



Preliminary Plan Reviews

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To assist persons who are involved in the building construction process, City of Milwaukee plan examiners are available for preliminary discussions regarding building and zoning code interpretations affecting proposed construction projects. These discussions may be informal conversations over the phone or in person, or they may involve more formal meetings.

If you seek a preliminary plan review meeting, please **complete the questionnaire** at the end of this information sheet, and bring the answers with you to the meeting.

There is a charge for the preliminary plan review meeting of \$165 per hour or fraction of an hour for commercial buildings, and \$85 per hour or fraction of an hour for one and two-family homes. Plan examiners have the authority to waive the preliminary plan review fee.

Customers who want to know which code provisions apply to a particular project are advised to consult a design professional, such as a registered architect or professional engineer, before contacting a plan examiner. The design professional combines code knowledge with design expertise, and the designer also will consider the many aspects of the development process that are not dictated by the code. See the customer information sheet titled *Architect involvement in your project* for a more detailed discussion of this topic.

Getting the most out of a preliminary review

Based on our experience, we suggest the following preparation for a preliminary plan review:

- Be specific. The more specific the question, the better the potential for getting the question answered.
- Remember that the plan examiner's function is to review a project for compliance with building and zoning codes. The plan

examiner's job is not to design a project or to do a feasibility study. Likewise, the plan examiner cannot take cost factors into account. Codes are concerned with providing a minimum degree of health, safety, and welfare, without regard to costs that may put a desired project out of reach for a given budget.

- Know what you want to accomplish in the meeting and communicate that to the plan examiner at the start. We work with a range of customers, and knowing up front what you want to accomplish will help both you and the plan examiner.
- Put your questions in writing before meeting with the plan examiner. Even if you don't give the plan examiner a list of questions, formulating written questions helps clarify the issues.
- Provide drawings whenever possible. Most of the work that a plan examiner deals with involves the physical environment, and the best method to communicate this is by means of drawings.
- Do your homework. Particularly if you are an architect or engineer, make sure that you have researched the codes for the particular application. The following web sites provide information that may assist in your preparation:
 - City zoning ordinance: www.mkedcd.org/czo (Use definitions are found in chapter 2.)
 - City maps (including zoning): www.mapmilwaukee.com
 - City building code: <http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/TableofContents1179.htm>
 - Property information for buildings in Milwaukee: <http://assessments.milwaukee.gov>
 - State building code (does not include the International Building Code): <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/codmm/comm060.html>
 - International Code Council: www.iccsafe.org

- Wisconsin Department of Commerce Safety and Buildings:
www.commerce.state.wi.us/SB

Finally, a word about our limitations... Sometimes it may seem that a plan examiner is being vague or evasive in answering a question. Although we work with very detailed zoning and building codes, we also work in an area that

involves design, which by definition means there are various options available to achieve a certain desired condition. Therefore, many questions are answered not "yes" or "no," but "it depends." Alternate design solutions may often solve code problems (and occasionally result in new issues to be resolved).

Preliminary plan review questionnaire

Please provide the following information about the building that is the subject of the preliminary plan review meeting. Please bring plans, photos, a survey and a site plan to supplement this information.

Property address	
Zoning of property	
Use(s) of property under Milwaukee zoning ordinance (Chapter 295)	
Number of stories	
Total SF	
First floor SF	
Scope of project (e.g., new construction, tenant alteration, etc.)	
Occupancy classification(s) under the International Building Code (per IBC chapter 3)	
Does the project involve a change of use under IBC? If so, identify the previous use(s).	
Building construction type (per IBC chapter 6)	
Describe fire protection and/or alarm systems proposed for the building	
In the table below, please list the specific code sections and related questions you wish to discuss. Please provide your analysis.	
Code section(s)	Specific questions you wish to discuss