



Site Planning FAQ

There are many steps involved in the development of a commercial, recreational, or residential parcel. Use this document to help plan your next site improvement project.

What is a Site Plan? A site plan is a bird's eye view drawing of your property. It shows your property lines and everything currently existing on the land (home, garage, driveway, fence, wetland, etc.). It will also depict any of your proposed projects (deck, building, shed, retention pond, well, septic). A site plan may also be referred to as a site layout or site map. It will be drawn to an appropriate scale for the proposed project.

Why would I need a site plan? Generally, a site plan is necessary whenever a project or improvement is undertaken on the property. A site plan is required by most city, township, and county zoning ordinances. Examples of projects include a fence, addition, deck, shed, freestanding sign, driveway, culvert, garage, home, office, or parking lot.

What needs to be on my site plan? The information required on a site plan will vary considerably depending on the permitting authority. Typically, a plan will include:

- ❖ Property boundary
- ❖ Existing structures with dimensions
- ❖ Proposed structures with dimensions
- ❖ Natural features (pond, spring, etc.)
- ❖ Distances between all existing and proposed structures and between structures and property or setbacks

Depending on your project, you may also need:

- ❖ Existing and proposed elevations (topography) – important for drainage and construction quantities
- ❖ A grading plan – Where will runoff be directed after the project is completed? Do you need a retention pond?
- ❖ Green space ratios – Are you creating or leaving enough landscaped (pervious) area for the amount of hardscape (impervious buildings, parking lots, and roadways) that you are proposing?
- ❖ A utility map – Are there hookups for water, sewer, electricity, and telephone?
- ❖ Soils information – Can the land support a conventional septic system? How deep must your well be? Is there a high water table, which would effect foundation elevation?
- ❖ Relevant structures on adjacent property – Are you meeting required setbacks for specific projects?
- ❖ Easement description – Is your land accessible by public road, or do you have a deeded right-of-way to access your parcel?

Does a site plan require a survey? You will need some type of survey drawing for your site plan. You will need the recorded plat and/or legal description showing the boundaries of the site, most likely a Certificate of Survey signed by a licensed surveyor. The survey is used to design and layout the site in accordance with relevant setbacks and restrictions. For almost all projects you will also need a topographic (topo) survey. The topo survey establishes the "lay of the land" and the location of existing structures and natural features. This will be used in determining building and drainage layout, opportunities, and constraints. If you intend to subdivide the land or create an easement, you will also need a land division or easement description survey, which results in a new legal description and Certificate of Survey drawing.

Which permits will I need? The permits required for your project depend on the project type, size, and location. Often permits are needed from:

- ❖ Zoning Commission
- ❖ Road Commission
- ❖ Drain Commission
- ❖ District Health Department
- ❖ Soil erosion authority
- ❖ MDEQ

Does every project need a site plan? Siding, roofs, window replacement, and miscellaneous repairs will not require a site plan or site plan review. Most electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits also do not require a site plan review.

NCE engineers can help you navigate the site planning process and assist with all permit applications and requirements. We will work with you directly to understand your needs and objectives. Ask questions if you are unsure about any elements of the project. Our staff is local, accessible, and affordable in order to provide you with professional and efficient service for your project.