# SECTION 6. WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED FROM AN APPLICANT FOR SITE PLAN REVIEW?

The **site plan review** process requires that the owner of the proposed development submit material which outlines the nature of the project. This allows the reviewing body to determine if the proposal meets the standards established by the community. A key question in the development of a **site plan review** process is determining what kind of information needs to be submitted and at what level of detail. These issues are discussed below.

#### **■ THE BASIC PACKAGE**

Most site plan review systems require the applicant to submit three basic types of information:

- 1. An application form setting forth the basic factual information about the project. This often includes information about the ownership of the property, evidence of the applicant's legal interest in the property, the location of the property, the proposed use, information about easements or other encumbrances, and similar information.
- 2. A drawing or site plan showing the boundaries of the lot, together with location and size of proposed buildings and site improvements such as access drives, parking, provisions for water supply and sewage disposal, grading, stormwater management, landscaping, lighting, etc.
- 3. Supplemental information that describes existing conditions at the site, the nature of the proposed development, on-site and off-site impacts, and the applicant's technical and financial capability to complete the project as proposed.

### ■ LEVEL OF DETAIL REQUIRED

Many communities struggle with the question of how much detail to require of applicants. The information that is submitted for review must present an accurate picture of what is proposed to be constructed, accurately portray where it is located on the parcel of land, describe adjacent land uses, and correctly depict the spatial relationships between various aspects of the development (how far the propane tank is from the building, where the driveway will be located, etc.).

The key item of information is an accurate site plan showing the boundaries of the lot and the proposed buildings and site improvements. This plan must be drawn to scale and accurately represent the distances on the site. The plan should be drawn at a large enough scale so that the development proposal can be evaluated. For larger scale projects or any projects involving significant grading or the construction of roadways, utilities, stormwater drainage facilities, or similar items, the plan should be an "engineered" site plan meaning that it has been prepared by a professional licensed to practice site design and engineering in the State of Maine.

Many site plan review systems link the level of information required to the scale and intensity of the project. Thus, the submission requirements for small projects are limited, whereas larger, more complex projects are often required to submit more detailed and/or additional information.

### **■ CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION**

For most types of nonresidential projects, applicants should be required to submit three categories of information:

- 1. Information about the Existing Conditions on the Site In most situations, a thorough understanding of the existing conditions on the development site is required. The applicant should be required to provide information about:
  - The existing natural features of the site (i.e., topography, soils, vegetation, water bodies or resources, floodplains, unique natural features, etc.),
  - Existing development on and adjacent to the site (i.e., existing buildings and structures, location and size of public utilities or water supply and sewage disposal facilities, location of existing driveways and curb cuts, etc.), and
  - Any incumbrance on the use of the site such as easements, deed restrictions, etc.

One way to understand the opportunities and constraints created by existing site conditions is to require the applicant to prepare a site analysis as part of the process especially for larger scale projects. The site analysis should evaluate the site and its features and identify issues and opportunities that should be addressed in the preparation of the development plan. The site analysis should evaluate both natural features and built features.

A site analysis can be a valuable planning tool for the applicant and a useful tool for reviewers, since it identifies issues that need to be addressed by the development plan. A sample site analysis is shown on the following page.

2. Information about Proposed Development Activities - The applicant should be required to submit information about what development is proposed on the site.

This should include the size and location of buildings and structures, location and layout of access drives, parking areas, sidewalks and any other pedestrian or vehicular facilities, provisions for water supply and sewage disposal, drainage, and other site improvements. If the project involves significant grading or if there are areas with steep or unstable slopes, it should show how the contour of the site

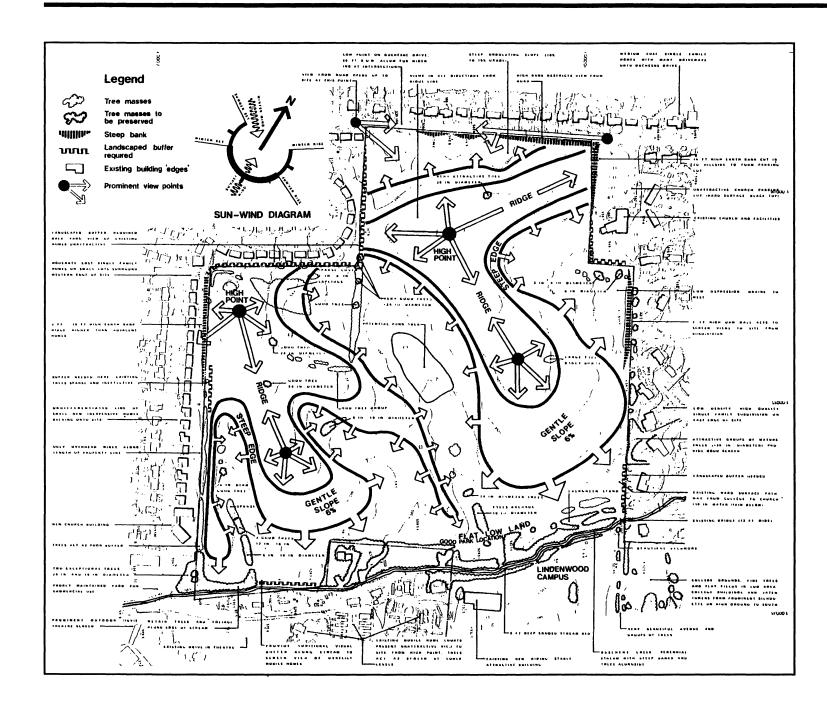
will be changed and stabilized.

The information that the applicant is required to provide about the site development should be tied to the review standards adopted for site plans. For example, if the **site plan review** regulations address lighting and the impact on adjacent properties, the "submission requirements" in the regulations should require that the applicant provide information about site lighting and how it will affect abutting properties. Submission requirements should not require information be provided about aspects of development that are not subject to review. e.g., taxable value.

Two sample site plans are shown on page 23.

3. Information about the Impacts of the Proposed Development Activities - For some aspects of the development, additional information may be needed, especially if it affects the community or adjacent properties. For example, some site plan review regulations require a traffic impact analysis be prepared if the project will generate a lot of traffic. Similarly, a stormwater impact analysis or noise analysis may be needed for some types of projects.

SECTION 6. ISSUES
Given the type of activities that may be covered by site plan review, what information will be required to allow a meaningful review?
Should the regulations allow smaller projects to provide less information?
When should an "engineered" plan be required?
Should a site analysis provision be included for larger projects?



## **Example of a Site Analysis**

A site analysis can be a valuable planning tool for the applicant and a useful tool for reviewers since it identifies issues that need to be addressed by the development plan.

A site analysis should identify and evaluate the existing natural and built features of the site and identify issues and opportunities that should be addressed in the development proposal.

## **Examples of Site Plans**

