

# Commercial Site Plan Review



King Street, Northampton

## What are the objectives of site plan review?

To promote standards for new business development and advance the appearance, traffic conditions, shopping atmosphere and opportunities in pertinent zoning districts.

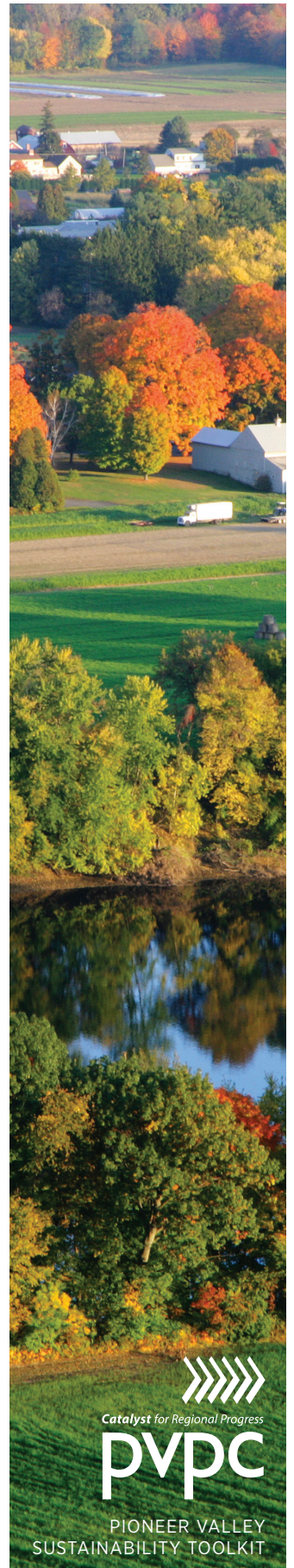
## Why do we need commercial site plan review?

Commercial and industrial growth is important for any community's tax base and can benefit the community by providing needed jobs and services. However, without proper local review, large-scale projects such as shopping centers or industrial parks can have significant impacts on traffic, neighboring properties and community character. To prepare for the new forms of development anticipated today and beyond, communities need a site plan approval process for commercial and industrial uses.

## How does commercial site plan review work?

To streamline the process, Site Plan Approval is usually undertaken simultaneously with the Special Permit review process. In general, the types of projects which require site plan approval include retail services, wholesale, transportation and industrial uses, community facilities, commercial earth removal operations, and multi-family residential uses. Other more simple projects usually require only administrative site plan review. Depending on the use, the Special Permit Granting Authority may be the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, or Board of Selectmen.

A site plan approval bylaw/ordinance sets forth specific procedures for application, review and approval of both Special Permits and Special Permits with Site Plan Approval. Such regulations include a description of the necessary application contents for basic Special



Permits and for Special Permits with Site Plan Approval. The procedures are described for review by municipal boards and for joint public hearings on both the Special Permit and Site Plan Approval, where necessary. Detailed criteria are established for evaluating site plans and special permits in order to ensure a fair and objective review process. The Special Permit Granting Authority's final action on a site plan may be to either approve, approve with modifications, or deny the application. After approval of the site plan, the Special Permit Granting Authority then takes action on the Special Permit.

### DID YOU KNOW...

**Special Permit with Site Plan Review:** This is a clearly designated Special Permit Process that follows all requirements for public hearing and application review timeframes

**Site Plan Review:** This is an administrative review process only, not a Special Permit process, and applies to certain uses permitted as a matter of right.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY



### Hadley Commercial Strip Standards

In the mid-1980s, commercial development along the Route 9 corridor in Hadley began to accelerate at an alarming rate. The Town of Hadley recognized that unmanaged growth along the corridor would have detrimental results on the scenic, rural, and historic character of the town. In 1989, the town adopted the Commercial Site Plan Approval Standards that would help Hadley control development along this commercial corridor. The purpose of these standards is to discourage unlimited commercial strip development by promoting compatible architectural design and safe traffic guidelines in order to protect the rural character of Hadley. These standards require site plan review for any new or expansion of commercial developments with the Business, Limited Business and Industrial zoning districts. In order to receive site plan approval, all commercial projects within these zones must comply with a series of performance standards developed by the planning board. The Hadley bylaws also include trip reduction requirements and traffic impact statement requirements for large developments.

**A model bylaw or strategy is included in the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Toolkit.**

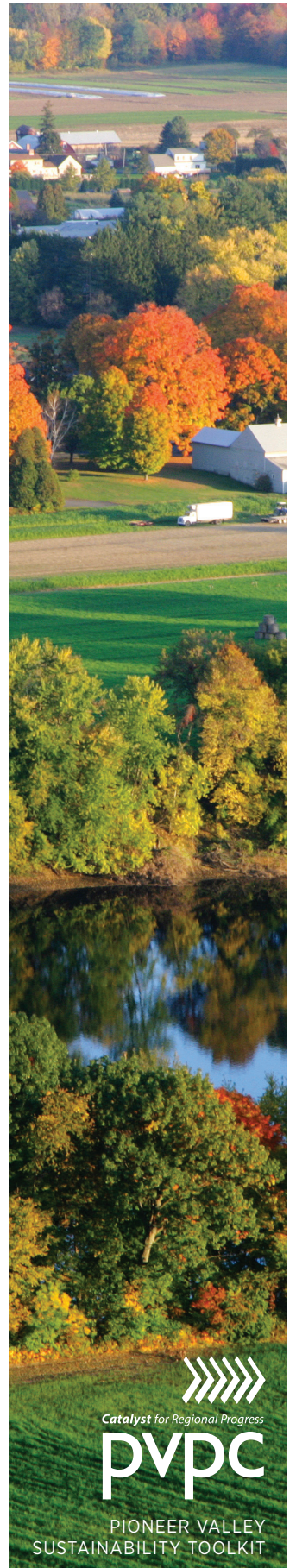
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT**

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SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT