

A Guide for Residential Building Construction

Residential Building Permits for one and two family dwellings and detached garages

The purpose of this brochure is to provide the information necessary for an individual to plan for residential construction in the City of Sault Ste. Marie. The brochure will cover zoning requirements and the minimum requirements for site plans and building plans for residential construction. Residential construction includes a new home, an addition, a deck or porch, a renovation project or a garage project. These construction projects require a completed building permit application, site plan and building plans to be submitted to the City Building Department in order to obtain a building permit. Information regarding other agencies you will likely encounter while you are planning a building project is also included within this brochure.

ZONING

All proposed development within the City of Sault Ste. Marie, including construction of a new home or garage, is required to comply with the provisions of the City of Sault Ste. Marie Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of the zoning ordinance is to regulate the height and area of buildings, establish the size of yards, determine the building setbacks from the property lines and limit the density of population within the various zoning districts in an effort to promote a healthy, safe and harmonious environment for the residents of the City.

There are minimum requirements established by the City Zoning Ordinance for new homes to be located within the City. Most new homes will readily comply with the minimum requirements of the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance provides a definition for what constitutes a single family home. A single family home is defined as a building containing one dwelling unit which complies with the following requirements. The dwelling shall be connected to a public sewer and water supply where public facilities are available or provided with approved private on-site facilities when public facilities are not available. The dwelling shall have an approved permanent foundation system which adequately supports the home. The dwelling shall be constructed and maintained in accordance with construction codes and property maintenance codes adopted by the City. The dwelling shall have minimum length and width dimensions of 20 feet. The dwelling shall have a pitched roof with a minimum slope ratio of 3:12. A two family home is defined as a building with two dwelling units with each complying with the requirements for a single family home.

Zoning Districts

A new home must be located in a residential zoning district. The City of Sault Ste. Marie Zoning Ordinance provides for five zoning districts that allow the placement of single family homes and an additional four zoning districts that allow for both one and two family homes.

Single family zoning districts include the R-1, RS-1, RS-2, R-1A and RSV zoning districts. Only single family homes may be located in these districts. Although the RS-1 zoning district exists in the zoning ordinance, there are no RS-1 zoning districts designated within the City at this time. Single wide manufactured homes may be located in the R-1A district only. Both one and two family homes may be located in the R-2, RM-1, RM-2 and RM-3 zoning districts.

The Schedule of Regulations is a table found in Section 1600 of the City Zoning Ordinance. The Schedule of Regulations table provides information regarding the minimum lot area and lot width, the maximum height of structures located on the lot expressed in both stories and feet, the minimum setbacks from all of the property lines to the exterior walls of a building and the maximum percentage of lot coverage by buildings on a lot.

The major differences between the various single family residential zoning districts are the minimum lot area and frontage width required for each zoning district. The R-1, RS-1, RS-2, R-1A and RSV are single family zoning districts and the Schedule of Regulations specifies the lot area, width and setbacks for each individual district.

One and two family homes may be located in the R-2, RM-1, RM-2 and RM-3 zoning districts. Single family dwellings to be located in the R-2, RM-1, RM-2 and RM-3 zoning districts are subject to the requirements of the Schedule of Regulations for the R-1 zoning district. The Schedule of Regulations requirements for the R-2 zoning district shall apply to two family dwellings to be located in the R-2, RM-1, RM-2 and RM-3 zoning districts.

Subdivisions

Much of the property within the City of Sault Ste. Marie is divided into subdivisions. Many of the established subdivisions in the City of Sault Ste. Marie were created over a century ago when smaller lots apparently met the needs of a homeowner at the time. The lot widths for some of these established subdivisions are as narrow as 25 feet wide with many averaging 40 feet wide. These widths are less than the minimum width of 50 feet found in the Schedule of Regulations for homes in the R-1 zoning district. The current zoning ordinance in use today was established in 1965. There is a provision in the current zoning ordinance that allows new homes to be constructed on one of these narrow lots provided the setbacks and maximum lot coverage by buildings comply with the current Schedule of Regulations for the proposed new home. This provision applies only to single sub-standard subdivision lots on record. Two or more of the narrow lots that have been combined in the City tax records by a owner sometime in the past must be left combined in order to comply with the minimum width and area requirements of the Schedule of Regulations. A property owner may apply to the City to divide combined existing sub-standard lots, however, a legal lot split must result in lots that comply with the minimum width and area requirements of the current Schedule of Regulations.

Detached Garages and Accessory Structures

Detached garages are recognized as accessory structures by the City Zoning Ordinance Section 1703. Detached garages are the most frequently built accessory structures but other accessory structures include personal homeowner storage buildings, gardening sheds and small workshops. The reason these buildings are called accessory structures is that they are an accessory to the main use, which, within one and two family residential zoning districts, is the home. Because they are accessory to the home, the home must exist before the accessory structure is constructed. Section 1703 provides most of the zoning regulations for accessory structures. The Schedule of Regulations restricts the maximum coverage of all buildings on a lot to 35 percent of the total area of the lot, including accessory structures.

Section 1703 provides the following restrictions for accessory structures;

1. An accessory structure may be located in the side or rear yard with a minimum setback of at least 20 feet from the front property line.
2. The maximum ground floor area of an accessory structure is restricted to be no greater than the ground floor area of the home.
3. An accessory building shall be located at least 10 feet away from the home.
4. An accessory structure shall be located at least 3 feet from side or rear property lines unless the side or rear property line is adjacent to an alley or a street in which case the accessory building shall be located at least 5 feet from the property line adjacent to the alley or the street.
5. The maximum height of an accessory structure shall not exceed 15 feet as defined by the zoning ordinance. This height limitation is misleading in that the overall height of an accessory structure often exceeds the height limit while still complying with the height limit. The defined height of an accessory structure is equal to the total wall height of the structure plus one half the total height of the roof structure.

The Zoning Board of Appeals

If it is discovered that a proposed home or garage project will not comply with the requirements of the zoning ordinance in one or several ways, the zoning ordinance provides for a means of appeal. An applicant may request a variance or exception from the zoning ordinance to allow the proposed construction through the appeals process. A completed application to the Zoning Board of Appeals is submitted to the City Building Department along with a \$100.00 filing fee. The staff of the City Building Department schedules a meeting and prepares a report providing all of the pertinent information regarding the appeal for the Zoning Board members. The Zoning board of Appeals is made up of seven volunteer residents of the City of Sault Ste. Marie. The zoning board hears the appeal in an open meeting and determines to grant or deny a variance request based on the compelling need for the variance by the applicant and on how the variance request will impact the neighborhood and the City.

Upon determining that the proposed home or garage will comply with the provisions of the zoning ordinance which may include a zoning variance or exception, the building department may proceed with processing a building permit application for the proposed structure.

BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS

The Sault Ste. Marie Building Department is responsible for the enforcement of the Michigan Building Code and the Michigan Mechanical Code. The State of Michigan is responsible for the enforcement of the Michigan Plumbing Code and the Michigan Electrical Code in the City of Sault Ste. Marie.

A building permit is required for all residential construction. Residential construction includes a new home or garage, an addition to a house or garage, a new deck or porch or a complete interior renovation project. At present, building permits are not required for normal maintenance projects which include new siding, new roof shingles or window and door replacement. Although building

permits are not required for these maintenance projects, building code compliance is required and any questions regarding these type of projects may be directed to the Building Department. Building permit applications are available at the City Building Department. The City Building Department staff is happy to discuss your project with you and assist you in completing applications for permits.

A mechanical permit is required for the installation or replacement of heating, cooling or ventilation systems. The application for a mechanical permit is available at the City Building Department.

Applications for State of Michigan plumbing permits and electrical permits are available at the City Building Department and are required for plumbing or electrical work to be performed. State employed inspectors do inspection for plumbing and electrical work.

The completed application is submitted to the building department along with a site plan, when applicable, and a set of building plans for the proposed project. The completed building permit application may be submitted by the homeowner, the building designer or the building contractor. Building Department staff will review the completed application and plans before issuing a building permit. The review process will ensure that the application, the site plan and the building plans comply with ordinances and codes enforced within the City.

Site Plan

A site plan is required for a new home, an addition to an existing home or garage, or for a new deck or porch. A site plan is a drawing of the building lot with the proposed structures and driveways shown on the lot. The site plan may be drawn on the back page of the building permit application or on a separate sheet of paper if desired. The site plan needs to be drawn with dimensions and details shown to illustrate that the project will comply with City zoning requirements. The details and dimensions that need to be shown are; an arrow indicating north, the lot dimensions, the dimensions of the exterior walls of the buildings, the distance from the property lines to the building walls and the driveway location and dimensions. The site plan will be reviewed by the building department staff to determine if the proposed project complies with the zoning requirements. Once the site plan is approved by the staff, the building plans are reviewed by the staff.

Building Plans

The City Building Department requires that two sets of building plans be submitted for review. One and two family homes and residential accessory structures are reviewed for compliance with the provisions of the Michigan Residential Code as adopted and enforced by the City Building Department. The building plans need to show, at the minimum, a floor plan and a building elevation showing typical construction details from the bottom of the foundation to the top of the roof. More complicated building designs require more plan details to adequately illustrate the building construction. The Michigan Residential Code states that, where special conditions exist, the building official is authorized to require additional construction documents prepared, sealed and signed by a design professional registered to practice in the State of Michigan. A design professional is an architect or a professional engineer.

The building plans are reviewed for adequate structural design, life safety facilities and a healthy living environment. The foundation, floor, wall and roof systems are checked for structural code compliance. The interior of the building is checked for fire resistant construction where it is required. The rooms, hallways, stairs, windows and doors are checked for the ability to allow safe exiting from the building in the event of an emergency. The building envelope from the foundation to the roof and the heating and ventilating system are checked to ensure energy efficiency and comfort for the home. During the building plan review, anything that is found that will not comply with the building code is noted and a report is prepared to bring the deficiencies to the attention of the building designer, contractor or homeowner. The report may require additional information or plan revisions in order to be able to approve the plans. Once the site plan and building plan are approved by the building department, a building permit may be issued.

Construction Permits

A building permit for a one or two family home or a residential garage may be issued to either the homeowner or a Michigan licensed residential builder as the agent of the homeowner. The permit holder issued the building permit is responsible for ensuring that the building is constructed in accordance with the applicable code.

In the State of Michigan, a homeowner may obtain permits for every trade necessary to build a new home with one exception. The homeowner may be issued the building permit, the plumbing permit, the electrical permit and the mechanical permit for their own new residential building project. However, a permit for a boiler for a hot water home heating system may only be issued to a Michigan licensed boiler installer. Construction permits are issued to a homeowner for a new home with the understanding that the homeowner will be living in the new home.

A building permit may also be issued to a residential contractor who is licensed by the State of Michigan. The contractor must present his license in order to obtain a building permit. The contractor must also provide proof of liability insurance, a Federal I.D. number and an MESC unemployment insurance number. The City Building Department maintains this information once a licensed contractor has been issued a building permit. Every trade represented to build a new home is required to be licensed by the State of Michigan for their trade. Builders, electricians, plumbers and mechanical contractors all must be properly licensed to perform work on a residential construction project. Construction may commence once construction permits have been issued for a project. The construction is required to be inspected periodically.

Inspections

The building inspector will be inspecting a new home from the very beginning until the finish of the project. There are several required inspections including foundation, rough inspection of all of the trades by the qualified inspectors, framing and masonry inspection and the final inspections of the finished home for all of the trades. Periodic inspections may also be done by the inspector as work progresses. The permit holder will be informed of any violations noted during the various inspections and required to correct the violations before the work can be approved. After the inspectors have approved the completed work in a finished new home, a certificate of occupancy is issued to the permit holder and homeowner to allow the new home to be legally occupied.

Certificate of Occupancy

The City Building Department may issue a Certificate of Occupancy upon the completion of a new home project. The Certificate of Occupancy indicates that all trades involved in the construction of the house have been approved by the inspector responsible for that trade. The building inspector, the plumbing inspector, the electrical inspector and the mechanical inspector have each must approve the project to allow occupancy of the new home.

Other Permits

Other permits may be required depending on the location of the building lot and the public utilities available. The City requires permits for driveways, water main taps, sewer taps and permits to work in the street. Water tap permits and sewer tap permits are not required where these services are not available. If a new home requires either a well or an on-site septic system or both, permits for the well and septic must be obtained from the Chippewa County Environmental Health Department. If the home building project is located within 500 feet of a lake or a stream or if an acre or more of land will be disturbed, a soil and sedimentation permit must be obtained from the Chippewa County Drain Commissioner.

DIRECTORY OF CONSTRUCTION RELATED SERVICES AND AGENCIES

BUILDING PERMITS, MECHANICAL PERMITS, ZONING INFORMATION

Agency: City Building Department
225 East Portage Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 632-5700

ELECTRICAL PERMIT

Agency: State of Michigan
Bureau of Construction Codes
Electrical Division
P.O. Box 30254
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 241-9320

Area Inspector: Jon Marihugn, Electrical Inspector
(906) 495-1390 (between 8:00-9:00 a.m.)

Permit applications available at the City Building Department for submittal to the State of Michigan.

PLUMBING PERMIT

Agency: State of Michigan
Bureau of Construction Codes
Plumbing Division
P.O. Box 30254
Lansing, MI 48909

Area Inspector: Kole Myers, Plumbing Inspector
(231) 238-0588 (Between 8:00-9:00 a.m.)

Permit applications available at the City Building Department for submittal to the State of Michigan.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, REZONING, LOT SPLITS

Agency: City Planning Department
225 East Portage Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 635-1521

WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SERVICE

Agency: City Water/Sewer Department
James Moreau
Water Service Shop
(906) 632-3531

STORM SEWER

Agency: City Street Department
James Atkins, Street Superintendent
1200 East Easterday Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 632-9953

WELL AND/OR ON-SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL

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

NATURAL GAS SERVICE

Agency: Michigan Consolidated Gas Company
1115 East Easterday Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 632-3330

ELECTRICAL SERVICE

Agency: Cloverland Electric Cooperative
401 Hursley Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 632-2221

TELEPHONE SERVICE

Agency: Ameritech, Business Office
1-800-244-4444

WETLAND INFORMATION

Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources
309 West Michigan
Newberry, MI 49868
(906) 293-5131

CULVERTS AND DRIVEWAY OPENINGS

Agency: City Engineering Department
225 East Portage Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 632-5730

SOIL EROSION CONTROL

Agency: Chippewa County Drain Commissioner's Office
319 Court Street
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 635-6362

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

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

Agency: City Building Department
225 East Portage Avenue
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
(906) 632-5700

MISS DIG

Before digging with powered equipment call MISS DIG at 1-800-482-7171 or 811.

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