

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Planned Development Process

What is a planned development?

In River Forest it is a development of 20,000 square feet or more of land area or gross floor area, a new multi-family housing development or the reconstruction of existing multi-family housing that is damaged beyond 50% of its value. The Zoning Ordinance also allows a development of any property or tract of land in any zoning district, regardless of size, to be submitted as a planned development as there are certain projects that require greater consideration of their impact on surrounding properties and the Village in general. Further, no new construction, expansion of any building or the addition of any parcel(s) or change of use is allowed in a Public/Recreational/Institutional (PRI) district, unless a planned development permit is granted.

What process must an applicant follow to apply for a planned development permit?

Title 10, Chapter 19 of the River Forest Zoning Ordinance identifies the steps of the application process. In summary, an applicant submits a proposed plan development to the Village Board of Trustees and then to the Development Review Board. The applicant must submit a complete application satisfying the requirements outlined in Title 10, Chapter 19, Section 6 of the Zoning Ordinance unless the Development Review Board has granted any application waivers. Village staff and consultants review the application and schedule a public hearing before the Development Review Board. During the public hearing testimony is made by the applicant, Village staff and consultants and members of the public. At the conclusion of the hearing the Development Review Board deliberates and determines whether it will recommend to the Village Board of Trustees that the permit be approved, with or without conditions, or denied, and adopts findings of fact that are sent to the Village Board. The Village Board then has seven to 60 days to consider the Development Review Board's recommendation and makes a final decision to approve or deny the planned development permit.

What is the purpose of the planned development process?

The purpose of the planned development process is to engage with the community to evaluate the merits of a project by weighing it against the standards outlined in Title 10, Chapter 19, Section 3 of the Zoning Ordinance. The process also allows the applicant to request relief from the Village's normal zoning requirements, which is referred to as a "Site Development Allowance". Examples of site development allowances include, but are not limited to, constructing a building that is taller, denser, or located closer to a property line than what the Zoning Ordinance allows, allowing a commercial use on a property that is zoned for residential use, or vice versa, or allowing a special or non-permitted use.

Who reviews a planned development application?

Once an application is submitted it is reviewed by Village staff and consultants to assess the zoning, building, engineering, planning, traffic and public safety impacts of a proposed project. The application is then reviewed by the Development Review Board and, finally, by the Village Board of Trustees. The Village's Economic Development Commission or Historic Preservation Commission may also review an application if needed. All meetings of the Village's appointed and elected bodies are open to the public.

What is the Development Review Board?

The Development Review Board is an advisory body that reviews planned development permit applications and recommends to the Village Board of Trustees that the applications be approved or denied. The Development Review Board is comprised of seven River Forest residents who are appointed for four-year terms and who also serve on either the Plan Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals.

How can residents participate in the planned development process?

View the application: Planned development permit applications are posted on the Village's website (www.vrf.us) no less than 15 days prior to the initial public hearing date. A public hearing may occur during one meeting or over multiple meetings. Any amendments to the application are included in the meeting packets that are sent to the Development Review Board and posted on the Village's website no less than 48 hours prior to the next public hearing date. It is common for the project designs, layouts, etc. to evolve and for applications to be amended based on feedback from the community so residents are encouraged to continue visiting the Village's website.

Attend a neighborhood meeting, public hearing and/or Village Board meeting: Depending upon the scope of the project the Village may require that the applicant conduct a neighborhood meeting to present the project and receive questions and comments from the public. Applicants are required to mail written notice to property owners within 500 feet of the location of the proposed planned development 15-30 days prior to the meeting date. All new planned development applications and major amendments to existing planned developments require that a public hearing be held before the Development Review Board. Applicants are required to mail written notice of the public hearing to property owners within 500 feet of the location of the proposed planned development 15-30 days prior to the meeting date. Public hearings may last over multiple meetings and future dates will be announced at the meeting and posted on the Village's online meeting calendar at www.vrf.us. Once the Development Review Board has concluded the public hearing, made its recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees and adopted findings of fact, the Village Board of Trustees will consider the recommendation at a Village Board Meeting. Applicants are required to mail written notice of the Village Board meeting to property owners within 500 feet of the location of the proposed planned development at least seven days prior to the meeting date.

Submit your comments and questions for consideration: Residents who wish to comment on a pending planned development application may do so during the public hearing and public comment portion of the respective Board/Commission meetings where the application is discussed. Speakers are asked to identify which of the standards identified in Title 10, Chapter 19, Section 3 the planned development does not meet and why. These standards are available online at www.vrf.us under the Village Code. Residents who are unable to submit these comments at a public meeting are welcome to send them to Assistant Village Administrator Lisa Scheiner at lscheiner@vrf.us, by mail to 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, IL 60305, or by telephone at (708) 714-3554.

What happens after the Village Board casts its final vote?

If a planned development permit is approved the applicant may obtain a building permit once it has been shown that it satisfies all building code requirements and any conditions of approval that were imposed by the Village Board of Trustees. The applicant has nine months from the date the planned development is issued to obtain a building permit. The applicant then has six months to commence construction. Construction must be completed within the following 18 months. Some applications may include a phasing plan that may extend that timeline. The Village Board may also grant an extension to the timeline provided that good cause is shown by the applicant. If a planned development permit is denied it may not be brought back for two years if it is resubmitted in substantially the same form or content as the original application.

Can an approved planned development be changed?

Applicants can request approval of major or minor amendments to an existing planned development. Title 10, Chapter 19, Section 8 identifies what constitutes a major or minor amendment. A minor amendment may be approved by the Village Administrator and/or the Village Board without a public hearing. A major amendment requires that the Development Review Board hold a public hearing and that the Village Board consider the Development Review Board's recommendation on the matter in accordance with the process described above.

For more information visit the Village's website at www.vrf.us.