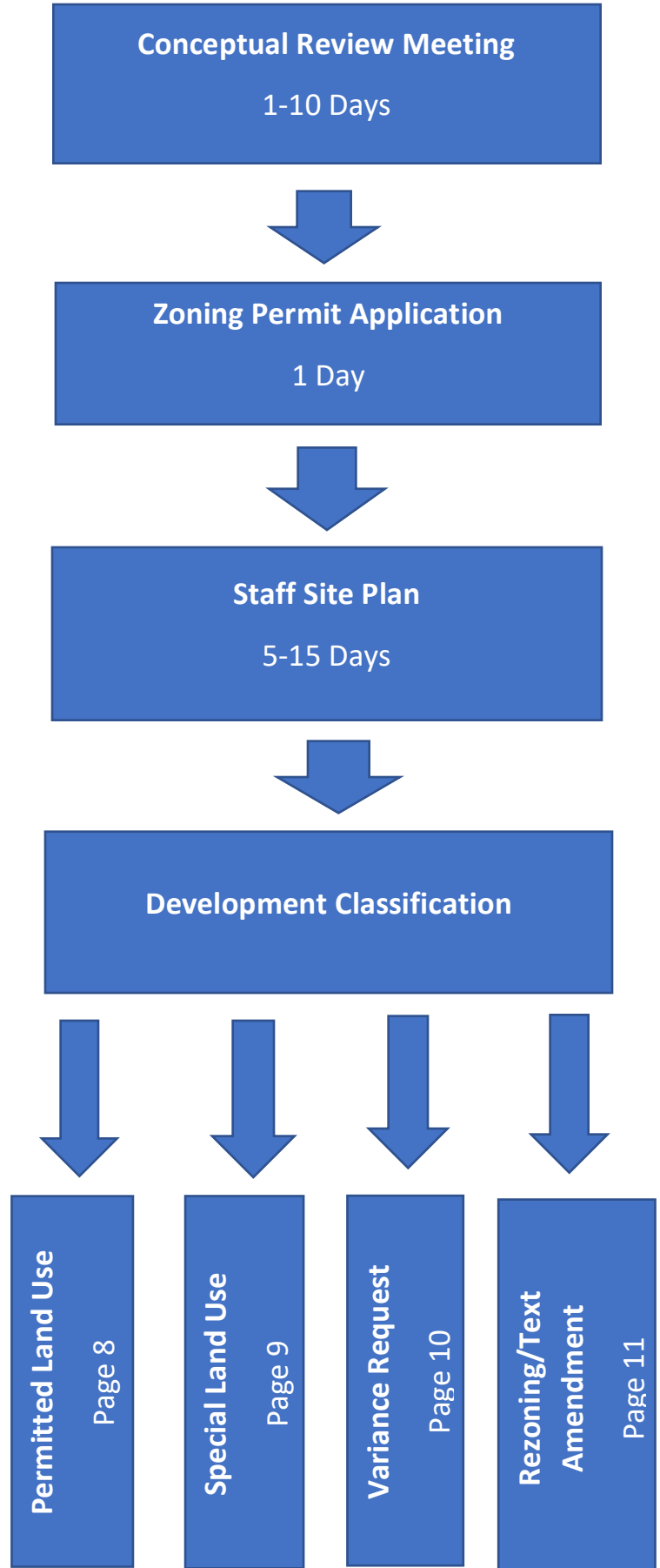
Developers are required to obtain the proper permits from the city prior to any construction; Zoning Permit Applications may be obtained at the city offices or online. Once a completed application and related fees are received by the city, the City Manager will facilitate a staff site plan review.

### Staff Site Plan Review

Upon receiving a zoning permit application, the City Manager shall forward materials to the Planning Commission, decide on the applicant’s compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, and inform the applicant about which next steps are necessary for approval (if applicable).

### Development Classification

- **Permitted (By Right) Land Use:** The proposed project is explicitly permitted by the Zoning Ordinance; approval from City Manager & Planning Commission.
- **Special Land Use:** The proposed project is conditionally permitted by the Zoning Ordinance; approval from Planning Commission.
- **Variance Request:** The proposed project partially aligns with the Zoning Ordinance, but conflicts with certain specifications; approval from ZBA.
- **Rezoning/ Text Amendment:** The Zoning Ordinance does not allow the proposed project; requires City Council amendment.



### Permitted (By-Right) Development

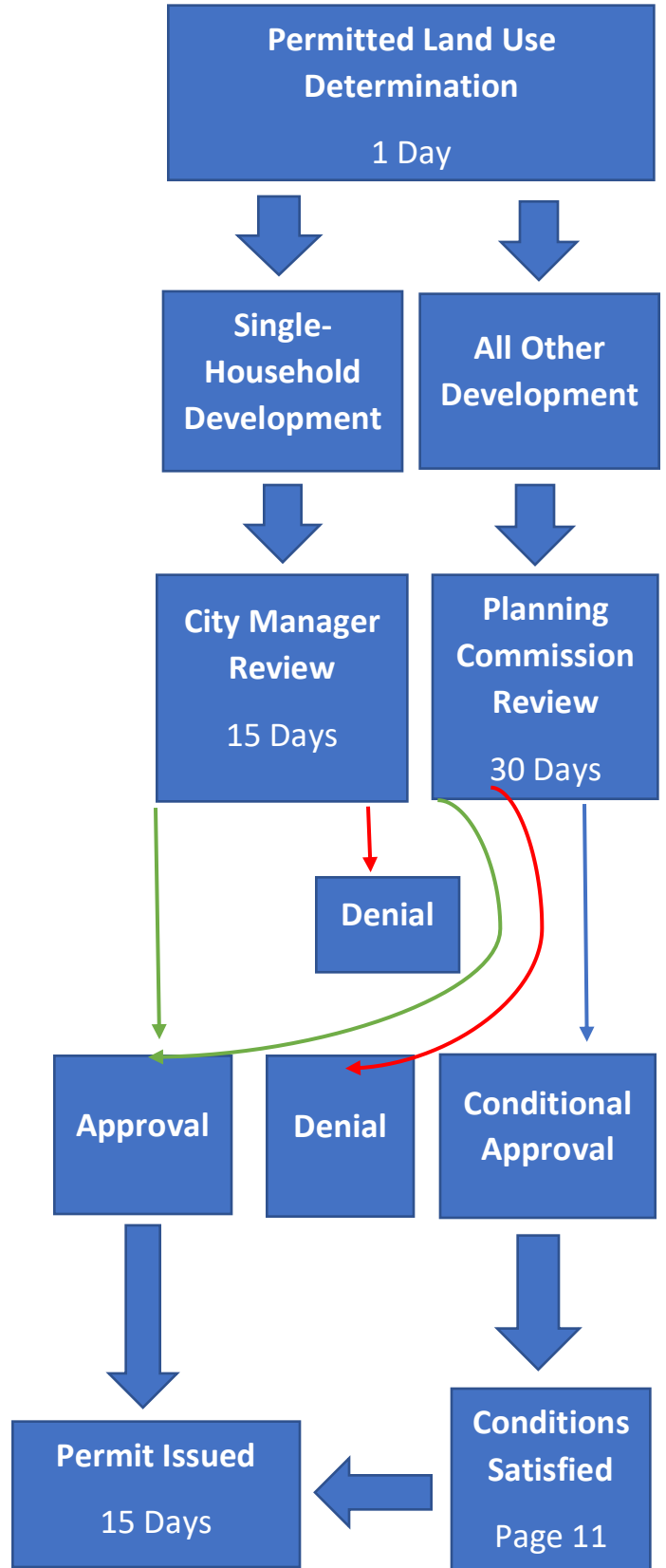
Permitted (by-right) development projects within the City of Vassar are subject to site plan review and inspection prior to the issuance of a zoning permit. Except for single-household residential development, which may be approved by the City Manager, all permitted use projects shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their monthly meeting. Chapter 2, Article, II, Section 2-67 outlines the Site Plan Review Process with the City of Vassar Planning Commission.

For single-household dwellings, the City Manager shall:

1. Approve the site plan if it is found to satisfy the requirements of this zoning ordinance. The City Manager will mail out a zoning permit within 15 days of approval.
2. Deny the site plan if it is found that the proposed site plan fails to satisfy the requirements of this zoning ordinance. In the event of denial, the applicant shall be informed of the decision in writing, with the reasons for denial contained in the letter. Applicants may appeal the decision to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

For all other development projects, the Planning Commission will:

1. Approve the site plan if it is found to satisfy the requirements of this zoning ordinance. The City Manager will mail out a zoning permit within fifteen (15) days of approval, valid for one (1) year after the date of issuance.
2. Place conditions on the site plan approval to ensure that it satisfies the requirements and intent of this zoning ordinance. This may include a requirement that the applicant obtain a variance from the ZBA prior to a zoning permit being issued.
3. Deny the site plan if it is found that the proposed site plan fails to satisfy the requirements of this zoning ordinance. In the event of denial, the applicant shall be informed of this decision and reasoning in writing. Applicants may appeal the decision to the Zoning Board of Appeals (see page 10).





## Special Land Use Development

A special land use approval is required for development projects which are listed as special land uses in the Zoning Ordinance. Chapter 2, Article II, Section 2.67 outlines the Special Land Use Review Process as overseen by the Planning Commission.

To obtain a zoning permit for a special land use project, applicants must fill out a Special Land Use Application (available from the city offices or online), along with a Zoning Permit Application, which will be submitted to the Planning Commission for a site plan review process. These materials shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their monthly meeting, where they will schedule a public hearing on the proposed special use project.

Per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, (PA 110 of 2006), scheduling a public hearing requires that the City of Vassar publish notice of that hearing in a newspaper of general circulation not less than fifteen (15) days before the date of the hearing. Additionally, notice must be given to all persons to whom real property is assessed within 300 feet of the proposed project property and to the occupants of all structures within 300 feet of the subject property.

After site plan review and a public hearing, the Planning Commission will:

1. Approve and permit the special land use, provided that the use: is not injurious to the district and environs; is not contrary to the spirit and purpose of this chapter; is not incompatible with already existing uses in the area; would not interfere with the orderly development of the area; and would not be detrimental to the safety or convenience of vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
2. Issue a conditional approval of the project, provided that the use aligns with the above criteria, and subject the project to additional inspection to ensure the conditions placed upon approval are met.
3. Deny approval for the project and inform the applicant of the decision and reasoning in writing. Applicants may appeal the decision to the Zoning Board of Appeals (see page 10).

Once a permit is approved, it shall be mailed out within fifteen (15) days of the approval and valid for one (1) year after the date of issuance.



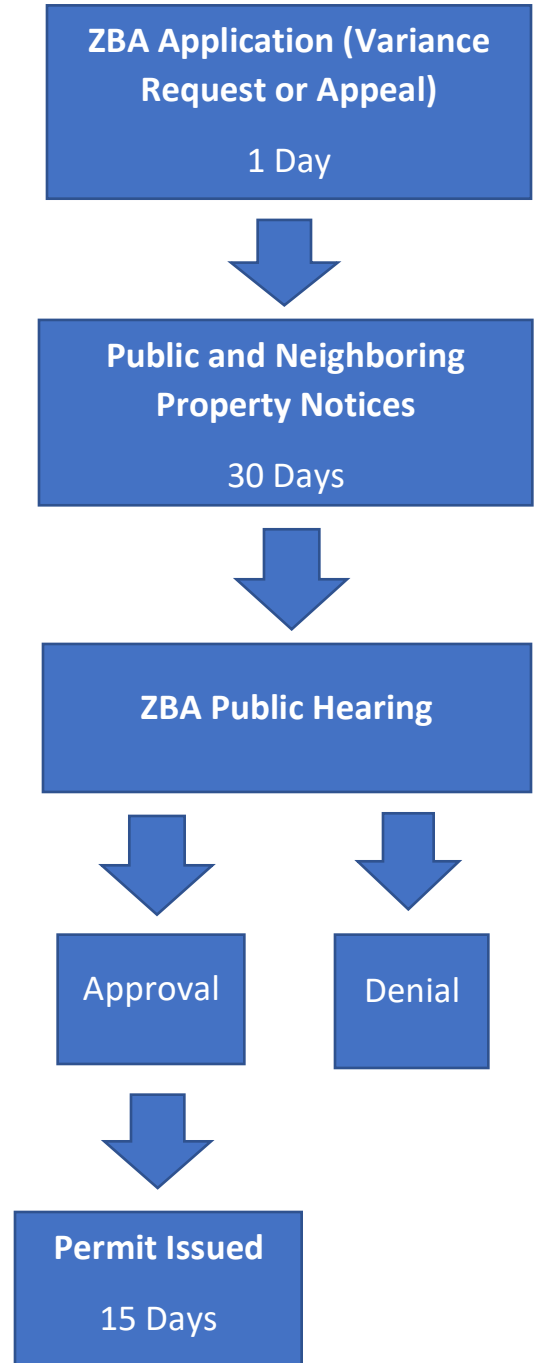
### Variance Request or Appeal

Chapter 2, Article II, Section 2.67 of the Zoning Ordinance provides information on requesting a variance or appealing a decision of the City Manager or the Planning Commission. To formally begin this process, an applicant must file a Zoning Board of Appeal Application with the city and pay the required fee. Applications may be obtained from the city offices or online. In appealing for administrative review, an application must be filed within 30 days of a denial issued by the City Manager or Planning Commission. Once an application and related fees are received by the city, the ZBA will schedule a hearing to review an appeal (generally within thirty (30) days of application).

Per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006), scheduling a public hearing requires that the city publish notice of that hearing in a newspaper of general circulation not less than fifteen (15) days before the date of the hearing. Additionally, notice must be given to all persons to whom real property is assessed at 300 feet of the proposed project property and to the occupants of all structures within 300 feet of the subject property.

Once an application and related fees are received by the city, the ZBA will schedule a hearing to review an appeal (generally within 30 days of application). During the ZBA hearing, the Board will:

1. Decide in favor of the applicant, approving the variance or granting an approval overriding the City Manager or Planning Commission’s decision. The ZBA may grant a variance in cases where the strict application of the zoning regulations enacted would result in peculiar or exceptional practical difficulties to, or exceptional undue hardship upon the owner, provided that the relief granted is without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent and purpose of the zoning ordinance. Should the ZBA approve a variance, the board may attach special conditions of the approval.
2. Issue a denial of the applicant’s request; there is no appeal process for a decision by the ZBA.



## Zoning Petition and Rezoning Request

Amending the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map of the city is the responsibility of the City Council, following formal recommendation from the Planning Commission, pursuant to Chapter 2, Article II, Section 2.67 of the Zoning Ordinance, and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Changes to the Zoning Ordinance, including specific property rezoning, may be initiated on petition to the Planning Commission. The Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment and Rezoning Petition may be obtained online or from the City’s Offices. Once initiated, an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance or map generally takes 90-120 days.

Once the city receives a completed petition and any applicable fees, the petition will be placed on the Planning Commission’s agenda for review during a regular meeting. During their initial review of the request, the Planning Commission will schedule a public hearing for input on the proposed changes to the zoning ordinance.

Per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006), scheduling a public hearing requires that the city publish notice of that hearing in a newspaper of general circulation not less than fifteen (15) days before the date of the hearing. Additionally, notice must be given to all persons to whom real property is assessed within 300 feet of the proposed project property and to the occupants of all structures within 300 feet of the subject property.

Following the Planning Commission’s public hearing, the board will make a formal recommendation to the City Council to adopt or reject the proposed zoning amendment.

Unless the City Council decides a consult a professional opinion on the proposed change, the zoning petition is generally reviewed during the next regular meeting. Following the first reading, the Council will schedule and hold a public hearing (subject to noticing), and then vote on the proposed changes after the public hearing and second reading. The City Council may:

1. Approve the amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Notice must be published in a paper of general circulation within fifteen (15) days of adoption before the changes goes into effect.
2. Deny the request; decisions may not be appealed to the ZBA.

