

# City of Worcester, Massachusetts



## Pre-Development Consultations: The City's Interdepartmental Review Team (IRT)

### Summary & FAQ

#### ***What are IRT meetings?***

Interdepartmental Review Team meetings are regularly scheduled pre-development consultations that are offered free of charge and are designed to assist developers and land owners in the pre-development stages of potential and proposed projects with questions relating to permitting processes, zoning compliance, engineering standards and land use policy considerations. The meeting time is available by appointment to any proposed development, large or small, residential, commercial, institutional or industrial at any stage of the development.

You need to have a specific address/s in mind when scheduling an IRT meeting.

The meetings are attended by City key review staff members who regularly advise City Boards on land use development considerations. Attendees are welcome to bring engineers, architects, attorneys or other representatives to the meeting.

Note that these informative but informal meetings do not substitute for any required administrative reviews or necessary Board approvals.

#### ***What are the most common reasons for scheduling an IRT meeting?***

- If you and your representatives have questions regarding the City's permitting process.
- If your development has specific engineering issues or questions.
- If your development requires one or more discretionary permits and you have questions regarding what information staff will require or recommend be submitted.

#### ***What are commonly discussed topics at the IRT meeting?***

Commonly discussed topics at IRT include but are not limited to:

- 1) Zoning compliance of a proposed project with respect to use, required dimensions for lots and setbacks, and off-street parking requirements.
- 2) Policies regarding landscaping, open space, pedestrian access, lighting, buffers to abutting properties, etc.
- 3) Signage compliance.
- 4) Conservation Commission notification or approvals required with regards to wetlands protection.
- 5) Proposed curb cuts, parking layout, vehicular and pedestrian circulation on a site.
- 6) Proposed erosion controls.
- 7) Stormwater mitigation requirements/policies.
- 8) Sewer and water connections requirements.
- 9) ADA compliance.
- 10) Zone change considerations.
- 11) Requirements for developments in local historic districts or those involving historically registered properties.

#### ***What City representatives are present at the meeting?***

- The key review staff members present at the meetings review submitted plans and regularly advise land use boards (Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals) on such issues as drainage, utility connections, proximity to wetlands, compliance with Zoning Ordinance's dimensional requirements, landscaping, parking requirements, and more. Site search assistance may be available for certain projects / businesses through the Economic Development Division.
- DPRS staff will coordinate follow-up for outstanding questions with appropriate departments.

## **Scheduling a meeting**

- If you are unsure if you should make an IRT appointment or simply need to talk to someone on staff, please contact Division of Planning & Regulatory Services directly.
- Typically, the meetings are held on Thursdays between 2:30-4:30 pm and are 30-45 minutes in length.
- To schedule an IRT meeting, contact *Planning & Regulatory Services Division (DRPS)* at 445 Main Street, Room 404, Worcester, Massachusetts 01608 by calling (508) 799-1400 ext.260 or e-mailing [planning@worcesterma.gov](mailto:planning@worcesterma.gov).
- You will be asked to provide your name, anticipated attendees' names, contact information, parcel address, and a brief description of the project. It is also helpful to provide information regarding any city departments with whom you have been working.
- If you would like to forward copies of a draft plan, proposal or narrative to include in the email appointment, you should forward these to DRPS at least 2 business days prior to the IRT meeting.
- On the day of your meeting, please check in at 445 Main Street, Room 404.

## **How can I prepare for and what should I bring to the meeting?**

Attendees are welcome to bring engineers, architects, attorneys, etc. to discuss the proposed project.

While it is not a requirement to bring fully engineered plan sets or architectural renderings to the meeting, the more detailed the plans, renderings, and project concept, and more specific questions, the more responsive and helpful staff can be. We suggest that prior to your meeting you read "Building in Worcester: A Developer's Guide" (<http://www.worcestermass.org/land-development-in-worcester/developers-guidebook>) and work with your project team to prepare some or all of the following to bring with you to the meeting (and/or to e-mail to scheduling staff at least 2 days prior to the meeting):

- 1) a visual representation of your site, such as image of the site, a plot plan, a site plan, rendering or elevations of any existing or proposed buildings, etc;
- 2) a description of the proposal;
- 3) a detailed description of the existing and proposed use; and
- 4) a list of questions for the staff members with respect to land use considerations and permitting process.

## **Application Forms, Meeting Schedule, and Fee List**

The following documents are available free of charge at the Division of Planning and Regulatory Planning (weekdays, 8:30am-2pm) or may be downloaded at any time from <http://www.worcesterma.gov/e-services/document-center/planning-regulatory>:

- All applications and application requirement checklists for PB, ZBA or HC in fillable pdf format
- The meeting schedule for PB, ZBA, HC, and Conservation Commission meetings
- The application fee list for PB and ZBA considerations (No fee is charged for HC considerations. DPW&P should be contacted with regards to Conservation Commission fees.)

## **Other Common FAQ With Respect to IRT and Permitting Process**

- *What if I have a by-right development?* - Questions regarding building permits for by-right developments (i.e. not requiring Boards' approvals) can be discussed directly with a building inspector or other Inspectional Services staff at 25 Meade Street.
- *How do I know what permits to apply for?* – While IRT staff can offer advice on the permitting process and/or information that will likely be requested by the land use boards, a Zoning Determination Form (ZDF) should be requested from a Dept of Inspectional Services' Land Use & Zoning Coordinator (508-799-1714) to determine which approvals/permits will be required for a particular project. This form needs to accompany all of your Planning Board &/or Zoning Board of Appeals applications. Please note that the Coordinator may request a plan of land to scale in order to issue a ZDF for the proposed project.
- *If I need to apply for permits to more than one Board/Commission, is there a particular sequence in which I should do so?* – No, you are not required to apply in a particular sequence. However, we do advise that petitioners of projects requiring both ZBA and PB approvals apply for ZBA permits first, as potential ZBA conditions of approval may modify site plans or parking plans for PB.
- *Can I attend the IRT more than once?* – Yes, as long as your proposal is substantially different or substantially more developed from the one previously presented.