Pittsburgh Department of City Planning

INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS

WHAT IS AN INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN?

Institutional Master Plans (IMP) provide a framework for development of institutions, such as hospitals and colleges, which control large areas of land within the City. These institutions are unique because they generally contain a greater density of development than surrounding areas, are a source of substantial employment, and are usually located immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods. As such, the IMP allows the institutions the flexibility to plan and develop project- and campus-based standards for building height and massing; parking and transportation; urban design; and neighborhood compatibly. Finally, the IMP provides a level of understanding to the public and the community about the potential growth of institutions and the resultant impacts. All institutions located in Education Medical Institutional (EMI) zoning districts are required to have a current IMP.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN THE INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN?

A complete outline of topics and issues required to be covered in an IMP is detailed in Section 905.03.D.2 of the Zoning Code. These topics broadly are:

- Planning Horizon of 10 and 25 Years
- Mission and Objectives of the Institution
- Existing Property and Uses
- Needs of the Institution
- Ten-Year Development Envelope
- Twenty-Five-Year Development Sites
- Transportation Management Plan
- Environmental Protection Plan
- Open Space and Pedestrian Circulation Plan
- Urban Design Guidelines
- Neighborhood Protection Strategy

WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP IN THE IMP PROCESS?

It is recommended that the institution and their planning consultant hold a pre-application meeting with City Planning staff to discuss the IMP process and requirements specific to each project. To schedule this meeting, please email zoning@pittsburghpa.gov or call 412-255-2241.

MAY INSTITUTIONS FILE FOR A ZONE CHANGE WITH THE IMP?

Yes, this process should be run concurrently with the IMP. Please speak to a City Planning staff member about this application.

HOW DO I MAKE AN APPLICATION?

Submit a Development Review Application, available on the City Planning website, five hard copies of the draft IMP, an electronic copy of the IMP, and the fee.

HOW MUCH IS THE FEE?

The fee is $25 plus one of the following:

- $7,500 for fewer than 3 Acres
- $15,000 for more than 3 Acres

Checks or money orders payable to "Treasurer, City of Pittsburgh" are accepted. Fees are non-refundable, including if the IMP is not approved. Additional fees are assessed for projects outlined in the IMP and zoning changes.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN APPLICATION HAS BEEN FILED?

First the scoping for the traffic analysis will be completed. The institution and their consultant will have a meeting with City Planning and Public Works transportation staff to discuss what should be included in any transportation study.

While the transportation analysis is being completed, the draft IMP goes through the City Planning staff review process. This includes reviews of accessibility, neighborhood compatibility, zoning, and urban design. The design review is the only review with a formalized process.

WHAT IS THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS?

The design review process is the review related to architecture and urban design. For IMPs, this encompasses the urban design guidelines and the location, height, and setbacks of the buildings within the ten-year development plan. This process this includes staff design review and the Contextual Design Advisory Panel. For more information about design review, please visit the Deaprtment of City Planning website.

IMP APPROVAL PROCESS, CONTINUED

WHAT COMMUNITY OUTREACH SHOULD THE INSTITUTION DO?

Early and throughout the planning process, it is recommended that the applicant reach out to multiple community stakeholders, including neighborhood groups, adjacent residents, City Council representatives, other institutions, and other relevant stakeholders.

In addition, as required by the Zoning Code, City Planning will mail surrounding property owners and post around the institution notice of the IMP filing 21 days prior to the Planning Commission hearing. Please note that this requirement should be included in any time frame estimate for approvals.

WHAT IS THE PLANNING COMMISSION PROCESS?

City Planning staff work with the applicant throughout the review process. After staff has determined that all of the required topics are adequately addressed, the IMP is scheduled for Planning Commission review. The Commission meets bi-weekly on Tuesday afternoons with briefing starting around 1 PM and the public meeting starting at 2 PM. A briefing to the Commission is the first step. This is an off-the-record presentation to introduce the project to members. It also provides the opportunity for the Commissioners to ask questions they want the applicant to further address. Then the project returns two weeks later for on-the-record hearing and action. A full presentation is made again and then public comment is taken. The Commission will generally vote at that meeting to approve or disapprove the IMP. If the Commission disapproves the IMP, then it still proceeds to City Council, where it needs an affirmative vote by at least seven members to be adopted.

At each hearing, City Planning staff will introduce the project and then a representative of the institution or their planning firm will make the presentation. A computer and projector will be set up. The applicant is requested to bring the presentation on a CD or thumb drive for both presentations. Twelve paper copies of the presentation are also required for the on-the-record hearing.

The presentation should include highlights of all the topics covered in the IMP. The most focus should be placed on the proposed projects in the ten-year development plan. The presentation should last between ten and fifteen minutes.

Planning Commission meetings occur in the first floor conference room at 200 Ross Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219. When entering from Ross Street, turn right in the main lobby and walk down the hallway to the meeting room.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

City Planning staff prepare legislation to send to the Law Department for review and then to City Council.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE CITY COUNCIL PROCESS?

The City Clerk's office schedules the IMP for a City Council committee hearing. The applicant should work on this scheduling with the City Councilmember for the location of the institution. The applicant presents to the Council committee and public testimony is heard. If approved in committee, the IMP is voted on at a full Council hearing. If passed, the IMP is approved. No mayoral action occurs.

HOW LONG DOES THE IMP APPROVAL PROCESS TAKE?

The entire process, from making an application to City Council approval, takes approximately six months. This varies depending on the complexity of the plan and on Planning Commission and City Council schedules.

WHEN CAN AN INSTITUTION RECEIVE APPROVAL FOR THE PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE IMP?

For new buildings proposed in the IMP, Planning Commission and/or Zoning Board of Adjustment approval may be required after the IMP is approved. This approval will be specific to the building and require design review and zoning review. The Planning Commission procedure is similar to that for the IMP, although City Council approval is not required. For information about the Zoning Board process, please visit the City Planning website.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please consult the Zoning Code, including sections 905.03.D and 922.12. For additional questions, please contact Kate Rakus at kate.rakus@pittsburghpa.gov or 412-255-2470.