



Guide to Development

Approval Authorities | Application Process | Review Procedure

Created May 2023



Key Contact Information

City Manager's Office

Precia Garland, City Manager | (616) 527-5776 | pgarland@ci.ionia.mi.us

Planning and Zoning

Jonathan Bowman, Assistant to the City Manager | (616) 523-0147 | jb Bowman@ci.ionia.mi.us

Finance Department

Chris Hyzer, Finance Director and Treasurer | (616) 523-0137 | chyzer@ci.ionia.mi.us

Department of Public Works

Gary Cunningham, Director of Public Works | (616) 523-0170 | gcunningham@ci.ionia.mi.us

Department of Public Utilities

Joe Lafler, Director of Public Utilities | (616) 523-0165 | jlafler@ci.ionia.mi.us

Assessor

Randy Jewell, City Assessor | (616) 523-0146 | rjewell@ci.ionia.mi.us

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

Linda Curtis, DDA Director | (616) 523-0176 | lcurtis@ci.ionis.mi.us

Building Department (Ionia County)

Ionia County Building Department | (616) 527-5374 | building@ioniacounty.org

Boards and Commissions

City Council

Meets every 1st Wednesday of the month in Council Chambers at 7:00 PM

Staff Liaison:
Precia Garland, (616) 527-5776

Planning Commission

Meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month in Council Chambers at 4:30 PM

Staff Liaison:
Jonathan Bowman, (616) 523-0147

Zoning Board of Appeals

Meets when necessary the 1st Monday of the month in Council Chambers at 6:30 PM

Staff Liaison:
Jonathan Bowman, (616) 523-0147

Downtown Development Authority

Meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month in Council Chambers at 8:00 AM

Staff Liaison:
Linda Curtis, (616) 523-0176

Ionia Housing Commission

Meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Housing Commission Office (667 Union St.)

Staff Liaison:
Katie Bennett, (616) 527-9060

Approval Authorities Table

| Approval Authorities Table | Zoning Administrator | Planning Commission | Zoning Board of Appeals | City Council | Ionia County Building Dept. |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Zoning Permit | X | | | | |
| Site Plan Review (Level A) | X | | | | |
| Site Plan Review (Level B) | X (Recommendation) | X (Approval) | | | |
| Special Land Use | | X | | | |
| Planned Unit Development | | X (Recommendation) | | X (Approval) | |
| Rezoning Ordinance Amendment | | X (Recommendation) | | X (Approval) | |
| Variance | | | X | | |
| Appeal | | | X | | |
| Building, Electrical, and other Construction Permits | | | | | X |

Planning and Zoning

Zoning Ordinance

The zoning ordinance regulates the use of properties and buildings while determining the parameters for new construction or installation in the City of Ionia. Regulations can apply city-wide or be specific to the designated zoning district. Please consult with the Zoning Administrator if you have any questions regarding the zoning ordinance. To view the full zoning ordinance, please see:

[Part Twelve – Planning and Zoning Code](#)

Zoning Map

The zoning map displays the different zoning districts that are established in the City of Ionia. Zoning districts regulate specific uses, designs, and layouts for developments. Please consult the Zoning map to determine what uses may be permitted at your site.

[Click here to view the City of Ionia Zoning Map](#)

Zoning Schedule of Regulations (Area, Height, and Placement Requirements)

The zoning ordinance provides certain development restrictions such as setbacks, lot coverage limitations, and other minimum zoning requirements. The schedule of regulations outlines these restrictions by zoning district. Click the link below to review these regulations and contact the Zoning Administrator if you have any questions.

[Appendix I - Schedule of Regulations](#)

Master Plan

The City of Ionia Master Plan serves as an extension of the community's vision and goals for planning and land use. While the document does not explicitly regulate development in the City, it provides insight into what improvements or projects residents and business owners want to see in their community. The Master Plan is updated once every 5 years, keeping the document current with the perspectives of community stakeholders.

Applications for larger developments such as planned unit developments and special land uses require locations, designs, and uses compliant with the Master Plan. It is highly

encouraged for developers to review the plan to ensure their proposed construction aligns with the community vision for the City of Ionia.

[Click here to view the City of Ionia Master Plan](#)

Fee Schedule

The fee schedule, located on the City of Ionia Planning and Zoning page, provides the costs for applications submitted for planning and zoning approval. All related applications can be found on the planning and zoning webpage of the City website at <https://cityofionia.org/planning-and-zoning.php>. A link to the fee schedule is provided below.

[Click here to view the fee schedule.](#)

Notification Procedures

When certain development actions require notification in compliance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006, as amended), the City of Ionia will publish notifications in a newspaper of general circulation and mail/hand deliver notification to the subject property and all persons owning property within 300 feet of the boundary of the subject property at least 15 days before the hearing. All occupants within the 300 feet boundary will be notified if the apartment has fewer than 12 units. Notices will describe the nature of the request or application, identify subject property, state where and how the request or application review is being considered, and will indicate how written responses are being collected for the public hearing.

For more information on how public input is gathered during planning and development review processes, please view the [City of Ionia Public Participation Plan](#).

Zoning Permits

Zoning permits serve as certification that the building or structure to be constructed meets the dimensional requirements and permitted use as detailed in the zoning ordinance. These permits are reviewed by the Zoning Administrator. All permit applications are available on the City Planning and Zoning page of the website found at the link below. Applications may be submitted at City Hall or via email to jbowman@ci.ionia.mi.us. Please reach out to the Zoning Administrator for any questions on zoning requirements or the application process.

[Planning and Zoning Page](#)

Building Permits

All permitting and inspections for building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits are handled by the [Ionia County Building Department](#). Contact the Ionia County Building Department at (616) 527-5374 or via email at building@ioniacounty.org with any questions you may have.

Pre-Application Meetings

Prior to beginning any development process in the City of Ionia, applicants are encouraged to meet on an informal basis with the City Manager/Zoning Administrator to discuss the proposed project and review the submittal requirements. This meeting can help facilitate the approval process once a formal application is submitted. In order to request a conceptual review or pre-application meeting, please contact the City Manager by phone at (616) 527-5776 or by email at pgarland@ci.ionia.mi.us.

In order to make the best use of time, the following should be known / available:

- Location of site
- Existing land use
- Intended development (residential, office, retail, manufacturing, etc.)
- Preliminary sketches (hand drawn are sufficient)
- Surrounding land uses
- Any other additional information such as flood zone status, expected parking, etc. are helpful but not required.

At the meeting, staff will cover the following:

- Review the proposed use for general conformance with existing zoning
- Provide initial feedback on design (if applicable)
- Identify the correct process (site plan review, special land use, variance, etc.) and walk the applicant through what to expect, identify timelines
- Identify other possible agencies to engage such as MDOT, Ionia County, etc.
- Answer any additional questions you may have pertaining to development in the City.

Economic Development Incentives

The City uses Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Industrial Property Tax Abatements (Industrial Facility Tax (IFT) Exemption Certificates), and Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Districts as its methods for economic development tax incentives. The City uses the State of Michigan's general applications for these programs. If you are interested in these incentives and developing in Ionia, contact the City Manager at (616) 527-5776 or via email at pgarland@ci.ionia.mi.us. For more information visit the economic development page of the City website at the link below.

[Economic Development Page](#)

Date: _____

Zoning Permit or Site Plan Review Survey



In an effort to improve our procedures and processes, we are requesting feedback from those who have experienced the Site Plan Review process. This survey will assist City personnel in approving the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing Site Plan Review process and update as needed. Thank you for your participation.

Please indicate the category to which you belong:

Resident Contractor Commercial property owner

Business owner Other: _____

Did you find the Site Plan Review process to be well organized and easy to navigate?

Yes No, please explain: _____

How did you find the pace of the Site Plan Review process?

Too fast; difficult to keep up Quick and efficient
 Medium Slower than most communities
 No action. Requiring my constant intervention to move the process along.

Do you feel the Planning Commission was thorough understanding your concerns and addressing all of the important and relevant items?

Yes No, please explain: _____

How did you find the pace of the Permit and Inspection Review process?

Too fast; difficult to keep up Quick and efficient
 Medium Slower than most communities
 No action. Requiring my constant intervention to move the process along.

How did you find the permitting and inspection process?

Easy to follow Required assistance from City

If additional assistance was necessary, how can we improve the process? _____

Do you feel the Planning Commission was thorough understanding your concerns and addressing all of the important and relevant items?

Yes No, please explain: _____

Were the City staff and / or the Planning Commission responsive to your questions, comments, and concerns?

Yes

They tried but lacked sufficient knowledge or skills to address my issue.

No

Do you feel that the final decision was consistent with the governing guidelines of the Site Plan Review process?

Yes No, please explain: _____

Please return this survey to:

City of Ionia
P.O. Box 496
Ionia, MI 48846

Site Plan and Special Land Use Review Process

City of Ionia

Step 1

Pre-application meeting with staff (optional).

Step 2

Applicant submits complete site plan application package at least 30 days prior to the Planning Commission meeting at which it will be reviewed. Staff conduct a review of the application. **Timeline: Day 1**

Step 3

At the Planning Commission meeting a preliminary review will be conducted on the application. Staff will present a report and the Commission will be able to ask questions of the applicant. The Planning Commission will decide whether or not the application is complete enough to schedule a public hearing for the next Commission meeting. **Timeline: Day 30**

Step 4

At the public hearing, the Planning Commission will conduct a final review of the application and information from the city staff and shall provide the applicant and the public an opportunity to comment on the application. The Planning Commission will act on the request. **Timeline: Day 60**

Step 5

The Zoning Administrator shall notify the applicant of the Planning Commission's decision within 15 days of the date of the decision. **Timeline: Day 75**

City Hall

114 N. Kidd Street
Ionia, MI 48846

Business Hours: 8 AM – 4 PM
Monday - Friday

For questions please contact:
Jonathan Bowman, Assistant to
the City Manager
(616) 523-0147
jbowman@ci.ionia.mi.us

Notes:

- Planning Commission meets every second Wednesday of the month at 4:30 PM in Council Chambers at City Hall.
- Approved site plans are valid for one year. Upon written application filed prior to the termination of the one-year period, the Planning Commission may authorize a single extension of the time limit for a further period of not more than one year. This must be submitted 30-days prior to the Planning Commission meeting preceding the site plan expiration date.
- There is a staff approval process for site plans that are for the expansion of an existing use or building which comprises less than 50% of the building or land area if an outdoor use. Review Section 1276.02 of the Zoning Code for more details.



Rezoning or Planned Unit Development Review Process

City of Ionia

Step 1

Pre-application meeting with staff to discuss the project and determine the best path forward.

Step 2

Applicant submits complete application package at least 30 days prior to the Planning Commission meeting at which it will be reviewed. Staff conduct a review of the application. **Timeline: Day 1**

Step 3

At the Planning Commission meeting a preliminary review will be conducted on the application. Staff will present a report and the Commission will be able to ask questions of the applicant. The Planning Commission will decide whether or not the application is complete enough to schedule a public hearing for the next Commission meeting. Staff will draft an ordinance corresponding to the request. **Timeline: Day 30**

Step 4

At the public hearing, the Planning Commission will conduct a final review of the application and information from the city staff and shall provide the applicant and the public an opportunity to comment on the application. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation for City Council on the application and ordinance. **Timeline: Day 60**

Step 5

City Council will conduct a first reading of the ordinance and schedule a public hearing for the ordinance at its next meeting. **Timeline: Day 90**

Step 6

City Council will conduct a public hearing on the ordinance providing the public with time to comment. Council will make a decision on the ordinance following the public hearing and discussion. **Timeline: Day 120**

Step 7

The Zoning Administrator shall notify the applicant of City Council's decision within 15 days of the date of the decision. **Timeline: Day 135**

Notes:

- Planning Commission meets every second Wednesday of the month at 4:30 PM in Council Chambers at City Hall.
- City Council meets every first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers at City Hall.
- The preliminary review process is intended to be for informational purposes only and does not ensure approval of the full application by the Planning Commission.

City Hall

114 N. Kidd Street
Ionia, MI 48846

Business Hours: 8 AM – 4 PM
Monday - Friday

For questions please contact:
Jonathan Bowman, Assistant to
the City Manager
(616) 523-0147
jbowman@ci.ionia.mi.us



Appeal and Variance Requests

City of Ionia

Step 1

Pre-application meeting with city staff (optional).

Step 2

Applicant submits appeal or variance request application at least 30 days prior to the ZBA meeting at which it will be reviewed. Staff conduct a review of the application and schedule a public hearing. **Timeline: Day 1**

Step 3

The Zoning Board of Appeals conducts a public hearing to receive public input on the request. The ZBA hears from the applicant and staff on the request and reviews all provided materials. **Timeline: Day 30**

Step 4

At the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting the ZBA will reach a decision on the request. **Timeline: Day 30**

Step 5

The Zoning Administrator shall notify the applicant of Zoning Board of Appeal's decision within 15 days of the date of the decision. **Timeline: Day 45**

City Hall
114 N. Kidd Street
Ionia, MI 48846

Business Hours: 8 AM – 4 PM
Monday - Friday

For questions please contact:
Jonathan Bowman, Assistant to
the City Manager
(616) 523-0147
jbowman@ci.ionia.mi.us

Notes:

- The Zoning Board of Appeals meets as needed on the first Monday of the month at 6:30 PM in Council Chambers at City Hall.
- Each variance granted shall become null and void unless the provisions of the variance have been utilized by an applicant within 12 months after granting of the variance.
- Timelines noted are approximate and depend upon response time of the applicant, application submission data and whether plan revisions are needed.

