

How does development happen in Buffalo?

The development process at the City of Buffalo has several steps and includes extensive reviews by multiple City Advisory Boards and Commissions depending on the type of development.

If a proposal meets the existing zoning for a parcel and does not require any Variances or Conditional Use Permits for construction, it will simply proceed through reviews by City staff to ensure compliance with the Building Code, Zoning Code, and Fire Code. Once the proposal is deemed sufficient by City staff, construction can proceed.

If a proposal will require either a Zoning Amendment, Variance, Conditional Use Permit (CUP), or any combination of the three, it must be reviewed first by the City Planning Commission prior to final action by the City Council. As the Planning Commission is advisory and reports directly to the City Council, the Commission is not the final say on any specific request; rather, it will provide a formal recommendation either in favor or against an application that falls under its jurisdiction. Once a recommendation is made by the Commission, the application will proceed to the next scheduled City Council meeting where a final vote will take place. Once the proposal has obtained the necessary approvals and is deemed sufficient by City staff, construction can proceed.

If a proposal will result in the creation of more than two lots or a Planned Unit Development (PUD), additional reviews will be needed. Generally, an individual or team of developers will first meet with City staff to propose their idea and obtain initial feedback on the feasibility of their proposal. If the individual wishes to proceed with their proposal further, they will submit a Land Use Application to the City for their item to be reviewed by the Planning Commission- either in the form of a Concept Review, Preliminary Plat, or Development Stage PUD. While a Concept Review is not a required part of the process and no formal action is taken by the Commission, it is recommended that all proposals seek this review to make any adjustments prior to a Preliminary Plat or Development Stage PUD. If a concept is viewed favorably in this review and the applicant wishes to proceed further, the applicant will then submit a new Land Use Application for the Preliminary Plat or Development Stage PUD by the third Friday of the preceding month to be placed on the next Planning Commission meeting agenda. Prior to this meeting, and only when applicable, the applicants will have their proposal reviewed by the Parks Advisory Board to obtain their comments in accordance with Sec. 40-62 of the Code. With all required materials submitted and comments obtained from the Parks Advisory Board, the application will then be reviewed at the Planning Commission meeting in the form of a public hearing. Upon a favorable review by City Council of the Commission's recommendation, the applicant will then make final adjustments to their proposal and submit additional information prior to applying for Final Plat approval. In accordance with Sec. 40-91 of the Code, a Final Plat will be reviewed and approved of only by Council, with the public hearing held at the time of review by Council. Once the proposal has obtained the necessary approvals, is deemed sufficient by City staff, and the Final Plat has been filed at the County, construction can proceed.

Additional details on the Preliminary Plat process can be found in Chapter 40, Article II, Division 1 of the Code. Additional details on the Planned Unit Development process can be found in Chapter 50, Article III of the Code