



GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENT for Building, Planning and Zoning

This document is intended to be used as an informational source for
municipal employees, citizens, developers and elected officials.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

❖ Introduction	3
❖ Zoning Districts	4 - 6
❖ Zoning Map	6
❖ Making a Zoning Inquiry	7
❖ Conceptual Meeting	7
❖ Planning Commission	8
❖ Site Plan Review	9 – 10
❖ Rezoning	11 - 12
❖ Special Land Use	13 - 14
❖ Zoning Board of Appeals	15 - 16
❖ Building and Trades Permits	17-18
❖ Historical District	19
❖ Forms and Documents Link	20
❖ Possible Incentives and Programs	21 – 22
❖ Additional Information and Contacts	23



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide to City residents, business owners and other decision makers. Although this document provides detailed information on a number of the City's processes, it is best to contact City staff directly before filing an application.

The City of Owosso is governed by Building and Zoning ordinances and the Master Plan that proposes the orderly development of land, capital improvements and concentration of different land uses. The City is granted these privileges under State's Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 207 of 1921. In general, planning and zoning are closely related and regulate development. Zoning controls the intensity and type of development allowed in specific areas of the City.

In addition, the City has adopted the State of Michigan Building Codes. These codes exist to ensure the safety and well-being of building occupants and the public. These codes provide the minimum standards for design, construction, alteration and maintenance of buildings and structures.

Many residents and developers find it helpful to meet with City staff prior to purchasing a property or submitting permits to make improvements to one's property. Meeting with staff will provide guidance on applicable City zoning codes and/or State building codes required for the proposed modifications or improvements. Before changes can take place, a site plan or other approval process may be required by the Planning Commission or a variance may be required from the Board of Appeals. City staff acts as the liaison between residents and the City Planning Commission and Board of Appeals.

The Building, Planning and Zoning Department can be reached at (989) 725-0535.

❖ The City of Owosso has the following Zoning Districts

The City of Owosso is divided into 11 zoning districts. Each district allows a variety of land uses and applicable regulations. Each of the zoning districts is briefly described below. For a complete description and regulations for each district, please refer to the [City's Zoning Ordinance](#).

R-1 RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, R-2 RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, RM RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT:

The intent of the Residential Zoning Regulations is to:

- Contribute to quality of life by protecting stable neighborhoods and increase availability of attainable and diverse housing options.
- Maintain distinct neighborhoods in Owosso; existing neighborhoods have their own character influenced by size of homes, architecture, density, and layout of streets.
- Increase availability of attainable and workforce housing.
- Reduce barriers that limit market's ability to build small, lower cost homes.
- Redevelop old, low-density buildings into new higher density building; and
- Ensure additions and new construction (infill) be compatible with the existing scale, height, massing and setbacks of existing buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD):

The central business district (CBD) is intended to provide for a traditional mixture of small office buildings, specialty retail stores, entertainment, public spaces, and related activities that are mutually supporting and serve the needs of both the city and surrounding communities. The intent of these district regulations is to encourage a lively social environment and economically viable downtown with a wide variety of uses in a pedestrian-oriented, unified setting, with shared parking. The district makes special provisions for vertical zoning, allowing the upper floors to be used as residential dwellings.

CORRIDOR BUSINESS DISTRICT (COR):

Corridors are the streets that connect the city together and sometimes divide it. They are the arteries of transportation into, around and through the city and are home to most of the commercial areas. Historic Corridors connect the centers of the city with other corridors and the surrounding neighborhoods. The city has four primary corridors: Main St (M-21) east of downtown, Corunna Ave between downtown and the city limits, S. Washington St. south of downtown to Baker College, and N. Shiawassee St between downtown and the hospital.

GENERAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (GBD):

The general business district (GBD) is intended to accommodate commercial establishments that serve community-wide shopping and service needs, including motorists using M-21 and M-52. This district is intended to create cohesive commercial areas that take advantage of access provided by the city's roadway system but also provide convenient vehicular access between businesses in attractive settings, thereby ensuring the safety and discouraging undesirable commercial development.

OS-1 OFFICE SERVICE DISTRICT:

The OS-1 districts are designed to accommodate uses such as offices, banks, and personal services that can serve as transitional areas between residential and commercial districts and to provide a transition between major thoroughfares and residential districts.

I-1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT:

The I-1 light industrial districts are designed to primarily accommodate wholesale activities, warehouses and industrial operations whose external, physical effects are restricted to the area of the district and in no manner affect in a detrimental way any of the surrounding districts. The I-1 districts are so structured as to permit, along with any specified uses, the manufacturing, compounding, processing, packaging, assembly and/or treatment of finished or semi-finished products from previously prepared material. It is further intended that the processing of raw material for shipment in bulk form, to be used in an industrial operation at another location, not be permitted. The general goals of these use districts include, among others, the following specific purposes:

- To provide sufficient space, in appropriate locations, to meet the needs of the city's expected future economy for all types of manufacturing and related uses.
- To protect abutting residential districts by separating them from manufacturing activities, and by prohibiting the use of such industrial areas for new residential development.
- To promote manufacturing development which is free from danger of fire, explosions, toxic and noxious matter, radiation and other hazards, and from offensive noise, vibration, smoke, odor and other objectionable influences.
- To promote the most desirable use of land in accordance with a well-considered plan. To protect the character and established pattern of adjacent development, and in each area to conserve the value of land and buildings and other structures, and to protect the city's tax revenue.

I-2 GENERAL INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT:

General industrial districts are designed primarily for manufacturing, assembling, and fabrication activities including large scale or specialized industrial operations, whose external physical effects will be felt to some degree by surrounding districts. The I-2 districts are so structured as to permit the manufacturing, processing and composing of semi-finished or finished products from raw materials as well as from previously prepared material.

C-OS CONSERVATION-OPEN SPACE DISTRICT:

The C-OS conservation/open space districts are intended to permit maintenance and management of natural areas, to protect lands under public ownership, under permanent conservation organization or of high public value due either to their uniqueness or to their potential hazards to the public.

PUD PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT:

- The planned unit development (PUD) standards are a supplementary list of "overlay" zoning standards which apply to properties simultaneously with one of the other zoning districts established in this title, hereinafter referred to as the "underlying" zoning district. For properties approved for PUD designation, these PUD standards replace the height and placement requirements listed for the underlying zoning districts in Article IV, Residential Districts, Articles V, VI, Business and Office Districts, and Articles VII and VIII, Light and General Industrial Districts.
- 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.

- The standards are intended to accommodate development on sites with significant natural, historical, and architectural features, as noted in the city master plan, on land which exhibits difficult development constraints, and/or to provide the opportunity to mix compatible uses or residential types, and/or to allow clustering of residential units to preserve common open space and natural features. The PUD standards shall not be sought primarily to avoid the imposition of standards and requirements of other zoning classifications rather than to achieve the stated purposes herein set forth.
- In order to encourage PUD developments on specific properties, these standards may allow the city to relax or waive one or more of the requirements of the underlying district. 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.

❖ ZONING MAP

Follow this link [Zoning Map](#)

❖ **MAKING A ZONING INQUIRY**

Prior to purchasing property, beginning construction or opening a business, it is very important to verify zoning of the property. The City can help determine what the property in question is zoned and what zoning requirements you may need to meet. In order to provide accurate information, please have the following information when contacting the City:

- Address of the property
- What is your intended use of the property?
- Will you be occupying an existing structure or constructing a new structure?
- Approximate square footage you will be occupying or constructing?
- Will you be making any structural changes to the building?

❖ **CONCEPTUAL MEETING**

Are you interested in developing a project within the City of Owosso? The City of Owosso staff is happy to hold a Conceptual Review Meeting with parties interested in investing in the community. To schedule a Conceptual Review Meeting, please submit a letter detailing your proposal and a set of concept plans to the Community Development staff.

Staff will schedule a meeting with you once the items have been received. During this meeting, City staff will provide you with the following:

1. Feedback on your proposal,
2. Discuss any applicable zoning regulations,
3. Walk you through the approval process for your proposal,
4. Provide you with copies of all applicable documents and
5. Discuss any potential incentives, if available.

❖ **PLANNING COMMISSION**

- Comprised of nine (9) members from community
- Reviews and approves Site Plans, requests for Special Uses, makes recommendations to City Council on rezoning requests and ordinance amendments
- Reviews and approves the City’s Master Plan and Capital Improvements Plan, making recommendations to City Council regarding adoption
- Meetings are on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 P.M. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall
- All applications and associated fees must be filed in advance and coordinated with City staff
- List of meeting dates:

2026 Meeting Date	Submittal Deadline	2026 Meeting Date	Submittal Deadline
January 26	January 2	July 27	July 2
February 23	January 29	August 24	July 31
March 23	February 27	September 28	September 3
April 27	April 2	October 26	October 1
May 26	May 1	November 23	October 30
June 22	May 29	December 14*	November 20

* changed due to the holiday

❖ **SITE PLAN REVIEW**

The Planning Commission reviews and approves or denies site plans.

Per Article XIII. Site Plan Review of the City Zoning Ordinance, a site plan shall be required for the following:

- a. Any use or development for which the submission of a site plan is required by any provision of this chapter.
- b. Any development, except single-family and two-family residential, for which off-street parking areas are provided as required in Article XV. Off-Street Parking and Loading Standards.
- c. Any use in an RM, OS-1, CBD, COR, GBD, I-1, I-2, or PUD district.
- d. Any use except single or two-family residential which lies contiguous to a major thoroughfare or collector street.
- e. All residentially related uses permitted in single-family districts such as, but not limited to, churches, schools, colleges, institutions, and public facilities.
- f. Accessory buildings or building additions that require additional off-street parking.

[Site Plan Review Application](#)

SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

The timeline provided is approximate and depends on the response time of the applicant.

Step 1	Conduct a conceptual meeting with City staff to determine if site plan approval is necessary
Step 2	30 days prior to the Planning Commission meeting – Applicant submits the site plan application, 1 set of plans and associated fees to City staff
Step 3	City staff reviews the application and related documents for completeness. Plans are forwarded to staff for an internal review process
Step 4	City staff provides applicant with list of requested revisions, if necessary
Step 5	Applicant submits 1 set of revised site plan drawings and a PDF version to the City for placement on the next available Planning Commission Agenda
Step 6	City staff develops and sends out a meeting agenda and packet to the Planning Commission members
Step 7	<p>Planning Commission reviews the site plan and makes a decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Approved – Applicant can proceed with submitting the building plans and permit application ➤ Approved with conditions – Applicant submits revised plans meeting the conditions prior to submittal of the building plans and permit application ➤ Denied – No further action



REZONING

The Planning Commission hears and makes recommendations to City Council regarding rezoning requests. Per Article XXI. Rezoning, Zoning and Master Plan Amendment Review of the City Zoning Ordinance, the application procedure of a rezoning is as follows: An amendment to this article or the official zoning map, except those initiated by the city, shall be initiated by submission of a completed application form and fee.

The following information shall accompany the application form:

1. A legal description and street address of the subject property, with a map identifying the subject property in relation to surrounding properties.
2. The name and address of the owner of the subject site, and a statement of the applicant's interest in the subject site if not the owner.
3. The existing and proposed zoning district designation of the subject property.
4. The land use classification for the subject site as illustrated on the city's master plan.
5. For an amendment to this article, other than an amendment to the official zoning map, a general description of the proposed amendment and rationale for the change shall accompany the application form.
6. A written description of how the requested rezoning meets the amendment criteria of this article

[Rezoning Application](#)

REZONING PROCESS

The timeline provided is approximate and depends on the response time of the applicant.

Step 1	Conduct a conceptual meeting with City staff to determine if a rezoning is necessary
Step 2	30 days prior to the Planning Commission meeting – Applicant submits the rezoning application, related documents and associated fees to City staff
Step 3	City staff reviews the application and related documents for completeness and requests additional information, if necessary.
Step 4	City staff will place the public hearing on the Planning Commission agenda. City staff will send out and publish the required public notice with the newspaper meeting the State requirements.
Step 5	Planning Commission will conduct the public hearing and make a recommendation to City Council to approve or deny the rezoning request based on their findings that identify and evaluate all factors relevant to the petition
Step 6	Upon receiving a recommendation and finding from the Planning Commission, City Council will hold a first reading of the rezoning request
Step 7	At the following meeting, the City Council will conduct a second reading. The City Council will take action to approve, deny or refer the rezoning request back to the Planning Commission for further review after the second reading

❖ SPECIAL LAND USE

The Planning Commission hears and makes decisions on requests for special land uses.

Article XI. Special Land Uses of the City Zoning Ordinance details the special land use permit procedures.

It shall be up to the applicant to provide evidence that meets the following standards and any others outlined in the zoning ordinance:

- Be compatible and in accordance with the goals, objectives, and policies of the city master plan and promote the intent of the zoning district in which the use is proposed.
- Be constructed, operated, and maintained to be compatible with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and so as not to change the essential character of the area in which it is proposed.
- Be served adequately by public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, water and sewage facilities, and primary and secondary schools.
- Not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, and equipment or conditions of operation that will be detrimental to the natural environment, public health, safety, or welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, odors, or other such nuisance.

[Special Land Use Application](#)

SPECIAL LAND USE PROCESS

The timeline provided is approximate and depends on the response time of the applicant.

Step 1	Conduct a conceptual meeting with City staff to determine if a special land use is necessary
Step 2	60 days prior to the Planning Commission meeting – Applicant submits the special land use application, site plan, related documents and associated fees to City staff
Step 3	City staff reviews the application and related documents for completeness and requests additional information, if necessary.
Step 5	Applicant submits 1 set of revised drawings and a PDF version to the City for placement on the next available Planning Commission Agenda
Step 6	City staff will place the public hearing on the Planning Commission agenda. City staff will send out and publish the required public notice with the newspaper meeting the State requirements.
Step 7	City staff develops and sends out a meeting agenda and packet to the Planning Commission members
Step 8	Planning Commission will conduct the public hearing, reviews the special land use and shall approve, approve with conditions or deny the application

❖ **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA)**

- Comprised of five (5) members and two (2) alternate members from the community
- Considers requests for variances from the strict application of the City’s Zoning and Sign Ordinance
- Applications to the Zoning Board of Appeals require a 300-foot mailing and a public notice published within the local newspaper
- Meets, as needed, the third Tuesday of each month at 9:30 A.M. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall
- All applications and associated fees must be filed in advance and coordinated with City staff

[Variance Request-ZBA Application](#)

2026 Meeting Date	Submittal Deadline	2026 Meeting Date	Submittal Deadline
January 20	December 26, 2025	July 21	June 26
February 17	January 23	August 18	July 24
March 17	February 20	September 15	August 21
April 21	March 27	October 20	September 25
May 19	April 24	November 17	October 23
June 16	May 22	December 15	November 20

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PROCESS

The timeline provided is approximate and depends on the response time of the applicant.

Step 1	Conduct a conceptual meeting with City staff to determine if a variance is necessary
Step 2	30 days prior to the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, Applicant submits the application, related documents and associated fees to City staff
Step 3	City staff reviews the application and related documents for completeness and requests additional information, if necessary
Step 4	City staff will place the public hearing on the Zoning Board of Appeals agenda. City staff will send out and publish the required public notice with the newspaper meeting the State requirements.
Step 5	City staff develops and sends out a meeting agenda and packet to the Zoning Board of Appeals members
Step 6	Zoning Board of Appeals will conduct the public hearing and a decision to approve or deny the request is made

❖ **BUILDING AND TRADES PERMITS**

- Applications can be obtained from the Building Department at Owosso City Hall or on the City's website <https://www.ci.owosso.mi.us>
- Permits can be required for building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and zoning.
- The Building Official reviews all applications for completeness and approvals. The Building Official, Electrical Inspector and the Mechanical/Plumbing Inspector review plans for completeness and approvals.
- Permit applications are processed utilizing the BS&A Building Module. Permits can be processed by the Building Official and the Planning & Building Director.
- The City of Owosso has adopted the State of Michigan Building Codes
- The following is a list of items that require permits (NOTE – these are common items, if you do not see your project on the list, please contact the Building Department for clarification)
 - Roofing, siding, windows, porches/decks
 - Additions, new builds
 - Garages (attached and detached)
 - Commercial projects
 - Trades work (for example – furnace, water heater, electrical service upgrade)
 - Zoning – accessory structures, fences, swimming pools, new businesses
- For larger scale projects – (additions, new builds, all commercial projects) - submit plans, along with a building permit application for review
- An application shall be granted, in whole or in part, or denied within 10 business days, except that in case of an unusually complicated building or structure, action shall be taken within 15 business days.

- Revised plans are submitted for further review
- After applications and plans are approved, fees are paid to the Building Department
- Permits are issued and expire 6 months after the date of issue.
- For all inspections, contact the Building Department to schedule.

❖ HISTORICAL DISTRICT

- Formed in the fall of 2010
- Regulatory commission is responsible for reviewing all applications for exterior work that is completed within the Downtown Historic District Commission (HDC) boundaries
- Comprised of seven members that use the Secretary of the Interiors Guidelines to review permits for work
- The historic designation also permits contributing structures within the district to seek additional funding assistance on redevelopment projects through the State of Michigan
- As of 2015, this district is on the National Register of Historic Places

[Historic District Commission Application](#)

[Downtown Historic District Map](#)

[Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#)

❖ **FORMS AND DOCUMENTS**

Follow this link to the City of Owosso's website page for additional applications, forms and documents

[City of Owosso Forms and Documents](#)



POSSIBLE INCENTIVES AND PROGRAMS

Facade Improvement Grants:

The City partners with the MEDC to distribute CDBG funds for façade improvements that meet the following:

- Must be located in the DDA district
- Must meet Secretary of Interior Standards
- Requires a **minimum** match of 25% from individual grant participant
- Must abide by 5-year restricted resale and reuse provision policy
- Must enter into escrow agreement with the city of Owosso
- Funding – Minimum of \$30,000; Maximum \$200,000 per individual façade grant award

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority:

- The purpose of the Brownfield Authority is to redevelop contaminated and obsolete sites within the city of Owosso under Public Act 381 of 1996.
- This authority has the power to approve brownfield plans for specific sites and projects within the city.
- This designation allows the OBRA to collect taxes on new property tax increase increments to pay off eligible expenses onsite over time.
- Such a designation can also make the site eligible for other state incentives.
- The OBRA has been successful at redeveloping contaminated and functionally obsolete sites and putting them into use, creating jobs, tax revenue, and eliminating blight.

Downtown Rental Rehabilitation:

- The Downtown Rental Rehabilitation program provides grant funding to assist downtown property owners with the creation of/or rehabilitation of affordable rental units above commercial space in the downtown.
- Grants are available for the rehabilitation of existing units and the creation of new units and are specific to individual projects
- The property owner must invest a minimum of 25% of the total project cost
- Rental units must be rented to low-to-moderate income individuals and the rent must meet affordability guidelines as determined by HUD
- The grant assistance is provided as a 5-year forgivable lien on the property if all compliance is followed

Revolving Loan & Grant Program:

- Supports the growth and revitalization of Owosso's Central Business District, Corridor Business District and the General Business District.
- Financial assistance is available for projects such as historic preservation, façade improvements, building accessibility, upper-story housing and restaurant and retail upgrades.

MEDC:

- There are many programs through the MEDC that may apply to your development.
- The following link will provide information on those programs:

<https://www.miplace.org/programs/>

❖ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Other incentives and programs may be available. It is imperative that discussions with City staff occur prior to assuming your project meets the requirements for any of the incentives or programs.

❖ **CONTACTS**

City of Owosso Building, Planning and Zoning Department
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