INTRODUCTION

■ NONRESIDENTIAL USES SHAPE THE CHARACTER OF MAINE COMMUNITIES

As we look around at Maine communities, it's quite obvious that retail stores, service businesses, offices, manufacturers, roller skating rinks, shopping centers — the entire complement of nonresidential uses — are key elements in our cities and towns. These nonresidential uses create the jobs upon which we depend, contribute to the tax base of our communities, and provide the goods and services we all need. As importantly, these commercial and industrial uses play a major role in shaping the character of Maine's cities and towns.

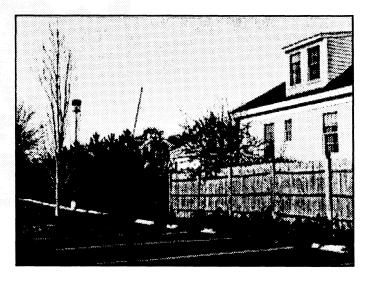


A drive around the state show will many examples of recent nonresidential development that are positive additions to our communities and The neighborhoods. reason? These projects have been planned and designed to be good neighbors. And in many cases, a local site plan review process has contributed to the quality of the development. These projects often exhibit common attributes.

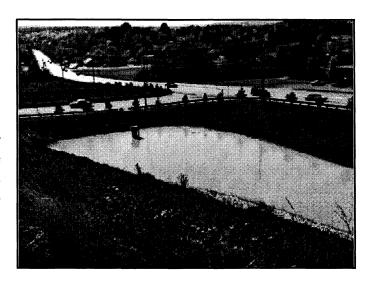
 The projects are designed so that traffic can get in and out safely.



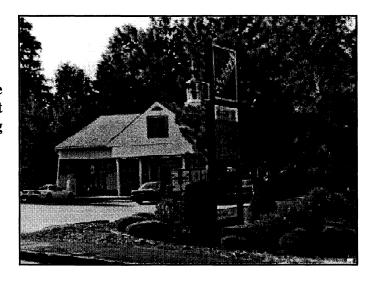
 The projects are sensitive to their neighbors and take measures to reduce possible impacts on adjacent properties.



• The projects are planned to address potential environmental problems such as stormwater runoff, noise, sewage disposal, and protection of surface and groundwater quality.



• The projects are sensitive to the visual environment and the surrounding neighborhood.



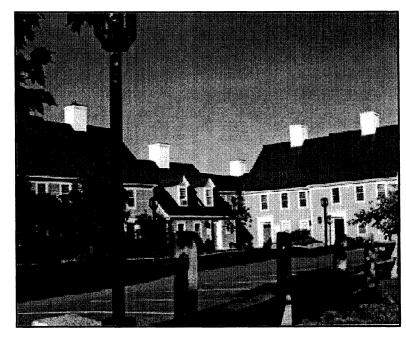
■ SITE PLAN REVIEW CAN HELP ASSURE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

A drive across Maine would also reveal new commercial, industrial, and other nonresidential projects that aren't positive additions to their communities. It's all too common to find:

- Traffic and safety problems,
- A lack of concern for fire protection and emergency access,
- Projects that aren't good neighbors,
- Negative environmental impacts due to lack of forethought or poor execution.

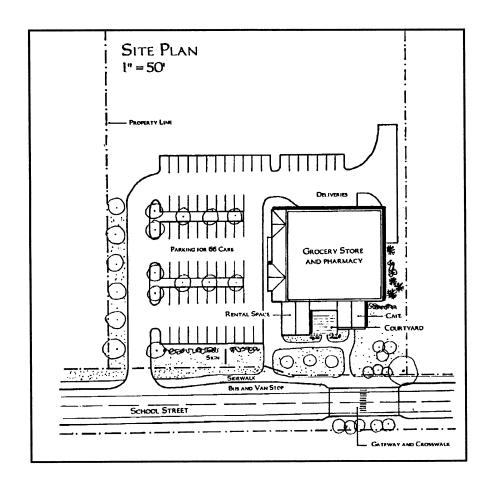
In many situations, the difference between a "good" nonresidential project that is an asset to the community and a not-so-good development is in the attention to details. It's often the little things that can make a big difference; for example

• A well-placed fence can protect abutting properties and make "good neighbors."



- A change in the location of a dumpster can minimize odors.
- Proper placement of the driveway can assure safe access into the site.
- A change in the stormwater drainage system can protect downstream properties.

Increasingly, Maine communities are interested in how they can assure that new nonresidential development is an asset and not a liability. This handbook looks at how site plan review can be used by towns and cities to accomplish this objective.



■ WHAT IS SITE PLAN REVIEW?

In simple terms, **site plan review** is a locally developed system for reviewing new commercial, industrial, and other nonresidential development to assure that it meets public health, safety, and environmental concerns. It is **not** zoning.

In many ways, **site plan review** is analogous to subdivision review for new residential developments. When a developer proposes to create a subdivision, that project must be reviewed by the local planning board to assure that it meets basic standards. **Site plan review** does the same thing for nonresidential projects. It establishes a process and standards for the local review of retail, office, service, industrial and other nonresidential developments. In some communities, **site plan review** also includes multifamily housing development. The review procedures and standards are developed and adopted by the local community to address the types of development and issues that concern them.

■ THE PURPOSE OF THE SITE PLAN REVIEW HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed for municipal officials. It shows how site plan review can be used in your community and how to develop a site plan review system that addresses your needs.

Site plan review is a local solution to local concerns. The review is done at the municipal level using locally adopted standards. The State of Maine does not mandate site plan review; nevertheless, many Maine communities have chosen to adopt local site plan review systems. It is important to note, however, that if your community has developed a comprehensive plan, your site plan review provisions must be consistent with that comprehensive plan. But even if you haven't received growth management funding, it is a good idea if your site plan review provisions are consistent with your community's adopted comprehensive plan.

Site plan review offers Maine communities an important tool they can use to assure that each and every new business activity in their municipality has a positive effect on the community.

The handbook consists of two parts:

Part A

Part A includes Sections 1 through 7. It is designed to familiarize you with site plan review. It is organized to help you:

- understand how site plan review works,
- consider the key issues so that you can make informed decisions about what should be included in a local site plan review process, and
- organize your ordinance to make it easier to administer.

Part B

Part B (Sections 8 through 11) is designed to help you craft site plan review provisions that meet your community's needs. Section 9 provides a basic site plan review system that is appropriate for many communities. Section 10 provides alternatives for structuring the site plan review process for communities with more complex needs. Section 11 provides additional review standards that deal with areas that are not included in the basic system.

Communities with existing site plan review provisions can also use these sections, especially Sections 10 and 11, to make improvements in their current ordinance.

Appendix A provides the text for a simple site plan review ordinance for a small community. This ordinance should not be adopted without careful review to assure that its provisions are appropriate for the community.

Copies of the various model ordinance provisions are available on computer disk from the State Planning Office.