

Land Based Projects: A Path to Purchase, Permit, and Design

What We Heard Answers: Interim Information

We heard: It is not clear where people can find the application to purchase property from the City or the Detroit Land Bank Authority.

The application is located here: <http://app.detroitmi.gov/PropertyApplicationForm/>. The City is currently working to simplify and clarify this application. However, if you are interested in purchasing property now, this link will take you to the existing form.

We heard: It is not always clear who owns a particular property (including which City agency if it is City-owned).

To find City-owned and Detroit Land Bank Authority-owned properties, visit: <https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/detroit-development-opportunities>. This website includes an interactive map. Click “Show/Hide Data Layers” on the map, and then click “DLBA Vacant Lots”. This will show all DLBA-owned vacant lots in your area of interest. The City is working to better clarify how this map and the Detroit Parcel Viewer can support you in looking up accurate property information.

We heard: It is not clear who is eligible to buy side lots and what qualifies as a side lot.

Currently, the DLBA Side Lot program allows people to buy properties that are:

- Next to a residential property that you own -- this can be your home or a residential rental property that you own. In most cases, if you purchase one side lot and then there is another vacant lot next to it, you can also purchase that additional property as a side lot.
- Less than 7,500 square feet in size
- “Structure Free” – they cannot have a structure of any kind on them

We heard: Pricing needs more clarity and consistency across neighborhoods and agencies.

Pricing for land is different across different programs, and it can differ across neighborhoods because most pricing requires the City to consider “fair market value” for its land. Setting a “fair market value” usually requires an opinion from an appraiser or other people who specialize in valuing property. This appraiser will take into account what other pieces of land in the nearby area have sold for in the recent past. This project is working to clarify how the City prices land.

We heard: There is confusion about eligibility for the DLBA Community Partner Program and frustration around the eligibility criteria for non-profits only.

Currently the Community Partner program is open to all tax-exempt organizations, including religious organizations, 501(c)(3) non-profits, and other tax-exempt entities. We have heard that many for-profit projects also offer significant social and economic benefits to communities. This will be considered in future policy and program improvements.

We heard: There is a need for clarity around the conditions of the Restricted Deed that purchasers receive from the DLBA.

This project will work to provide materials that clarify these conditions for purchasers. The conditions of the Restricted Deed generally include:

- A copy of the project’s site plan as provided by the purchaser
- An agreement that the purchaser will complete the project depicted in the site plan

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- An agreement to remove debris and provide a progress report within 30 days
- An agreement to continue to provide progress reports every 90 days until completion
- An agreement on a final timeline to complete the project

We heard: It's not clear why and when land based project leaders should get a permit by registering a Change of Use with the City.

The existing Building Permit form allows property owners to register their Change of Use, protecting land based projects' rights to operate on their land. It shows the City that the particular land use your land based project falls under is allowed by the City's zoning code, and that the way you are doing your project meets the City's zoning requirements for the land you are on. *Register Your Change of Use Today:* <https://detroitmi.gov/forms/building-permit-form>

We heard: Applicants don't always know what zoning is, how to look up zoning, and how it relates to the type of project they want to do.

Through this project, the City is working to better explain zoning for land based project leaders, and to help new project leaders understand how different sites may be easier or more difficult to use based on the zoning of the site.

We heard: People need clarity on when to combine lots and which lots can be combined.

The City is working to produce materials that clarify when lots can and cannot be combined. For example: Lots that are across the street from one another cannot be combined; Lots that are across an alleyway can only be combined sometimes (if the alleyway is out of use and can be "vacated"), and vacating an alleyway comes with an extra cost. *Contact the Department of Public Works – City Engineering Division at (313) 224-3970 to ask about vacating an alleyway.*

The City is also looking into opportunities to streamline permitting for land based project leaders who own lots that cannot be combined.

We heard: Inspectors need more training on how to inspect land based projects.

The City is working to arrange inspector trainings in order to increase inspector knowledge of land based projects.