

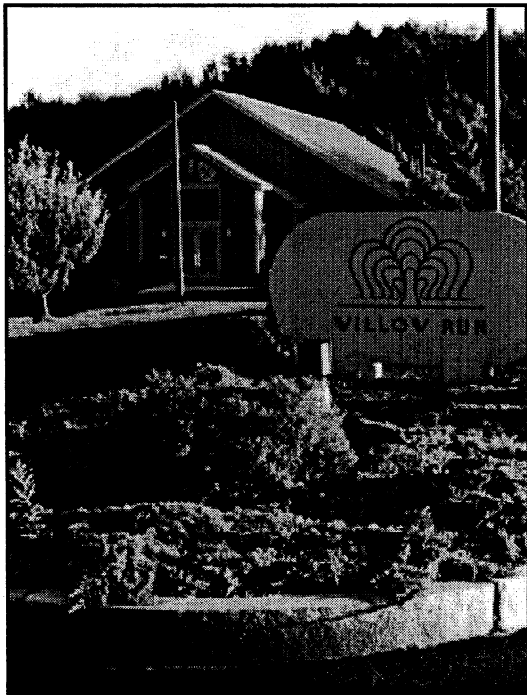
PART A. OVERVIEW OF SITE PLAN REVIEW

Part A of the handbook is designed to familiarize municipal officials, staff, and the general public with the concept of site plan review. It will help you understand how the site plan review process works, encourage you to consider the key issues, help you make informed decisions about what should be included under site plan review, and show you how the review process should be organized in your community.

SECTION 1. THE PURPOSE OF SITE PLAN REVIEW

■ WHAT ISSUES DOES SITE PLAN REVIEW ADDRESS?

Site plan review is a locally developed and administered process for reviewing and



Site Plan Review Issues

- Buffers
- Lighting
- Signs
- Parking
- Landscaping
- Traffic Access & Egress

approving commercial, industrial, institutional, and, in some communities, multifamily residential development proposals. These types of activities are usually not subject to local review under other land use regulations such as zoning or subdivision review.

Site plan review deals with how a particular development is designed. Site plan regulations typically address issues related to public health, public safety, and the

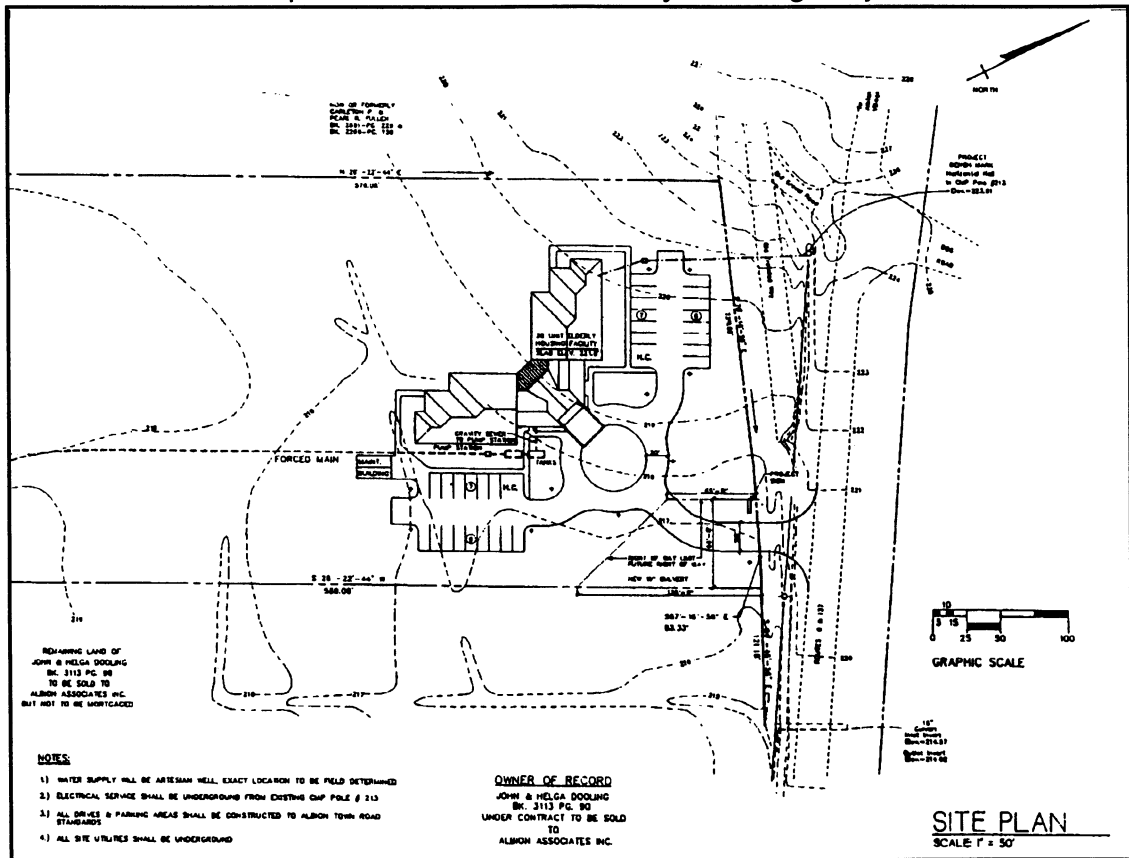
environment such as water supply, sewage disposal, traffic, emergency access, and stormwater management. In addition, many communities choose to address the protection of neighboring properties through standards for buffering, noise, lighting, and other external impacts. Some communities also choose to deal with how new projects fit into the community and review site design and landscaping provisions.

Each community should develop a site plan review process that meets the needs of its residents and recognizes the type and scale of development that is likely to occur there. This helps assure that the review process and the standards meet the needs of the community.

■ SITE PLAN REVIEW AND SUBDIVISION REVIEW

For certain projects, site plan review can overlap with subdivision review. While most subdivision regulations are designed to deal with a parcel of land being divided into lots, the State definition of subdivision includes multifamily housing involving three or more dwelling units. The State subdivision law also allows municipalities to include multiunit commercial or industrial structures in the subdivision review process. Since typical subdivision regulations do not deal well with multifamily, commercial, or industrial uses, communities often choose to review these projects under site plan review rather than as subdivisions. The State subdivision law provides that "... leased dwelling units are not subject to subdivision review if the municipal reviewing

Sample Site Plan for Multifamily Housing Project



SITE PLAN REVIEW AND THE SITE LOCATION LAW

Local site plan review can also overlap with State review under the Site Location of Development Law. Under the Site Location Law, large scale commercial, industrial, and other nonresidential uses and some multifamily housing developments require approval of the Board of Environmental Protection if they meet certain review thresholds. This should be considered in designing a local site plan review process. Local provisions can be designed to cover only those projects that are not subject to State review. However, a community can also choose to organize its review process to require a local review for projects that require State approval. Some municipalities have found that the local community has different concerns than the DEP and therefore wants to have a local review of these large scale projects in addition to the State review. Recent changes in the Site Location Law have increased the threshold for State review in many circumstances. This increases the need for local communities to have sound review processes for these projects.



authority has determined that the units are otherwise subject to municipal review at least as stringent as that required under this chapter.” This allows the community flexibility in deciding how to review multiunit rental/leased housing and multiunit commercial or industrial structures.

■ SITE PLAN REVIEW AND ZONING

In communities that have townwide zoning, the **site plan review** process needs to be coordinated with the zoning standards. Care needs to be taken to assure that any standards included in the site plan provisions are consistent with the development standards within the zoning ordinance. For example, some zoning ordinances establish a requirement for buffering where a commercial or industrial use abuts a residential use. Any requirement for buffering in the **site plan review** provisions would need to be compatible with the zoning provision. This can be addressed by referencing the zoning standards in the **site plan review** provisions. Section 2 explores how site plan review provisions can be integrated with other ordinances already in force in the community.

SECTION 1. ISSUES

- Will the community experience nonresidential development in the next 5-10 years?
- Has new nonresidential development been as positive an addition to the community as it could be?
- Should the municipality consider adopting **site plan review** or reviewing its existing **site plan review** provisions?