



CITY OF
St. Joseph
MICHIGAN

DEVELOPMENT GUIDE 2025





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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to streamline the development process in St. Joseph, MI, ensuring alignment with the city's regulations and vision. It provides step-by-step instructions for prospective developers, including links to key resources.

KEY CONTACTS

Planning & Zoning Department
 Address: City Hall, 700 Broad St., St. Joseph, MI 49085
 Phone: (269) 983-1212
 Fax: (269) 985-0347

Title	Name	Email	Phone
Community Development Director/ Zoning Administrator	Kristen Gundersen	kgundersen@sjcity.com	(269) 983-1212
Development Director (DDA and Economic Development)	Kelly Ewalt	kewalt@sjcity.com	(269) 983-5541
City Manager	Emily Hackworth	ehackworth@sjcity.com	(269) 983-5541
Director of Public Works	Greg Grothous	ggrothous@sjcity.com	(269) 983-6341
Building Official	Trudy Wilder	twilder@sjcity.com	(269) 983-1212
Building Inspector	Clint Levi	clevi@sjcity.com	(269) 983-1212
Assistant City Manager/City Engineer	Tim Zebell	tzebell@sjcity.com	(269) 983-5541

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 first Wednesday of even numbered months at 4:00pm as needed
- Downtown Development Authority – meets on the first Monday of each month at 8:30am
- Planning Commission – meets on the first Thursday of each month at 4:30pm
- Zoning Board of Appeals – meets the second Thursday of each month at 4:30pm
- Construction Board of Appeals – meets as needed

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.

MASTER PLAN

The 2016 Master Plan provides the city's development blueprint, emphasizing sustainable growth, preserving the community's character, and balancing economic and residential needs.

Review the plan for alignment with long-term city goals [here](#).

ZONING INFORMATION & PERMITTED USES

The [Zoning Ordinance](#) for the City of St. Joseph establishes specific zoning districts throughout the city, regulating permitted land uses, property development standards, and site layouts. Each property's zoning designation is depicted on the [Zoning Map](#), which serves as a guide for determining allowed uses.

The ordinance outlines detailed standards for various zoning districts and provides tables summarizing the permitted uses in each district for quick reference. Additionally, any supplementary conditions or specific criteria for development are addressed within the ordinance to ensure compliance with city regulations.

For more details, visit the city's page on zoning [here](#).

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

The City of St. Joseph's development process involves multiple steps and reviewing bodies to ensure compliance with zoning regulations and community standards. The process includes an overview of planning and zoning approval, required applications, and associated materials. Additionally, it provides guidance on obtaining permits and licenses needed for construction and land development. It is critical that applicants follow the directions provided and submit complete applications to ensure a timely response.

Key elements of the development review process include flowcharts detailing the steps for site plan approvals, rezoning requests, and other project-specific requirements. These diagrams identify necessary meetings, actions, and the roles of city boards and commissions in reviewing development applications. The process often involves staff review, recommendations from commissions, and public hearings.

For most construction and land-use changes, developers must submit a site plan application. Conditional use approval from City staff may also be necessary, even for projects involving only a change of use without construction. Developers should refer to the City's Zoning Ordinance and application packets for a detailed explanation of the approval process.

To promote community engagement, the City also follows a Community Engagement Plan, outlining methods for involving residents in the development process. You can view the plan [here](#).

PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING

The Pre-Submittal Meeting serves as an essential opportunity for private development teams to engage with city staff from various departments to discuss preliminary concepts for future projects and familiarize themselves with the city's review process. These meetings are structured as comprehensive question-and-answer sessions, enabling the identification of potential issues, fostering a shared understanding, and streamlining the development process. It is crucial for all key design staff from the private development team to attend, ensuring that feedback is heard firsthand.

By addressing site and technical code challenges early on, these meetings can save the development team time and money by minimizing redesign work. They are especially valuable for complex commercial or industrial projects and for developments involving older buildings, particularly those in the downtown area. While feedback from these sessions is preliminary and not exhaustive, they help lay a strong foundation for formal project submissions and subsequent reviews.

Pre-Submittal Meetings are free to schedule, and most projects require only one session. Meetings typically last an hour or less, providing an efficient and cost-effective way to advance project planning and design. The form to request a Pre-Submittal Meeting can be found [here](#).

PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING



ESTIMATED TIME*

1

REVIEW ORDINANCES

Private Development Team reviews all necessary City of St. Joseph Ordinances and documents for preparation of preliminary documents.

2

MAKE APPLICATION

Make Application - application needs to be complete and include a site plan.

START

3

PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING SCHEDULED

Complete applications may be submitted at any time. It is suggested that you make an appointment with staff to submit the application. All required applications, supplemental information and fees must be submitted at one time.

7 DAYS

4

STAFF REVIEW & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Staff reviews the application and supporting documents for completeness, then forwards the approved packet to the City Engineer, Public Works, Public Safety, and Building Official for review and comments.

14 DAYS

* Time Dependent on Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

Kristen Gundersen
Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:

No charge

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Pre-submittal meetings are in a "Q&A" format.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

The development review process begins with contacting the Community Development Director, who will assess the zoning ordinance regulations to determine the appropriate procedures for the proposed project. Staff will provide the necessary application forms and decide if a pre-submittal meeting is required. Depending on the nature of the request, applicants may need to complete a Site Plan Application or submit a detailed layout of the building space.

The pre-submittal meeting serves as a preliminary discussion of the project and typically involves key city officials, such as the City Engineer, Director of Public Works, Director of Public Safety, Building Official, and the Community Development Director. This meeting offers an opportunity to refine the proposal before finalizing any drawings or submitting the application. Applicants should provide a detailed site plan drawn to scale, which outlines existing conditions and proposed changes. The development team, including professionals like land surveyors, engineers, or attorneys, is encouraged to participate in this collaborative session. Meetings are scheduled as needed, generally one to two weeks out, based on staff availability.

Once the application is ready, it can be submitted at any time, though it is recommended to schedule an appointment with staff to ensure a smooth submission process. A complete application must include all required forms, supplemental documents, and fees. Staff will then review the submission for completeness and distribute the application to relevant departments, including engineering, public works, public safety, and building, for further evaluation and comments.

If additional information or revisions are required, staff will notify the applicant and provide guidance on the necessary updates. Once all requirements are met and the proposal complies with the applicable zoning regulations and other local and state standards, the staff may approve the request. In some cases, approval may be contingent upon meeting specific conditions outlined by the city. This streamlined process ensures that all projects align with established guidelines while promoting collaboration between applicants and city departments.

The form for submitting a Conditional Use Permit can be found [here](#).

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT



		ESTIMATED TIME*
1	CONTACT CITY Contact City Staff to discuss Request.	START
2	PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING This meeting, attended by the City Engineer, Directors of Public Works, Public Safety, Community Development, and the Building Official, facilitates discussion of the proposed project before finalizing drawings and submission.	14 DAYS
3	MAKE APPLICATION Complete applications may be submitted at any time. It is suggested that you make an appointment with staff to submit the application. All required applications, supplemental information and fees must be submitted at one time.	1 DAY
4	STAFF REVIEW & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION Staff reviews the application and supporting documents for completeness, then forwards the approved packet to the City Engineer, Public Works, Public Safety, and Building Official for review and comments.	14 DAY
5	PERMIT ISSUED If the request meets the requirements of the applicable zoning district and complies with all other local and state regulations, staff will approve the request. In some cases, conditions may be placed on the approval.	1 DAY

* Time Dependent on Public Meeting Schedule and Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

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Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:

Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Planning Commission typically meets
the first Thursday of each month.

City Commission typically meets
fourth Monday of month.

MINOR AND MAJOR SITE PLANS

For any proposed development request, the first step is to contact the Community Development Director or the Inspection Department. City staff will review the applicable zoning ordinance regulations and determine the appropriate process for your request. There are two primary types of site plan applications. Minor Site Plans are required for any new or altered use classified as "P" (Permitted) or "C" (Conditional) in [Table 4-1](#) of the Zoning Ordinance or for any new or altered building or structure associated with these uses. Applicants should allow approximately three weeks for an initial review. Major Site Plans are required for applications involving new or amended Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), Special Use Permits, or Dimensional Variance requests. These applications must be submitted at least 24 calendar days before the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, following the specific directions for each process.

Once a building permit application is submitted, staff will forward the application packet to the City Engineer, Director of Public Works, Director of Public Safety (Police/Fire), and the Building Official for review and comment. For minor site plans, applicants should submit the completed application and drawings with the building permit. For major site plans, final approval must first be granted by the City Commission (for Special Use Permits or PUDs) or the Zoning Board of Appeals (for Variances).

If revisions to the site plan drawings are necessary based on feedback from city departments, these changes must be completed before moving forward. However, revisions are typically unnecessary for major site plans after final approval. Once all outstanding concerns have been addressed, the building permit will be issued.

For projects involving new or altered publicly owned streets or utility infrastructure (water, sanitary sewer, or storm sewer mains), the applicant must submit "as-built" site plan drawings in compliance with [Section 12.10](#) of the Zoning Ordinance. These drawings must be submitted within one month of project occupancy.

The form for submitting a Site Plan can be found [here](#).

MINOR AND MAJOR SITE PLAN PROCESS



ESTIMATED TIME*

1

CONTACT CITY

Contact City Staff to discuss Request.

START

2

MAKE APPLICATION

1) Minor Site Plan associated with a permitted or conditional use - submit with building permit application - please allow three-weeks for initial review, or

2) Major Site Plan see directions for Planned Unit Development, Special Use Permit or Dimensional Variance. Complete applications must be submitted no less than 24 calendar days prior to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission (PC) or Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) meeting - see meeting date and deadline schedule as posted annually.

24 DAYS

3

STAFF REVIEW

Staff reviews for compliance.

7 DAYS

4

BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS BEGINS

Building permit process begins if approved.

1 DAY

* Time Dependent on Public Meeting Schedule and Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

Kristen Gundersen
Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:

Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

A complete site plan application is typically necessary for PUD or SUP requests.

MAP AMENDMENT (REZONING)

The development review process begins with the applicant contacting the Community Development Director to discuss the proposed request. During this initial step, staff will review zoning ordinance regulations and determine the appropriate process. Necessary application forms will be provided, and staff will assess whether a pre-submittal meeting is needed. Depending on the project's scope and nature, staff may also recommend holding a neighborhood meeting. This informal gathering allows the applicant to introduce themselves, share the project details with nearby residents, and gather community feedback before making a formal application.

The pre-submittal meeting, an essential part of the process, involves a collaborative discussion between the applicant, their development team, and key city officials, including the City Engineer, Director of Public Works, Director of Public Safety, Building Official, and the Community Development Director. The applicant must provide a detailed site plan and project description prior to this meeting. The site plan should include existing conditions and proposed changes, and the applicant's team, such as engineers, architects, or attorneys, is encouraged to attend. These meetings are typically scheduled one to two weeks out based on staff availability.

Once the application is complete, it must be submitted no later than 24 calendar days before the next Planning Commission (PC) meeting. Submissions should include all required forms, supporting documents, and fees in one package. Staff will review the application for completeness and, if acceptable, distribute it to relevant city departments for further review and feedback. Any identified deficiencies or requested revisions must be addressed before the application proceeds.

After revisions are made, staff prepares a memorandum summarizing the application, departmental feedback, and any public input received. This memorandum, along with the Planning Commission packet, is distributed prior to the scheduled PC meeting. During the PC public hearing, the applicant presents their case, including an overview of the request and submitted drawings. Commissioners and the public have the opportunity to ask questions and provide input. Following deliberation, the PC will make a recommendation to either approve, deny, or continue the request for additional information.

The application then moves to the City Commission (CC) for further deliberation. Staff prepares a second memorandum incorporating the PC's recommendation, meeting minutes, and additional documentation. The CC conducts two readings of the adopting ordinance. The first reading allows for further discussion and public input, followed by deliberation where the CC may approve, deny, or defer the request. The second and final reading, typically held in the following month, concludes the process with a final decision.

If the ordinance is approved, it is published in the local newspaper within seven days, and the amendment becomes effective ten days after adoption unless otherwise specified. Staff then provides the applicant with an approval packet, which includes meeting minutes and all pertinent documentation for their records. This comprehensive process ensures that proposed developments align with local standards and foster transparent decision-making.

The form for submitting a Map Amendment can be found [here](#).

MAP AMENDMENT (REZONING)



CITY OF
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ESTIMATED TIME*

- | | | ESTIMATED TIME* |
|----------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | CONTACT CITY
Contact City Staff to discuss Request. | START |
| 2 | MAKE APPLICATION
A complete application submitted a minimum 24 days prior to desired Planning Commission Meeting -see meeting date and deadline schedule as posted annually. | 24 DAYS |
| 3 | PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING
Public Hearing before Planning Commission. Planning Commission Recommendation Forwarded to City Commission. | 1 DAY |
| 4 | CITY COMMISSION - FIRST READING
City Commission first reading of the draft adopting Ordinance. | 1 DAY |
| 5 | CITY COMMISSION - SECOND READING
City Commission second and final reading of the draft adopting Ordinance. | 30 DAYS |
| 6 | CITY COMMISSION ACTION
City Commission either approves or denies application. | 1 DAY |
| 7 | ZONING CHANGE PUBLISHED
Adopted Ordinance published in local paper - becomes effective 10 days after approval. | 10 Days |

* Time Dependent on Public Meeting Schedule and Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

Kristen Gundersen
Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:

Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Planning Commission typically meets
the first Thursday of each month.

City Commission typically meets
fourth Monday of month.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS (PUD)

For any proposed development request, the process begins by contacting the Community Development Director. Staff will review the relevant zoning ordinance regulations to determine the appropriate procedures and provide necessary application forms. Depending on the project's scope and type, staff may recommend a neighborhood meeting as an initial step. This informal gathering offers an opportunity for the applicant to introduce the project, explain its scope, and gather feedback from nearby residents. Additionally, a pre-submittal meeting with city staff may be scheduled to discuss the proposal in detail before finalizing drawings and submitting the application. This meeting typically includes representatives from the City Engineer's office, Public Works, Public Safety (Police/Fire), the Building Official, and the Community Development Director. Applicants are encouraged to include their development team, such as engineers, attorneys, or architects, and provide detailed site plans and descriptions beforehand.

Completed applications must be submitted at least 24 calendar days before the next Planning Commission (PC) meeting, which typically occurs on the first Thursday of each month. Staff will review submissions for completeness and coordinate their distribution to the City Engineer, Public Works, Public Safety, and the Building Official for comments. Legal notices will also be prepared for publication and distribution to property owners within 300 feet of the site, ensuring compliance with the required 15-day notice period before the public hearing.

Prior to appearing before the Planning Commission, applicants may need to revise their site plans or supplemental drawings based on departmental feedback. Once finalized, staff compiles a memorandum detailing the request, departmental comments, public feedback, and supporting documents for the PC's consideration. At the Planning Commission meeting, the applicant will present their case, followed by questions and public comments. The PC will then deliberate and recommend one of four actions: approval, approval with conditions, denial, or continuation for additional information.

Following the Planning Commission's recommendation, the request moves to the City Commission (CC) for formal action. Similar to the PC process, the City Commission will review the proposal, consider public input, and deliberate on the request. Legal notices and public hearing procedures align with those of the Planning Commission. The City Commission may approve, approve with conditions, deny, or continue the request.

Once approved, the applicant may proceed with the building permit process through the Inspection Department. Additional permits for engineering plans or work in the public right-of-way may be required. All submitted drawings must adhere to those approved by the City Commission. Finally, staff will prepare a record of the approved materials, including meeting minutes and related documents, and provide a copy to the applicant for their records. This comprehensive process ensures that all development proposals are reviewed thoroughly and in accordance with city regulations.

The form for submitting a Planned Unit Development can be found [here](#).

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT



CITY OF
St. Joseph
MICHIGAN

		ESTIMATED TIME*
1	CONTACT CITY Contact City Staff to discuss Request.	START
2	MAKE APPLICATION A complete application submitted a minimum 24 days prior to desired Planning Commission Meeting.	24 DAYS
3	PUBLIC HEARING Public Hearing before Planning Commission.	1 DAY
4	PLANNING COMMISSION Planning Commission Recommendation forwarded to City Commission.	1 DAY
5	PUBLIC HEARING Public Hearing before City Commission (requires 15 day notice.)	15 DAYS
6	CITY COMMISSION ACTION City Commission either approves or denies application.	1 DAY
7	BUILDING PERMIT Building permit process begins.	

* Time Dependent on Public Meeting Schedule and Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

Kristen Gundersen
Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:

Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Planning Commission typically meets
the first Thursday of each month.

City Commission typically meets
fourth Monday of month.

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

The process for submitting a development request begins with contacting the Community Development Director, who will review the zoning ordinance and determine the appropriate procedure for the application. Staff will provide the necessary forms and decide if a pre-submittal meeting is required. For larger or more impactful projects, a neighborhood meeting may also be recommended. This informal gathering allows applicants to introduce the project, explain its scope, and receive feedback from nearby residents before formal submission.

A pre-submittal meeting with city staff often follows, including representatives from engineering, public works, public safety, and the building office. This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss the project details and refine the application prior to submission. Applicants are expected to bring their development team and a detailed site plan, drawn to scale, that outlines existing conditions and proposed changes. These plans, along with a thorough project description, must be submitted in advance of the meeting.

Once ready, the application must be submitted no later than 24 calendar days before the Planning Commission's (PC) next scheduled meeting. Complete submissions include all required forms, supplemental information, and fees. Staff will review the materials for completeness before formally accepting the application and forwarding it for departmental review. Concurrently, legal notices will be prepared for publication and mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the site, ensuring compliance with the 15-day notice requirement before the public hearing.

During the review process, applicants may be asked to revise their drawings based on comments from city departments. Finalized materials are compiled by staff into a memorandum, including comments, public input, and any supporting documentation, for the Planning Commission's consideration. At the public hearing, the applicant presents their proposal, followed by questions from the commission and comments from the public. The Planning Commission will deliberate and make one of four recommendations: approval, conditional approval, denial, or a request for additional information.

Following the Planning Commission's recommendation, the application proceeds to the City Commission for final review. Similar to the PC process, legal notices are published, and public hearings are conducted. The City Commission evaluates the proposal, considers public input, and votes on one of four options: approval, conditional approval, denial, or postponement for further information. If approved, the applicant can proceed with securing building permits through the Inspection Department, ensuring compliance with all approved plans and city requirements.

To conclude the process, staff will prepare a comprehensive approval packet, including meeting minutes and final documentation, for the applicant's records. This structured and collaborative approach ensures thorough review and consideration of all development proposals, balancing community standards with project objectives.

The form for submitting a Special Use Permit can be found [here](#).

SPECIAL USE PERMIT



ESTIMATED TIME*

- | | | ESTIMATED TIME* |
|----------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | CONTACT CITY
Contact City Staff to discuss Request. | START |
| 2 | MAKE APPLICATION
A complete application submitted a minimum 24 days prior to desired Planning Commission Meeting -see meeting date and deadline schedule as posted annually. | 24 DAYS |
| 3 | PUBLIC HEARING
Public Hearing before Planning Commission -typically first Thursday of each month. | 1 DAY |
| 4 | PLANNING COMMISSION
Planning Commission Recommendation forwarded to City Commission. | 1 DAY |
| 5 | PUBLIC HEARING
Public Hearing before City Commission -typically fourth Monday of month (requires 15 day notice.) | 15 DAYS |
| 6 | CITY COMMISSION ACTION
City Commission either approves or denies application. | 1 DAY |
| 7 | BUILDING PERMIT
Building permit process begins. | |

* Time Dependent on Public Meeting Schedule and Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

Kristen Gundersen
Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:

Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Planning Commission typically meets
the first Thursday of each month.

City Commission typically meets
fourth Monday of month.

TEXT AMENDMENT (MODIFYING LANGUAGE IN ZONING ORDINANCE)

To initiate a zoning or development request in St. Joseph, applicants should first contact the Community Development Director to discuss the proposal. The Director will review applicable zoning regulations, recommend the appropriate process, and determine if a pre-submittal meeting is necessary. Following this, applicants must submit a completed application at least 24 days before the next Planning Commission (PC) meeting, typically held on the first Thursday of each month. Appointments are recommended for application submission, ensuring all required forms, supplemental documents, and fees are included. Incomplete applications will not be accepted, potentially delaying the process.

Once an application is submitted, staff will review it for completeness before scheduling it for the PC. Accepted applications are forwarded to relevant departments, including engineering, public works, public safety, and building officials, for additional review and comment. A legal notice is also prepared and published at least 15 days prior to the public hearing. Staff then compiles a memorandum summarizing the proposal, staff comments, public input, and supporting documentation, which is shared with the PC and made public before the meeting.

During the PC public hearing, the applicant presents their proposal, including any drawings or supporting materials, and addresses questions from commissioners and the audience. After the hearing, the PC deliberates and may recommend approval, approval with modifications, denial, or continuation for additional information. These recommendations are documented in a staff memorandum for the City Commission (CC) and presented during their first reading of the ordinance, typically on the fourth Monday of the month.

At the first CC meeting, the Mayor opens the discussion, allowing the applicant to present their case. Commissioners review the proposal, ask questions, and deliberate, with the options to approve, modify, deny, or continue the request. The second reading of the ordinance, usually held on the second Monday of the following month, follows a similar process. Once the ordinance is adopted, it is published in the local newspaper within seven days and becomes effective ten days after adoption unless stated otherwise.

Finally, after all meeting minutes are approved, staff prepares an approval packet for the applicant, providing a comprehensive record of the process and outcome. This structured process ensures thorough review, public participation, and compliance with city standards.

The form for submitting a Text Amendment can be found [here](#).

TEXT AMENDMENT (MODIFYING LANGUAGE IN ZONING ORDINANCE)



1	CONTACT CITY Contact City Staff to discuss Request.	START
2	MAKE APPLICATION A complete application submitted a minimum 24 days prior to desired Planning Commission Meeting -see meeting date and deadline schedule as posted annually.	24 DAYS
3	PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING Public Hearing before Planning Commission. Planning Commission Recommendation Forwarded to City Commission.	1 DAY
4	CITY COMMISSION - FIRST READING City Commission first reading of the draft adopting Ordinance.	1 DAY
5	CITY COMMISSION - SECOND READING City Commission second and final reading of the draft adopting Ordinance.	30 DAYS
6	CITY COMMISSION ACTION City Commission either approves or denies application.	1 DAY
7	ZONING CHANGE PUBLISHED Adopted Ordinance published in local paper - becomes effective 10 days after approval.	10 Days

* Time Dependent on Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:
Kristen Gundersen
Community Development
Director/Zoning
Administrator
(269) 983-1212
kgundersen@sjcity.com

FEE:
Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:
Planning Commission typically
meets the first Thursday of each
month.

City Commission typically meets
fourth Monday of month.

BUILDING PERMIT

The building permit process begins with the applicant contacting the City of St. Joseph Building Department to determine if their proposed project requires a permit. During this initial step, staff will review project details, explain permit requirements, and outline next steps. If a permit is needed, staff will provide the necessary application forms and fee schedule. Applicants are advised to submit a complete application, including accurate building plans, a site plan, and all required fees, as incomplete submissions will be placed on hold until all materials are received.

Once the application is submitted, the building department reviews the documents to ensure compliance with applicable codes. Approved permits allow the applicant to begin construction and initiate the required inspection process. Inspections must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance by contacting the building inspector using the number listed on the permit. It is the applicant's responsibility to schedule inspections at key project milestones and before any work is concealed or covered.

The inspection process typically includes a minimum of three steps: a footing inspection prior to pouring concrete, a backfill inspection after footings, walls, waterproofing, and drain tiles are installed, and a rough inspection after framing, fire-stopping, bracing, and rough mechanical systems are in place but before insulation is installed. A final inspection is conducted once all work is complete, ensuring compliance with the approved permit and applicable codes.

Following successful inspections, the applicant must request a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) before occupying or using the building. This request, which may be submitted verbally or in writing, should include all associated permit numbers for building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing work. If certain permit types are not required, applicants should indicate "Not Applicable" in their request. The CO is issued only after all inspections are approved, all permit work complies with local codes, and the building has an established water account and installed water meter.

This comprehensive process ensures that construction projects meet local standards, align with zoning and safety regulations, and provide transparency for property owners and the community. For additional guidance or assistance, applicants are encouraged to contact the Building Department directly.

Review the plan for alignment with long-term city goals [here](#).

BUILDING PERMIT



1

DETERMINE IF A PERMIT IS REQUIRED

Call First! Before starting any home improvement project, contact the City of St. Joseph Building Department to verify whether your project requires a building permit.

2

OBTAIN BUILDING PERMIT FEE INFO

Building permit fees can be obtained from the Building Department. *Important:* Ensure you include the required permit fees with your application. Applications submitted without payment will be placed on hold until the fees are received.

3

SUBMIT YOUR PERMIT APPLICATION

Prepare a complete application, including accurate building plans and specifications; A site plan showing the project location and layout. Submit the application, plans, and fees to the Building Department.

4

SCHEDULE REQUIRED INSPECTIONS

Call the building inspector's phone number listed on your building permit at least 24 hours in advance to schedule an inspection. A minimum of three inspections is typically required for most structures. It is your responsibility to schedule inspections before any work is concealed or covered.

5

OBTAIN A CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY (CO)

The permit holder or their authorized agent must request the CO upon project completion. A written request is recommended and should include all permit numbers (building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing).

* Time Dependent on Applicant Response Timeliness

CONTACT:

Trudy Wilder
Building Official
(269) 983-1212
twilder@sjcity.com

Clint Levi
Building Inspector
(269) 983-1212
cotoole@sjcity.com

FEE:

Fee Chart Can Be
Found [Here](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Make sure to review all project requirements and guidelines with the Building Department to avoid delays.

Keep a copy of all permits, plans, and inspection records for your reference.

INCENTIVES

Brownfield Redevelopment

Brownfields are properties affected by historical activities where redevelopment, expansion, or reuse may be complicated due to those past uses. In the City of St. Joseph, brownfield redevelopment is supported through the Berrien County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA). The BRA fosters collaboration between citizens, developers, and regulatory authorities to return these properties to active and beneficial use. To aid this effort, a range of brownfield incentives is available to help developers address the extraordinary costs associated with redeveloping impaired properties.

One key incentive offered through the Berrien County BRA is tax increment financing (TIF). This tool allows developers to be reimbursed for eligible redevelopment expenses through the capture of taxes generated by the increased taxable value resulting from the project. Eligible activities under TIF may include:

- Environmental assessments
- Response activities
- Due care plans
- Remediation and engineering controls
- Demolition
- Pre-demolition asbestos abatement
- Other necessary actions to protect health, safety, welfare, the environment, or natural resources

Each brownfield redevelopment application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, considering the specifics of the proposed plan and the intended future use of the property. For more information on brownfield redevelopment in St. Joseph, please contact the Development Director.

Downtown Development Authority

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program is a critical tool for fostering economic growth and revitalization in the City of St. Joseph's downtown district. The DDA uses TIF to support projects that enhance the downtown area by leveraging the increased property tax revenues generated from new development and property value growth within the district. These funds are reinvested in public infrastructure, economic development initiatives, and other improvements that benefit the community.

Eligible activities supported by DDA TIF include:

- Streetscape improvements and beautification
- Public infrastructure upgrades (e.g., sidewalks, utilities, parking facilities)
- Development of public spaces such as parks or plazas
- Historic preservation and restoration efforts
- Marketing and promotional activities for the downtown district
- Planning and design services for redevelopment projects

The DDA considers each proposed project individually, evaluating its potential to enhance the downtown area's economic vitality, aesthetics, and overall appeal. By partnering with property owners, businesses, and developers, the DDA TIF program ensures that reinvestment in downtown St. Joseph creates a thriving, dynamic hub for commerce, culture, and community life.

For more information about DDA TIF and how it can support your project, please contact the Development Director.

RESOURCES

The City of St. Joseph offers personalized support to new and expanding businesses in the community. Businesses can schedule a meeting with the Development Director to discuss their specific needs and explore opportunities for growth. During these consultations, businesses are connected to various development resources and incentives available through the City or organizations such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Berrien County, or Cornerstone Alliance. This collaborative approach ensures businesses have access to the tools and support needed to thrive in St. Joseph.

This Guide Created By:

