

## A METHOD TO EVALUATE YOUR COMMUNITY'S BEST PRACTICES



Pre-Application Meetings



Internet Accessibility



Proactive Project Tracking



Clear and Efficient Permitting Processes



Business/Community Input



# A SUCCESSFUL ONE STOP READY PROGRAM

REQUIRES ENGAGEMENT FROM THE ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS  
AND COMMUNITY STAFF



*One Stop Ready Academy Classes bring the full community team together to share best practices for a continuously improving, high-quality customer service environment at their city, village or township.*

# INTRODUCTION

One Stop Ready is a community-focused economic development program built upon self-evaluation, information sharing and outstanding customer service.

One Stop Ready communities strive for continuous improvement through self-assessment. They regularly review and, if needed, update their ordinances, policies and procedures. They understand the importance of high quality customer service and have elected and appointed officials and staff that work as a team.

This report provides communities with a means to self-evaluate their performance relative to the five One Stop Ready best practices:

-  Pre-Application Meetings
-  Internet Accessibility
-  Proactive Project Tracking
-  Clear and Efficient Permitting Processes
-  Business/Community Input

Each best practice — as well as a community’s approach to self-evaluation, customer service and communication — is described by a series of indicators allowing a community to determine whether it is:

- meeting the indicator,
- meeting the indicator, but has room for improvement
- not meeting the indicator.

The five best practices are benchmarked through an iterative process led by the county and One Stop Ready community liaisons. The Self Evaluation, Customer Service, and Communication section at the end of this report is intended to be filled out independently by the community.

We hope you will find this report a useful methodology to determine your community’s areas in need of improvement and be able to track your progress over time.

–Your Oakland County One Stop Ready Team

## ONE STOP READY BENCHMARK REPORT PREPARED BY:

**County Liaison:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Liaison:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completion Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Community Representatives who Provided Input into Benchmark Report:**



# PRE-APPLICATION MEETINGS

Prior to formal application, the community provides the applicant an opportunity to meet with necessary staff and consultants to review the proposal. Timeline of the entire process and critical decision points are clearly defined. Potential problem areas are identified upfront.

The appropriate mix of staff and consultants attending pre-application meetings (e.g., planner, engineer, attorney, supervisor, DDA administrator, economic development coordinator, police and fire, other appropriate contractors and consultants etc.) will vary depending on the size and scope of the project. The community must decide who will attend the pre-application meeting in order to adequately address site and building questions.

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<p>a. Procedures are in place to determine who should attend meetings and the lead official is empowered to request/require staff to attend.</p>			
<p>b. A determination of the applicant’s desired time table is the first order of business. The applicant is asked: “When do you want to open and what are your deadlines?”</p>			
<p>c. The availability and purpose of pre-application meetings are clearly communicated (either verbally or through printed material at the counter).</p> <p>d. Staff, elected officials and boards (Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic District Commission and Downtown Development Authority etc.) are knowledgeable of pre-application meetings and their intended purpose.</p>			
<p>e. Pre-application meetings are explained and promoted on community web-site.</p>			
<p>f. Pre-application meeting times accommodate applicant’s needs.</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b></p> <p><i>Meeting appointments are offered within set-scheduled times.</i></p> <p><i>Meeting appointments are offered within a flexible schedule.</i></p>			
<p>g. Pre-application meetings are provided at no cost to the applicant.</p> <p><i>Meeting appointments are offered within set-scheduled times at no cost.</i></p> <p>Yes      No      NA</p> <p><i>Meeting appointments are offered within a flexible schedule at no cost.</i></p> <p>Yes      No      NA</p>			

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<p><b>h.</b> During the pre-application meeting, essential information is communicated to the applicant</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b></p> <p><i>Applicant is provided contact information for appropriate key staff.</i></p> <p><i>Submittal and approval requirements along with critical dates and deadlines are identified.</i></p> <p><i>Potential requirements beyond community control are clearly communicated (e.g., roads outside of community jurisdiction, DEQ and Oakland County Health regulations/permits).</i></p> <p><i>Applicants are apprised of the roles of boards, commissions and councils in the approval process.</i></p>			
<p><b>i.</b> Additional pre-application meetings are available if necessary.</p>			

**NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**





# INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY

Community website provides access to necessary development information including applications and fee schedules; plans, ordinances, regulations and maps; and adopted policies.

One Stop Ready communities have the following items available on their website.

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<b>DOING BUSINESS WITH THE COMMUNITY</b>			
a. Clearly identify offering of pre-application meetings and how to schedule them			
b. Outline of permitting and site plan review process			
c. Schedule of fees			
d. Application forms			
e. Ability to submit applications online			
f. Ability to pay fees directly online			
g. Current schedule of community meetings			
h. Agendas, information packets and minutes from community meetings			
<b>CONTACTING COMMUNITY</b>			
i. Staff phone numbers and email addresses			
j. There is a clearly identified point of contact for each phase of the development process			
k. Contact information for elected officials			
l. Names of appointed officials			
<b>OTHER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RELATED INFORMATION</b>			
m. Zoning ordinances and community master plans			
n. Map/listing of community targeted properties for development			
o. Economic development incentives and related policies (e.g., tax abatement policy)			

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<b>LINKS TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES</b>			
p. Oakland County Government (e.g., Advantage Oakland, Health Division, Water Resources Commissioner)			
q. Oakland County One Stop Ready Program			
r. Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC)			
s. State of Michigan Government (MDOT, MDEQ, MDNR, MEDC)			
t. Utility company links and contact information			

## NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS





# PROACTIVE PROJECT TRACKING

To meet the applicant’s timeline, community staff takes a proactive approach to keep the project on target — from application through occupancy — by ensuring that applicant is aware of submission requirements, key decision dates and proactively following up with applicant.

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<p>a. The applicant’s time table is identified.</p>			
<p>b. The community provides a single point of contact (e.g., development coordinator) for the applicant.</p>			
<p>c. Projects are tracked to ensure applicant is notified regarding status, deadlines, and/or deficiencies</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b></p> <p><i>Development project information is captured and documented in a consistent and retrievable form (written, Microsoft Excel, BS&amp;A, etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Critical information including submission requirements, submission deadlines (cut-off dates), and relevant meeting dates are communicated to the applicant</i></p> <p><i>When a submission is made, the application is reviewed for completeness before distribution</i></p> <p><i>Applicant is informed of any deficiencies before a critical deadline passes</i></p>			
<p>d. Community holds regular meetings to review current projects (e.g., Pre-app group meets regularly or community has formed an Administrative Review Committee)</p>			
<p>e. After a project is completed or a business opens, a method is in place to identify unresolved issues from the owner/occupant’s point of view</p>			
<p>f. The development process is reviewed internally by community staff to identify potential inefficiencies or improvements</p>			

## NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS





# CLEAR & EFFICIENT PERMITTING PROCESSES

Clear and efficient permitting can help advance or accelerate the development process to take advantage of opportunities and to meet applicant and project deadlines.

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<p>a. A customer service approach is incorporated into the permitting and inspection processes.</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b>  <i>Community has the ability to issue over the counter permits (e.g., fence, roof, deck etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Contact numbers for inspections is provided</i></p> <p><i>Customer is given a 2-hour window for time of inspection</i></p> <p><i>Customer calls are returned within one business day</i></p> <p><i>Customer complaints are resolved by staff when they can be and management is involved when necessary</i></p>			
<p>b. Properly completed and submitted permit applications are reviewed and approved within a timely manner (i.e., 3-5 days for residential, 10-14 days for commercial)</p>			
<p>c. Inspections are scheduled in a timely manner (i.e., 24-hour building inspection, 72-hour trade inspection)</p>			
<p>d. Community offers pre-construction/development review meetings (coordinated through a single point of contact) to clearly identify all permits, inspections and fees needed for a project.</p>			
<p>e. Community makes available detailed information on permitting, inspections and related fees.</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b>  <i>In person at the municipal counter, supported with detailed handouts</i></p> <p><i>Through phone and email communications</i></p> <p><i>On the community website</i></p>			
<p>f. Community offers customers the option of submitting permit applications online.</p>			
<p>g. Community offers customers the option of paying fees online.</p>			

## NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS





## BUSINESS/COMMUNITY INPUT

The community has processes in place to gather input from businesses and other stakeholders to identify potential problems and gather suggestions. This can be community led or led by some business organization like the chamber, downtown association or other business organization.

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<p>a. The community has formed a close relationship with the chamber or other business organization that represents the community.</p>			
<p>b. Methods are in place to obtain business input (such as Business Roundtable, real estate forum, etc.)</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b>  <i>Through monthly, quarterly, or semi-annual meetings</i>  <i>Survey</i>  <i>Online comments</i></p>			
<p>c. The community communicates with businesses through newsletters or email blasts.</p>			
<p>d. Business input is evaluated to see if changes in process or approach are needed.</p>			

## NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

# SELF-EVALUATION, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMMUNICATION

TO BE COMPLETED BY: CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL

One Stop Ready communities strive for continuous improvement through self-assessment. The elected and appointed officials and community staff regularly review and, if needed, update their ordinances, policies and procedures. Everyone understands and agrees that the goal is consistent, high-quality customer service for sustained economic development in their community.

**This section is completed by the chief elected official** in discussion with other elected officials, appointed officials, the community liaison and staff in order to reach consensus on how well they are meeting the indicators.

INDICATORS	MEETING INDICATOR	MEETING INDICATOR WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT	NOT MEETING INDICATOR
<p>a. The planning, zoning, permitting and inspection process is reviewed at least once a year to identify strengths and areas for improvement.</p>			
<p>b. Elected and appointed officials come prepared for meetings by reading packets in advance.</p>			
<p>c. Elected and appointed officials ask staff for clarifications before the meetings to avoid unnecessary delays.</p>			
<p>d. If all of the informational requirements have been provided by the applicant, decisions or recommendation are rendered at that meeting and aren't tabled unnecessarily.</p>			
<p>e. Staff reports provide elected and appointed officials with pertinent information on projects such as economic, environmental, or community impacts.</p>			
<p>f. All community representatives (elected and appointed officials and staff) are ambassadors for the community.</p> <p><b>Check all that apply:</b>  <i>Comments and suggestions on how to improve governmental services are sought as part of their regular contact with businesses and residents</i></p> <p><i>Comments and suggestions are relayed to the appropriate people within the community for evaluation and refinement of community processes and services</i></p>			
<p>g. Community holds at least one joint meeting per year that is attended by the community's legislative body, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and community staff in order to discuss priorities and customer service philosophy.</p>			
<p>h. Community provides customer service training to staff.</p>			

## NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Chief Elected Official:**

**Completion Date:**

**Other Community Representatives who Provided Input into the Self-Evaluation:**

# PLANNING AND ZONING DECISION GUIDE

Here is a checklist for elected and appointed officials and staff to assist in preparing for, and participating in, the planning, zoning and economic development process.

## BE PREPARED

ELECTED OFFICIALS	APPOINTED OFFICIALS	STAFF	ACTION	✓
X	X		Review agenda packet in advance	
X	X		If needed, contact staff to gain better understanding or clarification of the agenda materials	
		X	Identify approvals required and whether approvals are required from more than one body	
		X	Identify which body has the role to review, recommend and make a final decision	
		X	Outline what actions are necessary and which ones can be advanced concurrently	
X	X		Review the procedures for handling public hearings in your community	
X	X		Make sure your motion, for either approval or denial, contains the facts and reasons for your decision	
X	X		Be familiar with your community's conflict of interest procedures if available	
X	X		Be familiar with Robert's Rules of Order if adopted by your community	

## ASSIST THE APPLICANT

ELECTED OFFICIALS	APPOINTED OFFICIALS	STAFF	ACTION	✓
		X	Work with the applicant and communicate all of the information requirements to ensure their application submittal is complete	
		X	Identify next steps for applicant	
		X	Inform the applicant if the decision made is the final step or if another review will be performed prior to final approval	
X	X		Determine the impact on the applicant before you decide to table or postpone your decision	
X	X	X	Determine if the applicant has a limited time purchase option that will expire if the decision is tabled	
X	X	X	Determine if the applicant has time-sensitive financing, such as an active loan application	

## KNOW YOUR ORDINANCES

ELECTED OFFICIALS	APPOINTED OFFICIALS	STAFF	ACTION	✓
X	X		For re-zonings, determine if all the uses allowed in the district are appropriate for this location	
	X	X	For conditional re-zonings, check to see if your community has a mechanism in place to handle them	
		X	Check to see if the applicant has considered a conditional re-zoning if appropriate	
	X	X	Reference ordinance standards during all site plan reviews	
X	X	X	Determine if your community's zoning ordinance can allow for administrative approval for minor amendments to an approved site plan	
	X	X	Be well-versed in the differences between a dimensional variance and a use variance and the requirements for how they are obtained	
X	X	X	Know if your community can grant a use variance	



*An L. Brooks Patterson Initiative to help Oakland County communities be competitive and prepared for economic development opportunities.*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT**

**ONE STOP READY | PLANNING GROUP**

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