

# Permitting

This guide is one of five packets on how to buy publicly owned land and create land based projects in Detroit. Download these resources at [www.DetroitMi.gov/Land](http://www.DetroitMi.gov/Land) or pick up at 2 Woodward Ave.

1. Getting started	2. Check land zoning	3. Purchase land	4. Permitting
			Plot Plan, Site Design, and Maintenance Guide

## Read on if you...

- Need to obtain your permit(s)
- Want to understand current city requirements for site design and maintenance

## Inside you will find...

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**Need internet or computer access?**

Visit or call the Detroit Land Bank Authority, the Detroit Building Authority, or the Public Library. Your District Manager can provide additional information about locations where you can access the internet for free in your City Council District. Turn to **page 11**.

## What is a land based project?

A land based project uses land for activities such as urban agriculture, gardening, or beautification, whether for profit or community activation.

## Why do you need a permit?

A permit is required to register and record your project with the City. **A permit protects your rights as a property owner.**

There are several kinds of permits that may be relevant for your land based project. You might need more than one type of permit, depending on your project. **See pages 2 and 3** for a list of permits and projects that will require them.

**DISCLAIMER:** Although an application for a permit is submitted, approval is not guaranteed. Also, if permitted, the proposed work must be performed under the latest applicable codes and requirements of the City of Detroit and the applicant must take full responsibility for all code compliance, fees and inspections related to the installation/work performed.



## Getting your project permitted

Permits have a few different purposes.

Applying for a permit requires submitting a Plot Plan or Site Plan to the City. Your plans tell City inspectors what to expect when they inspect your property. Issuing permits also helps the City make sure projects are built safely and up to code. Once a permit is issued you have the right to use your property as planned.

When you submit a building permit application for your land based property, you are also notifying the City that your property is no longer vacant land. This notification is known as **“Recording your Change of Use.”** Note, you do not need to file a Change of Use if you are doing a project on a side lot next to your house and you have combined the parcels.

### Building Permit Form

**The Building Permit form is used for many kinds of building projects.**

The Building Permit form should be used for land based projects that will add a new structure over 200 sq ft (R1,R2) or 120 square feet (all other zones).

Fences over 7 feet tall, walls over 3 feet tall, and play equipment also need Building Permits.

**The Building Permit form should also be used to Record a Change of Use for your land based project.**

Submit your Building Permit form to BSEED through eLAPS ([www.bit.ly/2NftZFW](http://www.bit.ly/2NftZFW)) or in person at BSEED’s offices on walk through days (see **page 8**).

You can call the BSEED Development Resource Center at 313-224-2372 if you need help filling this form out.

### Information to have ready:

- Address(es) of the properties you need a permit for
- Estimated construction cost for your project; **permit fees are a minimum of \$150 but increase if your construction cost is over \$2,000**
- Completed plot plan (see **Plot Plan, Site Design Guide, and Maintenance Guide**). The Plot Plan should clearly identify the new use of the land.
- Proof of ownership or other legal interest in the property

## The process to receive your permit

### □ Submit your permit form!

- Submit your Building Permit form to BSEED through eLAPS ([www.bit.ly/2NftZFW](http://www.bit.ly/2NftZFW)) or in person at the BSEED Development Resource Center at the Coleman A Young Municipal Center, Suite 434.

### □ Answer any questions. BSEED will review your submitted form and let you know if they have any questions or additional needs. They will then approve your permit and you can proceed to build your project.

### □ Schedule an inspection when your project is complete. Once your project is complete, schedule an inspection with BSEED by calling 313-224-2372 so they can confirm that your project matches the Plot Plan you submitted. You will need to meet a BSEED inspector at your property with a printed copy of your Plot Plan.

### □ Receive your Certification of Acceptance. After a successful inspection, BSEED will issue you a Certification of Acceptance. Keep this certification and your Plot Plan drawings readily available.

### □ Update BSEED as necessary. If you change the layout of structures, compost, fencing, or orchards on your site, update your Plot Plan and submit a new, accurate plan to BSEED via email at [drc@detroitmi.gov](mailto:drc@detroitmi.gov). If your changes include adding a structure or changing the zoning use, a new permit will be required.

## Other types of permits

### Project Area Option

If you are using more than one parcel of

property for your land based project, see **pages 6-7** to understand how to combine your parcels and/or apply to BSEED for one permit for your Project Area.

### Getting a Plumbing Permit from BSEED

A Plumbing Permit is required from BSEED if you are:

- installing a new water tap, outdoor sink, sprinkler, or irrigation system
- installing new catch basins, drains, or sewers

You can access the Plumbing Permit form at [www.DetroitMI.gov/Land](http://www.DetroitMI.gov/Land) or at the BSEED Development Resource Center, 2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 434. A Plumbing Permit will cost a minimum of \$180, which includes review of your plans and an on-site inspection.

### Getting a Tap Permit from DWSD

A DWSD Tap Permit is required to install a new water tap that draws from the DWSD system. Usually, a contractor who is a licensed plumber will need to apply for this permit for you. The permit is available at <https://www.DetroitMI.gov/DWSDPermits> or at 735 Randolph, 1st Floor. A DWSD Tap Permit will cost a minimum of \$650; this does not include the cost for a Right of Way permit if required.

Irrigation services for Urban Farms will require a Water Service Permit through the [Water or Sewer Service Permit](#) process. Go to the [Water and Sewer Service Permit Engineering Review Request online form](#) to obtain Permit Engineering approval prior to [Water and Sewer Permit Application](#) submittal for your Irrigation Service.

Questions? Email [DWSD-Permits@detroitmi.gov](mailto:DWSD-Permits@detroitmi.gov)

## Understanding the conditional use process

A conditional land use is a type of land use that needs more review by the City to make sure it fits into its surrounding neighborhood. Conditional land uses are defined by the City's zoning ordinance, which was developed with community input.

### How to find out if your project is a conditional land use

**Packet 2. Check land zoning** tells you more about whether your project could be a conditional land use. Projects over one acre in size are more likely to be conditional land uses in many neighborhoods. The City will confirm whether your project is a conditional use at the following points in the process:

- **Purchasing land:** If you are purchasing land from the City or Land Bank, you will need to submit an Intake Form. City or Land Bank staff will let you know if your project is likely to be a conditional use based on your responses to the Intake Form. See **Packet 3. Purchase land** for details.
- **Permitting your project:** If you have a property and need to get a permit, BSEED will let you know whether your project is a conditional use when you submit for your Change of Use (see **page 2** of this packet).

### Where to submit your conditional land use application

You can fill out a Special Land Use Hearing application online at eLAPS at [www.bit.ly/2NftZFW](http://www.bit.ly/2NftZFW)

- Create an account once on eLAPS
- Select PLANNING tab → CREATE AN APPLICATION → Record Type: HEARINGS → SPECIAL LAND USE and fill out the application

If you prefer to fill out a paper form, visit BSEED's Zoning Division at 2 Woodward Ave, Suite 407.

## What you need to do to get your conditional land use approved

BSEED's Zoning Division will help walk you through the process. Reach them at 313-224-1317, by email at [zoning@detroitmi.gov](mailto:zoning@detroitmi.gov), or in person at 2 Woodward Ave, Suite 407.

The process includes:

- Notification of all of your neighbors within 300 feet of your property (**The City will do this notification; for details, see Packet 1. Getting started**).
- Development of a professionally-drawn Site Plan for your project (see **Plot Plan, Site Design, and Maintenance Guide**).
- A Special Land Use hearing with BSEED and multiple other departments. This hearing will also allow your neighbors to express their opinions on the project, either in person or in advance via written comments.
- A fee of \$1,160 to allow for site plan review and department participation in the hearing.
- The Special Land Use hearing process takes approximately 13 weeks from start to finish.

### Ways to avoid the conditional land use process

It depends on your project and your property! The City's zoning ordinance defines where different types of land based projects are allowed by right, or are conditional.

- **When purchasing land:** You may be able to choose a different property where your project is allowed by right, which would allow you to avoid the Special Land Use hearing.
- **When permitting your project:** You may be able to change your project so that it is allowed by right on a property you already have. BSEED's Zoning Division can help with advice.

## Conditional uses require Site Plans

If your project includes activities that are conditional land uses in your Zoning District, you will need to create a Site Plan. Site Plans are detailed drawings that show required information on your project.

A Site Plan is similar to the Plot Plan that is typically required when you are purchasing land from the Detroit Land Bank Authority, or applying for a Land Permit from BSEED. However, Site Plans are more detailed than Plot Plans. (Refer to the **Plot Plan, Site Design, and Maintenance Guide** for details on Plot Plan requirements.)

### What to include in the Site Plan:

- Name, address, and telephone number of the applicant
- Project name
- Project address(es)
- Gross site area
- Legal description with land area in square feet or acres
- Location map showing:
  - Site location
  - Current zoning designation of project area and properties adjacent and across any alleys
  - Major roads and railroads
  - Any approaches or drives

BSEED's Zoning Division at 313-224-1317 or at 2 Woodward Ave., Suite 407 will help walk you through the process.

### Tips for a good Site Plan

BSEED's Zoning Division at 313-224-1317 or at 2 Woodward Ave., Suite 407 will help walk you through the process. Here are some things to know:

- Depending on the complexity of your project, and your own technical skills, you may need to hire professional help to create your Site Plan.
- All details and notes on the site plan should be clearly legible.
- The location and dimensions of all structures, uses, features, etc. should be shown.
- Ideally, your site plan will be as close to scale as possible.
- The full requirements for Site Plans are in Article III, Division 5, Subdivision B (beginning in 50-3-131) of the City Code. Submittal requirements for urban farms and other agricultural uses are in 50-3-138.

### Conditional uses also require Neighbor Notification

If your land based project plans include conditional uses, or if it is an Urban Farm, then you must provide your name, address, and telephone number at least 30 days before you start doing site work to neighboring property owners or tenants.

Conditional uses require a Special Land Use Hearing in order to receive a permit. The City will send a letter to all addresses within a 300 feet radius of your project no less than 15 days prior to your scheduled hearing date.

Refer to **Packet 1. Getting started** for more details and tips on engaging your neighbors.

## Reducing costs for projects on multiple parcels of land

If you own multiple properties next to one another, it's often a good idea to consolidate your parcels before you apply for a permit for your project. Depending on the location of your properties, you have two options: **Parcel Combination** or **Project Area**.

**Parcel Combinations** are legal changes. **Project Areas** are agreements with BSEED that last as long as a project is permitted. If the location of your properties does not allow you to officially combine them, you may still be able to save on permitting fees by creating a Project Area. Combining parcels to the greatest extent possible is strongly recommended before requesting a Project Area. Project Area details are on **page 7**.

### Parcel Combination

Properties that are **next to one another on the same block with the same owner** may be combined. The owner must have filed their Property Transfer Affidavits with the Assessor's Office. The owner must be **current on all payments** or payment plans to the City of Detroit.

Parcels **across a street** or an unvacated alley from one another **cannot** be combined.

Unused alleys can be officially vacated in order to combine it and the parcels on each side. Alleys are usually vacated to an easement so the City can still access underground utilities. Alley vacations require petition signatures from all property owners next to the alley and City Council approval. Contact Department of Public Works (see **page 8**).

**Visit the Assessor's Office at 2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 804 to combine parcels. Download the Parcel Revision Packet and complete all items on the checklist before you go. Call 313-224-3024 for further assistance.**

You will need a picture ID and recorded deeds under your ownership for each property. You will need the Property Transfer Affidavits if you obtained the properties within the past 60 days.

If you are combining across an alley you will need a certified resolution from the City Clerk's Office showing City Council approval of the alley vacation (contact on **page 8**).

### Why consolidate parcels?

Parcel Combinations and Project Areas allow you to:

- Save on permitting fees! Pay one permit fee overall rather than fees for each parcel.
- Have more freedom with your site design! Combining lots will remove some set back requirements for each individual lot and allow you to build over former lot lines.

Parcel Combinations also mean:

- You will receive one tax bill rather than multiple, reducing the chances you miss a bill.

Be aware:

- Combining parcels with impervious surfaces or across alleys can change your taxes or drainage charges. Talk with BSEED or check with DWSD and the Assessor's Office in advance (contact information on **page 8**).

## Project Area Option

A **Project Area** is an option as of 2019 for land based projects with properties that are not all next to each other but are located within a two-block area. The Project Area option will reduce permitting costs by allowing project leaders to pay a single plan review fee and a single change of use fee. Create your Project Area through BSEED's Development Resource Center at 2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 434.

### Eligible projects and properties:

- One owner of multiple properties located inside of a 2-block area. Area may include no more than one street crossing less than 60' wide and up to two alley crossings. BSEED will identify a "parent" parcel that the permit is assigned to.
- All parcels that can be legally combined must be legally combined through the Assessor's Office prior to applying.
- Residentially and Commercially zoned properties may be included under one permit, but all project uses maybe not be permissible on all areas.
- Program administered through BSEED's Development Resource Center; BSEED staff at the DRC will assist in determining project are permit boundaries for projects with land holdings across more than two blocks.

### Steps to get your Project Area approved:

- Combine all parcels that can be legally combined through the Assessor's Office (see Lot Combination instructions on **page 6**).
- Submit a Land Permit Form with details about your project area and a Plot Plan for the whole project to BSEED's Development Resource Center (DRC).
- BSEED staff will help you determine if you are eligible for a Project Area.
- You will enter into an Agreement with BSEED that includes a description of all properties included in the Project Area.
- Pay one combined plan review fee and change of use fee for all properties included in your Project Area.
- Project Areas do not expire. If you acquire additional property that is eligible for inclusion in your Project Area, BSEED can update it at no cost. You will need to submit a plot plan for any new property to BSEED via email at [drc@detroitmi.gov](mailto:drc@detroitmi.gov) You may also need additional permits if the new portion of your project includes structures or new water hookups.

## Have questions or need help?

This table includes contact information for agencies and organizations involved in permitting and maintaining land. You can contact them to ask questions or get more information.

Contact	Location	Contact Information
<b>Buildings, Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED)</b>	2 Woodward Avenue 4th Floor	Development Resource Center: 313-224-2372 drc@detroitmi.gov  Zoning Office: 313-224-1317 zoning@detroitmi.gov  Plumbing: 313-224-3157
<b>Department of Public Works - Traffic and Engineering (TED)</b>	2633 Michigan Ave, Detroit, MI 48216	313-224-3954
<b>Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD)</b>	735 Randolph Street, 1st floor, Detroit, MI 48226	313-267-8000
<b>Detroit Parks &amp; Recreation (DPR)</b>	18100 Meyers Rd, Detroit, MI 48235	313-224-1100
<b>Detroit City Clerk's Office, City Council Committee Section</b>	2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 200	313-224-3266