



Pre-Development Consultations: The City's Interdepartmental Review Team (IRT)

Summary & FAQ

What are IRT meetings?

Interdepartmental Review Team (IRT) meetings are regularly scheduled pre-development consultations, held virtually, that are offered free of charge. IRT meetings are designed to assist developers and landowners in the pre-development stages of potential and proposed projects with questions relating to permitting processes, zoning compliance, engineering standards, and land use policy considerations. Meetings are available by appointment to anyone with a proposed development, large or small, residential, commercial, institutional, or industrial at any stage of the development.

To schedule an IRT meeting, you need to have a **specific address** and **project**, along with at least **preliminary site plans**.

Note: These informative but informal meetings do not substitute for any required administrative reviews or necessary Board/Commission approval.

What are the most common reasons for scheduling an IRT meeting?

IRT Meetings are not required, but are encouraged, especially for large or complex projects.

- If you and your representatives have questions regarding the City's permitting process.
- If your development has specific engineering issues or questions.
- If your development requires one or more discretionary permits and you have questions regarding what information staff will require or recommend be submitted.

What are commonly discussed topics at the IRT meeting?

Commonly discussed topics at IRT include but are not limited to:

- 1) Zoning compliance of a proposal with respect to use, and dimensional requirements (e.g., setbacks, and off-street parking requirements).
- 2) Policies regarding landscaping, open space, lighting, buffers to abutting properties, etc.
- 3) Public safety provisions in site design such as Fire Department access to structures, fire hydrants, etc.
- 4) Stormwater management requirements, wetlands protection, and erosion controls
- 5) Proposed curb cuts, parking layout, vehicular and pedestrian circulation on a site.
- 6) Sewer, water, and drain connections requirements.
- 7) ADA compliance.
- 8) Zoning district change considerations.
- 9) Requirements for developments in local historic districts or those involving historically listed properties.

What City representatives are present at the meeting?

- The key review staff members present at the meetings review submitted plans and regularly advise Boards/Commissions (Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Historic Commission, and the License Commission) on such issues as drainage, utility connections, proximity to wetlands, compliance with Zoning Ordinance's dimensional requirements, landscaping, parking requirements, and more. Representative generally include staff from Planning, Building & Zoning, Conservation, Historical, Housing, Fire, DPW, Transportation and Engineering. Site search assistance may be available for certain projects / businesses through the Economic Development Department.
- DPRS staff will coordinate follow-up for outstanding questions with appropriate departments.

Scheduling a meeting

- If you are unsure if you should make an IRT appointment or simply need to talk to someone on staff, please contact Division of Planning & Regulatory Services directly.
- Typically, the meetings are held on Thursdays between 2:00-4:00 pm and are 30 minutes in length; meetings are held virtually.
- To schedule an IRT meeting, contact *Planning & Regulatory Services Division (DPRS)* at City Hall, 445 Main Street, Room 404 or by calling (508) 799-1400 ext. 31440 or e-mailing planning@worcesterma.gov.
- You will be asked to complete a meeting request form.
- Plans and drawings should be submitted by the Friday prior to the meeting.

How should I prepare for the meeting?

Attendees are encouraged to bring their engineers, architects, attorneys, etc. to discuss the proposal.

The more detailed the plans, renderings, and project concept, and the more specific the questions, the more responsive and helpful staff can be. We suggest that prior to your meeting you read “Building in Worcester: A Developer’s Guide” (<http://www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/4f/ac/4fac390664b938015922d1f9a2e1f042/developers-guidebook.pdf>) and work with your project team to prepare the following and e-mail to scheduling staff the Friday prior to your meeting:

- 1) visual representation of your site, such as image of the site, a plot plan, a site plan, rendering or elevations of any existing or proposed buildings, etc;
- 2) a description of the proposal;
- 3) a list of questions for the staff members with respect to land use considerations and permitting process.

Application Forms, Meeting Schedule, and Fee List

The following documents are available free of charge at the Division of Planning and Regulatory Planning (weekdays, 8:30am-5pm) or may be downloaded at any time from <http://www.worcesterma.gov/planning-regulatory/boards>.

- All applications and application requirement checklists for PB, ZBA or HC in fillable pdf format
- The meeting schedule for PB, ZBA, HC, and Conservation Commission meetings
- The application fee list for PB and ZBA considerations (No fee is charged for HC considerations. DPW&P should be contacted with regards to Conservation Commission fees.)

Other Common FAQ With Respect to IRT and Permitting Process

- *What if I have a by-right development?* - Questions regarding building permits for by-right developments (i.e. not requiring relief from zoning requirements) can be discussed directly with a building inspector or other Inspectional Services staff at 25 Meade Street.
- *How do I know what permits to apply for?* – While IRT staff can offer advice on the permitting process and/or information that will likely be requested by the land use boards, a [Zoning Determination Form \(ZDF\)](#) should be requested from the Division of Inspectional Services (inspections@worcesterma.gov) to determine which approvals/permits will be required for a particular project. This form must accompany all Planning Board &/or Zoning Board of Appeals applications. Please note that the Zoning Coordinator may request a to-scale plan of land in order to issue a ZDF for the proposed project.
- *If I need to apply for permits to more than one Board/Commission, is there a particular sequence in which I should do so?* – No, you are not required to apply in a particular sequence. However, we do advise that petitioners of projects requiring both ZBA and PB approvals apply for ZBA permits first, as potential ZBA conditions of approval may modify site plans or parking plans for PB.
- *Can I attend the IRT more than once?* – Yes, as long as your proposal is substantially different or substantially more developed from the one previously presented.
- *How do I join the virtual meeting?* – Meetings are held virtually, the staff member who scheduled the meeting will send you a link to join the meeting. If you have issues joining the meeting, instructions are available by request, please contact DPRS staff.