

**A Guide for Building Development  
to alter; add to; construct; or change use of;  
a Commercial, Industrial, Institutional,  
or Multi-dwelling Building.  
Plus other related information**

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Preface*

The City of Sault Ste. Marie Michigan welcomes continued growth and development; also recognizing the need for orderly, uniform regulation of such development to insure proper health, safety and a harmonious living environment.

This guide is intended to provide information to assist those contemplating business, commercial, industrial, and multi-family residential developments in the city of Sault Ste. Marie.

This is a general informational guide only, and is not to be construed as the actual laws, codes, rules, ordinances, etc., which are the governing factors of law controlling such building and development.

This guide does not apply to one and two-family residential structures.

Michigan Building Code and the Michigan Architects and Engineers Registration Act require that professional design services be utilized in the design of all building projects other than one and two-family residential structures of under 3,500 square feet and other work of a minor nature.

### *Aim of Guide*

To assist the developer, owner or contractor who wishes to alter, change use or occupancy, add to, or construct a building such as a restaurant, office space, retail store, workshop, factory, school, church, apartment building, condominium, warehouse, storage building, etc.

The intent of this guide is to inform owners and/or developers of the general process by which the city handles proposed building projects (other than one and two family structures). The general processes used in the City of Sault Ste. Marie are not unlike those used in many other cities. Most professional design firms are familiar with the general requirements, although the details vary from city to city.

### *Why are there Ordinances and Codes?*

Ordinances, codes, and standards were developed by the various levels of government to ensure that developments meet health, fire safety, structural, and general safety requirements for the protection of the community as a whole. More specifically, local ordinances were enacted to ensure a better standard of growth and development of our City.

*Two distinct processes are involved* in most building or renovation projects:

- a) Site Plan Approval
- b) Building Plan Approval

**SITE PLAN APPROVAL** (Required before building permit issuance.)

*When is a Site Plan Approval Required?*

- a. Any land use or development for which the submission of a site plan is required by any provision of the City Code of Ordinances.
- b. Any land use or development, except single-family and two-family dwellings, for which off street parking areas are required.
- c. Any land use or development for which an obscuring fence, wall or greenbelt is required.
- d. All site condo and condominium subdivisions developed pursuant to the Condominium Act.
- e. Any expansion of, or change in an existing land use if more parking in addition to that already provided is required.

*Application for Site Plan Review:*

A completed site plan review application form along with five (5) copies of a site plan containing the following information shall be submitted to the City Building Department.

- a. A scale of not less than 50 feet to the inch if the property is less than 3 acres in size and 100 feet to the inch if the property is 3 acres or more.
- b. Date, north point and scale.
- c. The dimensions of all lot and property lines, showing the relationship of the subject property to abutting properties.
- d. The location of all existing and proposed structures on the subject property and all existing structures within 100 feet of the subject property.
- e. The location, dimensions, and details of all existing and proposed drives, parking areas, loading and unloading areas, signs curb cuts, lighting, access easements, trash receptacles, streets, alleys, sidewalks, walls, fences, required landscaping, and other associated site features.
- f. The size and location of all existing and proposed public and private utilities.
- g. Location and method for collecting and disposing of surface water drainage.
- h. A legal description of the land included in the site plan.
- i. The name, address and telephone number of the owner, developer and designer, together with a signed statement that the applicant is the owner of the property or officially acting on the owner's behalf.
- j. Any other information necessary to establish compliance with this ordinance.

*Note:* City Building, Engineering, and Planning Departments have available both; Site Plan Checklist/Basic Information Required, and Site Plan Review Applications.

*Two Categories of Site Plan Review - Major or Minor Projects:  
Major Projects*

All developments greater than 3,500 s.f. of structure, or larger than 2 acres in size, or which are adjacent to or within a single-family or two-family residentially zoned district, and exceed 2,000 s.f. of structure, or which are regulated as conditional uses in the Ordinance, are considered Major Projects which require review and action by the Planning and Development Commission pursuant to the requirements of the Site Plan Ordinance, copies available from the City Clerk's office.

*Minor Projects*

All developments, other than those enumerated under the procedure for Major Projects are Minor Projects.

In addition, the following developments are Minor Projects, subject to review:

- a. Accessory uses incidental to a conforming existing use.
- b. Expansions and/or additions to an existing conforming use, providing such expansion is not larger than 3,500 s.f. of structure or 2 acres in project size, or not larger than 2,000 s.f. of structure when adjacent to or within a single-family or two family residentially zoned district.
- c. Increase in off-street parking areas and loading spaces.
- d. Any other site plan not delegated for review to the Planning and Development Commission.

The disposition of Minor Projects differs from Major Projects as they do not require Planning Commission approval.

*How the Site Plan Review Process Works:*

Major and Minor Projects undergo the same review process, except that Major Projects are subject to final review and approval by the City Planning and Development Commission.

- a. A completed application form and five copies of the site plan pertaining to the project are to be submitted to the City Building Department.
- b. The City Building Department reviews the application and plans to determine if application and plans are generally complete.
- c. Upon determining that the application and plans are generally complete, the Building Department conveys a copy of the application and a copy of the plans to the following departments for review and comment: Engineering, Planning, Fire, and Police; also, the Building Department retains a copy of the site plan for review.
- d. Upon each Department's completion of their review, that Department's written

comments and concerns are forwarded to the Building Department to be assembled with comments by other departments before being sent to the project's contact person as designated on the application form.

*If the site plan is found to be satisfactory by all departments:*

Major Projects are forwarded to the Planning and Development Department for review and approval by the Planning Commission;

Minor Projects are considered approvable at this point with formal approval authorized by the City Building Department.

*If the site plan is found to be incomplete or inadequate:*

The applicant is to address the comments and concerns of the specific Departments by resubmitting copies of the revised site plan for a second review by the City Departments involved.

The City conducts the second review by repeating steps C and D above. These steps are repeated until compliance is achieved.

## **BUILDING PLAN APPROVAL** (Required before building permit issuance.)

*When Building Permits are Required:*

A Building Permit is required in accordance with the Construction Code Act, where anything is to be done in the erection, the installation, the extension, material alteration or repair of a building (including the installation of a building unit fabricated or moved from elsewhere) or where a building is to be demolished.

*This includes but is not limited to the following:*

- Construction of a new building
- Addition to an existing building
- Construction of accessory buildings
- Repair work, other than minor repairs
- Structural work
- Erection of wall, removal of walls or doors, etc., whether structural or non-structural
- Tenant improvements
- Erect Signs
- Repair work including any structural elements
- The addition of structural features such as balconies and canopies
- Change of use (existing building which is undergoing a change in type of use or type of occupancy)

### *Application for Plan Examination and Building Permit*

A completed plan examination and building permit application, two (2) sets of building plans and specifications, and (1) electronic copy shall be submitted to the City Building Department, along with the applicable plan review fee.

The plans shall be drawn to scale, with sufficient clarity and detailed dimensions to show the nature and character of the work to be performed. When quality of materials is essential for conformity to the code, specific information shall be given to establish such quality; and the code section shall not be cited, or the term legal or its equivalent be used, as a substitute for specific information.

*Note:* Plans and specification for these projects are required to be prepared by an appropriate registered professional architect or engineer, with rare exception.

### *How the Building Permit Plan Review Process Works*

- a. A completed application form and two sets of plans and specifications pertaining to the project are submitted to the City Building Department, along with the applicable plan review fee.
- b. The City Building Department reviews the application, plans, and specifications for compliance with Michigan Building Code.
- c. Either a report of code deficiencies or insufficient information is issued to the applicant; or notification of review and approval is given.

#### *Approvable Plans and Specifications:*

The Building Department advises the applicant that the plans and specifications have been reviewed and been found to be in compliance with the Michigan Building Code.

Provided the site plan has been approved, and the building permit fee is paid, a building permit is issued.

#### *Insufficient Plans and Specifications:*

The Building Department issues a plan review or plan examination report to the applicant and/or project's designer. This report lists concerns, including both; areas of specific code deficiencies, and identifying those areas which are not sufficiently addressed to determine code compliance.

The applicant has the plans and specifications revised to address all concerns listed in the plan review report and resubmits the revised plans and specifications to the Building Department for review. The applicant resubmits the plans and specifications to the Building Department for review.

Step B above is repeated until approvable plans and specifications are provided.

*When a Building Permit is Not Required:*

A building permit is not required when non-structural cosmetic work is to be done such as: Painting, replacing vinyl wall covering, replacing carpets or finished flooring, and similar minor maintenance type improvements.

If you question whether or not your project requires a permit, please contact the Building Department.

It should be noted that even though a building permit may not be required, this does not relieve the owner and contractor of the responsibility to comply with the Michigan Building Code, for example: utilize finish materials with proper flame spread ratings, provide required accessibility for the handicapped when undertaking sidewalk construction, etc.

**REVISIONS TO SITE OR BUILDING PLANS FOLLOWING APPROVALS**

When revisions deviating from the approved plans are contemplated, a written submission depicting the changes or amendments is required to be submitted to the City Building department for review and approval. Proposed revisions to the approved site plans pertaining to Major projects often require Planning Commission approval.

**FINAL INSPECTIONS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED PRIOR TO OCCUPANCY**

Upon completion of a project, final inspection and approval is required prior to occupancy. Upon final approval, a Certificate of Occupancy is issued for the project.

**LENGTH OF TIME OF TO OBTAIN A PERMIT**

(Requires both site plan approval and building plan approval)

Upon submission of a completed site plan review application and five (5) sets of the completed site plan, the city's initial review process takes on average about fourteen (14) days until the City responds with their comments and concerns.

From this point until the time that site plan approval varies considerably depending on the response time by the applicant, the complexity of the city's review comments, and if the project is considered major as defined by ordinance which requires final review and approval by the city Planning Commission. The ordinance allows a maximum time of forty-five (45) days from the date of receipt of a complete site plan application & plans until a decision is rendered by the City.

The building plan review process for new buildings, additions, and/or alterations to existing building, change in use or occupancy, for most applications takes on the average, 10 days from submission date to the date of the plans examination response letter by the City. This varies with workload and complexity of project.

From this point until the time that a permit can be issued varies considerably depending on the response time by the applicant and/or the complexity of the comments outlined in the letter.



Permits for repairs, alterations, signs, and similar items are issued sooner, based on the specific circumstances of each individual project.

*There are exceptions depending on:*

- The completeness of drawings and information submitted
- The overall complexity of the application
- If referral to other departments is required
- If special approval(s) is/are required such as variances, rezoning, development control, septic systems and well approvals, etc.

*The following are the responsibility of the owner, contractor, or permit holder:*

- To obtain a building permit
- To retain a copy of approved plans and specifications available on-site for use of the contractor and building inspector.
- Call for all mandatory (required) inspections.

## **FOUNDATION PERMITS**

The authority exists in the Michigan Building Code, Sections 106.3.3, to issue a permit for the construction of foundations or any other part of a building or structure before the entire plans and specifications for the entire building or structure have been submitted; provided the site plan has been approved and adequate information has been submitted to determine compliance with all pertinent codes relating to the partial approval being requested. The holder of such permit for a foundation or other part of a building or structure shall proceed at the holder's own risk with the building operation and without assurance that a permit for the entire structure will be granted.

## **APPLICATION FORMS AND FEES**

The various application forms, fee schedules, and other reference material discussed in this guide is available from the City Building Department or other City Departments as applicable to the subject matter.

The application formats, fee schedules, etc. change from item to item and involves several pages, therefore are feasible to be included with this guide.

## **APPEAL BOARDS AND SIMILAR BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

The Zoning Board of Appeals hears requests for variances and exceptions to the zoning ordinance provisions regarding yard setbacks, building height, parking requirements, etc. The Zoning Board of Appeals meets the third Thursday of each month. However, applications must be submitted approximately three weeks ahead of time to allow processing and proper legal notification to area residents. For application forms,

application deadline dates, and fee information, contact the City Building Department.

The Construction Board of Appeals meets upon request, and handles appeals pertaining to the Michigan Building Code (except barrier free issues) and the Michigan Mechanical Code. Barrier free issues are handled by the State Barrier Free Design Board. For information on how to apply, fees, and possible meeting dates, contact the City Building Department.

The Planning Commission acts on requests involving lot splits; street and alley vacations; rezoning; site plan reviews; and other such matters. The Planning Commission also reviews and approves conditional uses which are those special uses defined by ordinance which requires such approval. Some typical conditional uses include; race tracks, outdoor theaters, large radio/communication towers, etc.

Requests for exceptions to the Barrier Free Design Rules are handled by the State Barrier Free design Board in Lansing Michigan; phone (517) 241-9300. Application forms are available from the City Building Department.

## **FLOW CHART OF SITE AND BUILDING PLAN REVIEW PROCESSES**

### **FLOW CHART OF SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS**

*Application for Site Plan Review submitted with plans:*

If complete, application and associated plans, etc., are distributed to applicable City Departments for review.

Each City department conducts a review which is forwarded by the Building Department to the applicant's designated contact person for the project.

*If concern exists:*

Applicant responds with reviewed plans to address concerns of all City Departments involved

*If found to be satisfactory:*

Major Projects - Major Projects are forwarded to the Planning and Development Commission for review and approval.

-or-

Minor Projects - Minor Projects certified Approved by the Building Department.

### **FLOW CHART OF BUILDING PLAN REVIEW PROCESS**

Application, plans, specifications, and Plan Review Fee are submitted.

City Building Department reviews plans and specifications for compliance with Michigan

Building Code and provides applicant with examination report.

*If concern exists:*

Applicant responds with revised plans and specifications to address code concerns

*If approved:*

Applicant advised so that they may complete permit process, pay fee, etc. (Prior site plan approval required.)

*Notes:*

- Site plan and building plan approvals are both required prior to issuance of a building permit.
- The need for appeals hearings, well or septic approvals, and other special approvals which are necessary in conjunction with some projects will also affect the review process depicted above.
- Construction projects typically involve many regulatory agencies. The City's site plan approval process and building permit process does not relieve the developer, owner, or contractor, from the responsibility of addressing matters involving any other applicable regulatory agencies.

## **DIRECTORY OF CONSTRUCTION RELATED SERVICES AND AGENCIES**

### **BUILDING PERMIT**

*Scope:* All matters concerning the construction, alteration, addition, repair, removal, demolition, use, location, occupancy and maintenance of all buildings and structures, and shall apply to existing or proposed buildings and structures.

*Agency:* City Building Department  
225 East Portage Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 632-5702

*Brief summary of procedure to obtain a building permit:* Obtain a building permit application and submit completed application along with two sets of plans (drawn to scale) and specifications along with the appropriate plan review fee to the Building department. The Building Department will log the application and plans in, to be reviewed in the chronological order which they are received. Applicants will be advised of review findings and any necessary items which must be addressed prior to permit issuance. See earlier text of this guide for more detail on this procedure. Note: Site plan approval is required prior to building permit issuance.

## **MECHANICAL PERMIT**

*Scope:* The design, installation, maintenance, alteration and inspection of mechanical systems, including heating systems, ventilating systems, cooling systems, steam and hot water heating systems, water heaters, process piping, boilers and pressure vessels, appliances utilizing gas, liquid or solid fuel, chimneys and vents, mechanical refrigeration systems, fireplaces, barbecues, incinerators, crematories and air pollution systems as herein defined, shall comply with the requirements of the Michigan Mechanical Code.

*Agency:* State of Michigan  
Bureau of Construction Codes  
Mechanical Division  
P.O. Box 30255  
Lansing, MI 48909  
(517) 241-9313

*Area Inspector:* (906) 241-0730

Permit applications available online for submittal to the State of Michigan.

## **ELECTRICAL PERMIT**

*Scope:* Installations of electrical conductors and equipment within or on public and private buildings or other structures, including mobile homes, recreational vehicles, and floating buildings; and other premises such as yards, carnival, parking and other lots, and industrial substations.

*Agency:* State of Michigan  
Bureau of Construction Codes  
Electrical Division  
P.O. Box 30255  
Lansing, MI 48909  
(517) 241-9313

*Area Inspector:* (906) 241-3424

Permit applications available online for submittal to the State of Michigan.

## **PLUMBING PERMIT**

*Scope:* The design and installation of plumbing systems, including sanitary and storm drainage, sanitary facilities, water supplies, storm water and sewage disposal in buildings, shall comply with the requirements of the Michigan Plumbing Code.

The design and installation of gas piping, chilled water piping in connection with building heating shall conform to the requirements of the Michigan Mechanical Code. The design and installation of piping for fire sprinklers and standpipes

shall conform to the requirements of the Michigan Building Code and the Michigan Mechanical Code.

*Agency:* State of Michigan  
Bureau of Construction Codes  
Plumbing Division  
P.O. Box 30255  
Lansing, MI 48909  
(517) 241-9313

*Area Inspector:* (906) 235-8417

Permit applications available online for submittal to the State of Michigan.

## **ZONING AND PLANNING**

*Scope:* For information regarding zoning classifications, permitted uses, setbacks, allowable height and area, rezoning, City's master plan, conditional use permits etc.

*Agency:* Community Development  
225 East Portage Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 632-5703

## **WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SERVICE**

*Scope:* To assure availability of adequate water supply and sanitary sewer availability for the project, and to make arrangements for connection to these utilities. Parties responsible for cost and installation work vary with type of project, size of service, etc. Also the City Engineering department can assist in providing location and sizing information regarding existing public water and sanitary sewer mains.

*Agency:* City Water/Sewer Department  
1200 East Easterday Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 632-3531

## **STORM SEWER**

*Scope:* To determine availability, capacity, and connection information pertain to City storm sewer service. Also the city Engineering Department can assist in providing location and sizing information regarding existing public storm sewer mains.

*Agency:* City Street Department  
1200 East Easterday Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

(906) 632-3531

### **WELL AND/OR ON-SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL**

*Scope:* For information and permits for installation of on-site water (wells) supply and one-site sewage (septic or lagoon systems) disposal systems.

*Agency:* Chippewa County Health Department  
Environmental Health Division  
508 Ashmun Street  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 635-0413

### **NATURAL GAS SERVICE**

*Scope:* For information pertaining to the availability, and connection to natural gas service.

*Agency:* DTE Energy  
1125 E. Easterday Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(800)477-4747

### **ELECTRICAL SERVICE**

*Scope:* For information regarding electric utility service.

*Agency:* Cloverland Electric Cooperative  
2916 M-28  
Dafter, MI 49724  
(906) 635-6800

### **TELEPHONE SERVICE**

*Scope:* To obtain information regarding telephone utility service and availability.

*Agency:* AT&T, Business Office 1-800-660-3000

## **WETLAND INFORMATION**

*Scope:* For information pertaining to wetlands and associated regulations.

*Agency:* Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
1504 West Washington Street  
Marquette, MI 49855  
(906) 202-1507

## **CULVERTS AND DRIVEWAY OPENINGS**

*Scope:* To obtain information on sizing, location, and permits for culvert installations and drive openings.

*Agency:* City Engineering Department  
225 East Portage Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 632-5734

## **SOIL EROSION CONTROL**

*Scope:* For information regarding erosion control; projects involving the soil disturbance of one acre or more of area, or projects within 500 feet of any lake, stream, or creek.

*Agency:* Chippewa/East Mackinac Conservation District  
2847 Ashmun Street  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 635-1278

## **DOCKS, DREDGING AND WETLANDS, ADJACENT TO THE ST. MARY'S RIVER**

*Scope:* Information pertaining docks, dredging, sea walls & pilings, and filling of wetlands adjacent to the St. Mary's River system.

*Agency:* U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Regulatory Functions Section  
St. Mary's Fall Canal  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 632-3311

## **FEDERAL FLOOD PLAIN PROGRAM**

*Scope:* For information regarding those areas within the city which are considered flood plain area as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

*Agency:* City Building Department  
225 East Portage Avenue  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
(906) 632-5702

## **MISS DIG**

*Scope:* Before digging with powered equipment call MISS DIG at 1-800-482-7171

3 working days notice is required excepting in emergency when MISS DIG can expedite process.