



Guide to Development

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Contact Information

The City of Rochester Hills Planning and Economic Development Department [website](#) contains maps, applications, online plan submission, the City's [Zoning Ordinance](#) and [Master Plan](#), and much more. Additional resources on available properties and economic development initiatives are also available.

City of Rochester Hills, City Hall
 Planning and Economic Development Department
 1000 Rochester Hills Dr.
 Rochester Hills, MI 48309
 248.656.4660
 Monday – Friday 8:00am – 5:00pm

Contact Quick Reference

Planning and Economic Development Director	Sara Roediger, AICP	248.841.2573	roedigers@rochesterhills.org
Planning Manager	Kristen Kapelanski, AICP	248.841.2572	kapelanskik@rochesterhills.org
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Reviewing Bodies for Development Applications

The city's Zoning Ordinance outlines the procedures for development applications. Depending on the nature and location of the project, select City boards and commissions will review the project. [Click here](#) for a complete list of boards and commissions and more information about these entities. [Click here](#) for the City's calendar. The relevant boards and commissions are noted below, including meeting dates and times. Meetings take place at City Hall unless noted.

- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority – meets at 7:00PM the third Thursday of January, April, July and October
- Historic Districts Commission – meets at 7:00PM the second Thursday of each month
- Local Development Finance Authority – meets at 7:30AM the second Thursday in February, April, July and October
- Planning Commission – meets at 7:00PM the third Tuesday of each month
- Zoning/Sign Board of Appeals – meets at 7:00PM the second Wednesday of each month

The timeline for the approval process of development applications depends on the schedule of each board and commission that needs to review the project, the public notice requirements in each case, and the publication time for media release. Special meetings can be requested and accommodated if a quorum of board/commission members are available. A direct written request via email or letter is required to request a special meeting. Additional charges may apply.

Community Vision: The Master Plan

The Master Plan is one of the primary tools used by the City of Rochester Hills City Council, boards and commissions, and the staff that make decisions affecting the future land use of the community. A Master Plan is a broad based policy document for the physical, economic, and social development of the city as it relates to land use. It has a long-range perspective that provides a coordinated approach to making important decisions.

Prospective developers should review the City's [Master Plan](#) to make sure the proposed project helps fulfill the goals of the plan.

Zoning Information and Permitted Uses

The [Zoning Ordinance](#) details the various zoning districts within the City and includes regulations for the types of uses permitted, site layout and general property standards. The [Zoning Map](#) details the corresponding zoning district for each property in the city. A summary [Table of Permitted Uses](#), [Table of Permitted Uses in the Brooklands District](#) and [Table of Permitted Uses in Flex Business Districts](#) are provided for quick reference. Additional standards and conditions for development are noted in the [Zoning Ordinance](#).

The Development Review Process

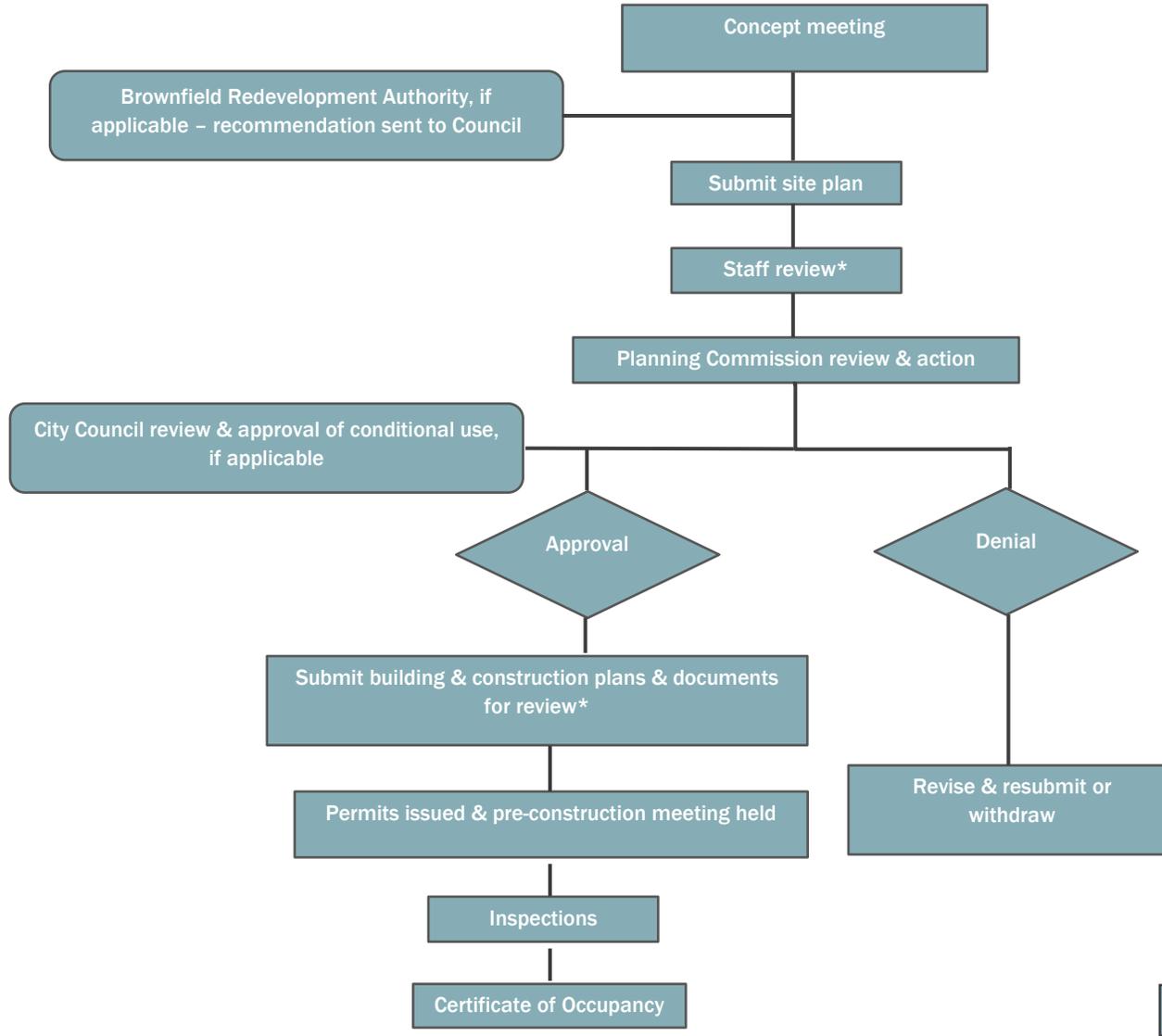
The following outlines the development review process. The guide describes the relevant reviewing bodies for planning and development projects in the City. It outlines the planning and zoning approval process and the applications and other materials needed. This is followed by a brief overview of the approval process of other permits and licenses necessary throughout the development project, including building and construction permits.

The accompanying flowcharts outline the site plan approval process, site condominium approval process and rezoning process followed in Rochester Hills. The diagrams include required meetings and actions and outline the boards and commissions required to review development applications. In many cases, this is a multi-step review process, including staff review, board/commission review and required public hearings.

In general, most building construction and land modifications require a site plan application and, depending on the use, may also require conditional use approval from the City Council. A conditional use approval could also be required where a simple change of use is proposed for a building, even if no construction is occurring. Refer to the City's [Zoning Ordinance](#) for detailed review and approval procedures.

As a companion document, the City's [Public Participation Plan](#), outlines the City's methods for public participation and engagement.

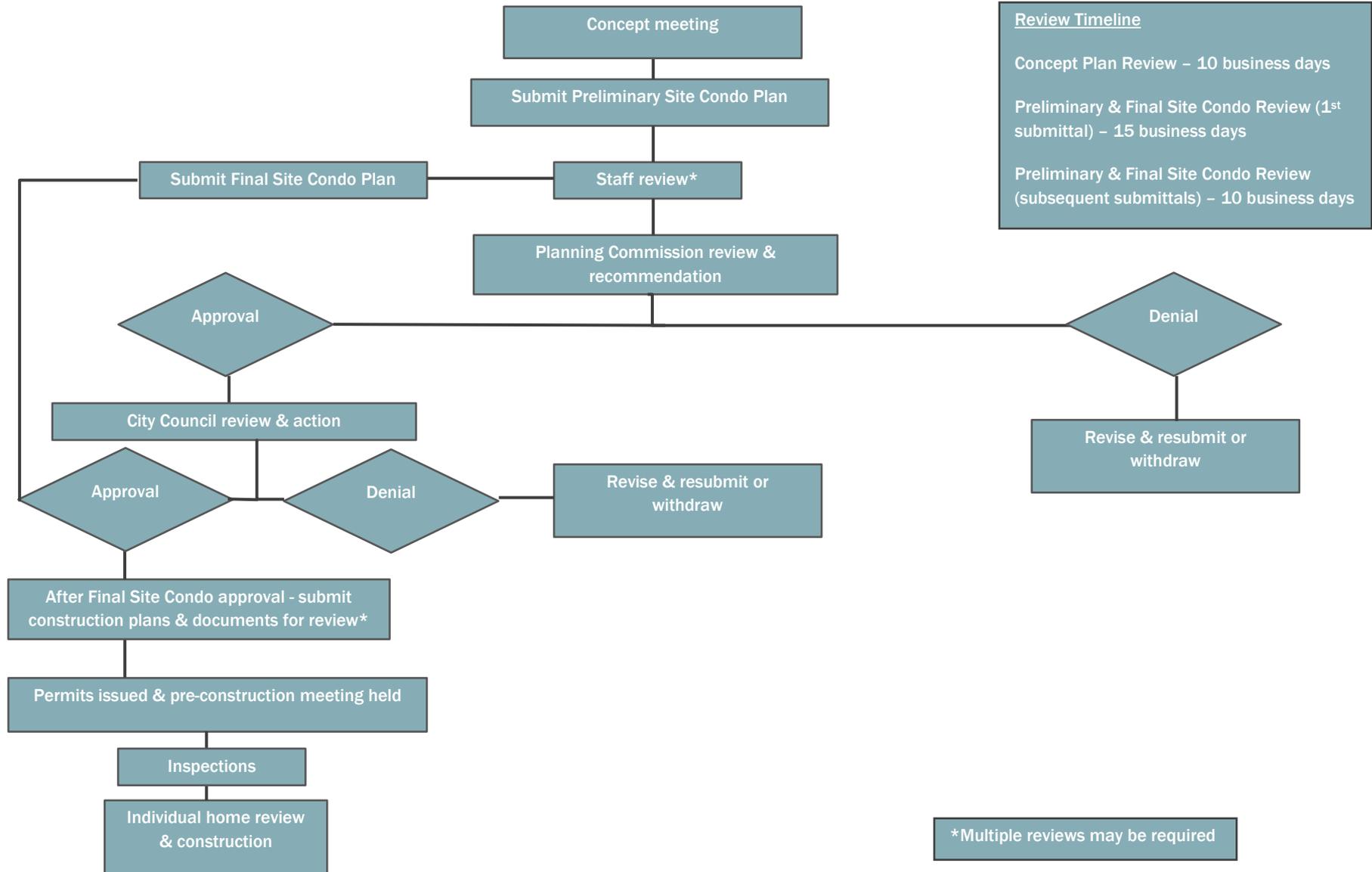
Site Plan Review & Approval Process



Review Timeline

- Concept Plan Review – 10 business days
- Site Plan Review (1st submittal) – 15 business days
- Site Plan Review (subsequent submittals) – 10 business days

Site Condominium Review & Approval Process



Review Timeline

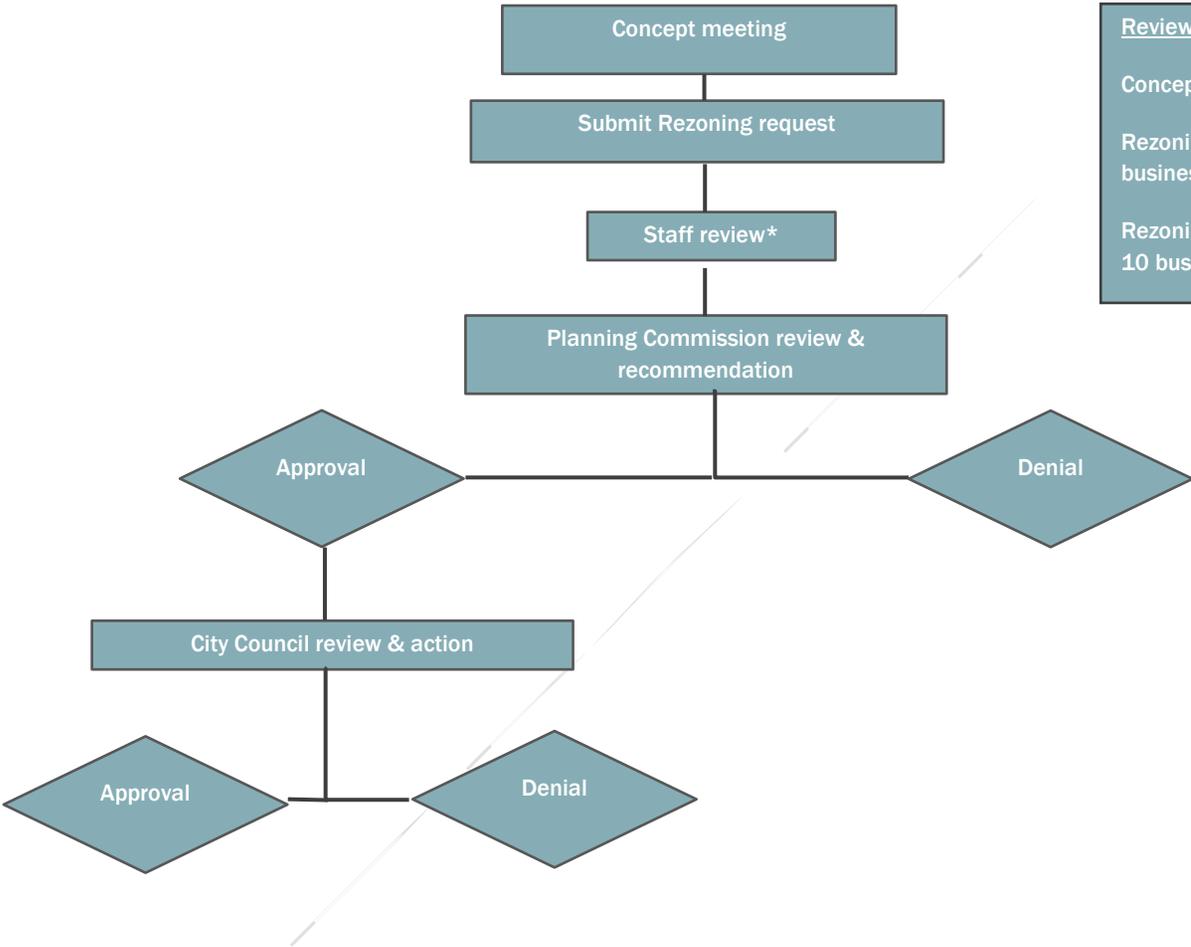
Concept Plan Review – 10 business days

Preliminary & Final Site Condo Review (1st submittal) – 15 business days

Preliminary & Final Site Condo Review (subsequent submittals) – 10 business days

*Multiple reviews may be required

Rezoning Review & Approval Process



Review Timeline

- Concept Plan Review - 10 business days
- Rezoning Review (1st submittal) - 15 business days
- Rezoning Review (subsequent submittals) - 10 business days

*Multiple reviews may be required

Concept Plan Meeting

The prospective developer or representative of an entity wishing to (re)develop a property in the City is encouraged to meet with the Planning and Economic Development team prior to submitting an official application for review. Information on what is required to schedule a Concept Plan Meeting can be found on page 2 of the [Request for Concept Plan Meeting Application](#). Generally, the more information and detail provided on a conceptual plan, the more feedback the city staff can provide.

Meetings are generally scheduled within two weeks of submitting an application. Drawings will be dispersed to the appropriate departments (fire, building, etc.) for staff to review in advance. Applicable staff from other departments may also attend the Concept Plan Meeting. During this meeting, the developer may outline the proposed development idea and any initial conceptual designs available. The staff will provide the developer with background information on the site, the community vision for the site, an overall opinion of the proposed idea and a description of the approval process and timeline. This service is provided free of charge.

A potential applicant has the opportunity to request to appear before the Planning Commission as a discussion item to get the Planning Commission's initial thoughts on any proposed concept. No guarantees of approval will be made at this meeting but the Commissioners will generally offer whether or not they have any concerns with the proposal.

Plan Submittal

Plan approvals involve first submitting the required documents to the Planning and Economic Development Department. The required plan elements are detailed in the [Development Application](#). Consult Section 138-2.200 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#) to determine when a project requires site plan review. Some projects may qualify for administrative review.

After a complete application is submitted, the Planning and Economic Development Department will distribute site plans to the following City departments for review and comment: Building, Fire, Police, and the Department of Public Works. Plans may be submitted to additional internal and external agencies, such as DTE, MDOT, or Consumer's Energy, as needed.

The City Council, Planning Commission or City staff have the authority to review and to approve, approve with conditions, or deny site plan applications in accordance with the requirements outlined in the City's [Zoning Ordinance](#).

Plan Review

Submitted plans will be circulated to the appropriate departments for review which may include Planning, Engineering, Building, Assessing, Parks and Natural Resources, Fire, etc. Marked up plans will be sent to the applicant indicating the proposed project's compliance with all of the applicable city, state, and federal laws, ordinances, and codes. The first review is generally completed within fifteen business days.

If all site plan requirements are met, the site plan will be approved administratively as detailed below or forwarded to the Planning Commission for their consideration. It is the department's policy not to send forward any plans without recommendations of approval from city staff. It typically takes an applicant a minimum of two rounds of review before they have addressed staff's outstanding issues. The second (and any subsequent rounds of review) are generally completed within ten business days.

Administrative Approval

Depending on the activity or use, approval is dependent upon the authority as designated. If administrative approval is applicable, the Planning and Economic Development Department has the discretion to forward any site plan submitted to the Planning Commission for final determination. Staff will approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application submitted for administrative approval. If administrative approval is denied, the applicant may submit the site plan to the Planning Commission. Table 1 of Section 138-2.200 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#) notes those projects that can be approved administratively.

Planning Commission Review and Action

The Planning Commission can approve, approve with conditions, or deny the plan. After reviewing the staff report and hearing public comment, the planning commission may suggest and/or require modifications to the proposed plan or require additional information is needed before acting on the plan or making a recommendation to the City Council (when applicable).

City Council Review and Action

Several items require approval from the City Council, based upon a recommendation from the Planning Commission. These include conditional land use approvals, planned unit developments, rezonings and site condominiums. After the Planning Commission takes action, an application requiring City Council approval will generally be forwarded to the next regular City Council meeting following the Planning Commission's action.

Final Site Plan Review and Approval

Once the application receives approval from the relevant boards and commissions, the applicant submits a final site plan to the Planning and Economic Development Department. The final site plan incorporates any conditions of approval. Staff determines if the final site plan complies with the conditions of approval. If so, stamped approval copies of the final site plan are forwarded to the Building and Public Services Departments. If not, they will require site plan modification. An approved site plan is required before the issuance of a Land Improvement Permit to begin work on the site and/or a Building Permit.

Time limit of approval and work completion

The site plan approval remains valid for 12 months from the date of its approval. If work has not begun within the 12-month limit, the approval shall automatically become null and void and all rights under the site plan approval lapse. Requests to extend the 12-month limit can be made up to one month prior to expiration, written and submitted to the Planning and Economic Development department. Site plan extensions are not required once a Land Improvement Permit and/or Building Permit is obtained and work on the proposed development site has begun.

Prior to beginning work on a site, an applicant is required to obtain a Land Improvement Permit from the Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works. Specific Engineering Design Standards and instructions for plan submission can be found on the [City of Rochester Hills Department of Public Services](#) website. Upon submission of construction design plans, applicants are given a project-specific checklist noting site specific requirements that must be completed in order to obtain a Land Improvement Permit.

Relevant project-specific building and trade permits are also required. Instructions for plan submission and requirements are available on the [City of Rochester Hills Building Department](#) website.

Variance Review Process

Dimensional and use variances are considered by the Zoning Board of Appeals, which meets the second Wednesday of the month. Standards considered for a dimensional variance are listed in Section 138-2.407 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#). Standards considered for a use variance are listed in Section 138-2.408 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#). A detailed description of materials to be submitted for consideration of a variance are noted in the [Zoning Board of Appeals Application](#).

Rezoning

The information required to initiate a rezoning for a subject property is detailed in the [Rezoning Application](#). Rezonings will be reviewed by staff prior to referral to the Planning Commission for public hearing and recommendation prior to consideration by City Council.

Conditional Use Approval

Uses requiring Conditional Use Approval are listed in Table 4 of Section 138-4.300 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#). A conditional use request is first reviewed by staff prior to consideration by the Planning Commission for public hearing and a referral to City Council. In their consideration of the application, the Planning Commission and the City Council must find the use:

1. Promotes the intent and purpose of this ordinance.
2. Is designed, constructed, operated, maintained and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, the natural environment, the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the land use, and the community as a whole.
3. Is served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainageways, refuse disposal, or that the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the land use or activity shall be able to provide adequately any such service.
4. Not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses, persons, property or the public welfare.
5. Not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

Tree Preservation Permits

All parcels are subject to the Tree Preservation Ordinance, requiring the preservation of a minimum of 40% of the regulated trees on site. Regulated trees are those trees with a diameter of six inches or greater. Additional detail on the requirements of the Tree Preservation Ordinance can be found in the [Tree Conservation and Tree Placement Fact Sheet](#). The removal of any regulated trees as part of a (re)development project requires the approval of a Tree Removal Permit from the Planning Commission and the notification of the surrounding property owners. Tree Removal Permits are considered as part of the regular site plan approval process and a separate application is not required. Owners of occupied single-family homes on parcels less than one acre are not required to obtain a Tree Preservation Permit.

Wetland Use Permits & Natural Features Setback Modifications

Wetlands have been deemed a protected resource by the City Council. A general Wetlands Map showing the approximate location of probable regulated wetlands is available on the [Rochester Hills Wetlands Map](#). Any property with potential regulated wetland areas should have a Wetland and Watercourse Boundary Determination completed. The required [application](#) lists the requirements to begin the process.

If impacts to a City-regulated wetland are proposed as part of a (re)development, a Wetland Use Permit may be granted by the City Council, following a recommendation from the Planning Commission and public hearing. The criteria considered by the City Council in determining whether or not to grant a Wetland Use Permit are listed in Section 126-565 of the [City Code](#).

Similarly, modifications to the required 25 foot natural features setback can be granted by the Planning Commission. Section 138-9.103 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#) lists the criteria the Planning Commission will consider in determining whether or not to grant the requested modification. Wetland Use Permits and Natural Features Setback Modifications are considered as part of the regular site plan approval process and a separate application is not required.

Historic Properties

Rochester Hills has several contiguous and non-contiguous historic districts overseen by the Historic Districts Commission as shown on the [Historic Districts Map](#). Development on these properties is subject to review and approval by the Historic Districts Commission. The City's [Historic Property Owner's Guide](#) provides additional information on the review and approval for changes to historic properties.

Incentives & Resources

Brownfield Redevelopment Incentive

Brownfields are properties that have been impacted from historical activities and where the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of the property may be complicated by those historical activities. The City of Rochester Hills' Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is dedicated to building a partnership between its citizens, developers and the regulatory authorities in order to return Brownfield properties to active and appropriate reuse. To facilitate this partnership, Brownfield incentives are available in the City and are provided to assist developers with the extra-ordinary costs of redeveloping impaired properties.

For Brownfield projects, one particular incentive available in Rochester Hills is tax increment financing. BRA tax increment financing allows developers to be reimbursed the cost of certain eligible expenses via the capture of taxes on the increased taxable value resulting from the redevelopment. Eligible activities may include:

- Environmental Assessments
- Response Activities
- Due Care Plans
- Remediation and Engineering Controls
- Demolition

- Pre-demolition asbestos abatement
- Other actions necessary to protect the health, safety, welfare, environment or natural resources.

The City will consider each application on a case-by-case basis, based on the merits of the particular plan and intended future use of the property. For more information, speak with the Planning & Economic Development Department.

P.A. 198 Industrial Facilities Exemption (Tax Abatement)

Rochester Hills City Council adopted a tax abatement policy, which allows the City to incentivize investment in new real property within the Rochester Hills. In accordance with P.A. 198 of 1976, as amended, eligible projects include those properties and businesses that primarily manufacture, or process, goods or materials by physical change. Related facilities of Michigan manufacturers may include offices, engineering, research and development, warehousing, parts distribution or high-technology facilities.

Typical projects see a tax benefit of a 50% reduction in the NEW real property tax anticipated. Eligibility, along with duration of the financial incentive, include (a.) meeting the criteria of P.A. 198 of 1976, as amended, (b.) the eligible costs of the new investment, and (c.) the number of jobs created and/or retained. For more information, speak with the Planning & Economic Development Department

Resources

The Planning and Economic Development Department also provides one-on-one support to new and expanding businesses in Rochester Hills. Businesses can schedule a meeting with economic development staff to discuss the business' needs and connect the company with various business development resources or incentives available through other organizations such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Oakland County or the Rochester Regional Chamber of Commerce.