
Lawrence Township

Mercer County, New Jersey



Working with our
Planning and Zoning Boards
&
A Guide to our Permit Process
www.lawrencetwp.com

About This Guide

This booklet was developed as a joint effort between the Township Administration and the Township Growth and Redevelopment Committee. Its purpose is to guide individuals and commercial entities through the process of applying for permits and through hearings with our Planning and Zoning Boards. A fee schedule is included for your convenience. Please note that fee schedules are subject to change. For current fees contact the Township Manager's office at (609) 844-7005.

Most people would be quite surprised to know how many zoning, planning and building permit applications are received annually in Lawrence Township from residents, developers, engineering firms, architects, contractors and others.

No two projects or applications are alike. Each requires its own special attention and service. It is the desire of the Administration and the Growth and Redevelopment Committee to clarify how to work with the Planning and Zoning Boards and how to acquire permits.

We sincerely hope that you find it useful and informative.

Lawrence Township
Growth and Redevelopment Committee

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Definitions

Bulk Standards

Standards and controls that establish the maximum size of buildings and structures and their physical placement on a lot. Homeowner applications to the zoning Board are typically requests for relief from bulk standard requirements.

“C” Variance (Bulk)

A grant of relief from specific bulk standard requirements of the Land Use Ordinance in conjunction with subdivision, site plan, floodplain and conditional use applications.

Conditional Use

A use permitted in a particular zone which complies with the conditions and standards for the location or operation of such use as contained in the Land Use Ordinance.

Conditions

What is and what is not allowed.

Floodplain Relief

A grant of relief from the requirements of the flood damage prevention chapter of the Land Use Ordinance which permits construction in a manner otherwise prohibited.

Major Subdivision

Any division of land not classified as a minor subdivision.

Minor Subdivision

Any subdivision of land resulting in the creation of not more than three (3) lots fronting on an existing street and not involving any new street or the extension of municipal facilities.

Site Plan

A development plan of one or more lots on which is shown the existing and proposed conditions of the lot, including but not necessarily limited to topography, vegetation, drainage, floodplains, marshes and waterways, the location of all existing and proposed buildings, drives, parking areas, walkways, means of ingress and egress, utility service, landscaping, structures and signs, lighting and screening devices, stormwater management, and any information that may be reasonably required in order to conduct an informed review of what is and is not allowed.

Subdivision

The division of a lot, tract or parcel of land into two or more lots, tracts or parcels or other divisions of land for sale or development.

Planning

Application Filing Procedures

An application must be submitted according to the type of proposed action. Application forms are available in the Planning and Redevelopment Office and on the Township website (www.lawrencetwp.com). Applications are reviewed for completeness by the Administrative Officer before being placed on the Planning Board agenda.

Public Notice Requirements (for certain applications)

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-12, the applicant is required to serve public notice at least 10 days prior to the date of the Planning Board hearing. Applicants may contact the Engineering Division for the list of property owners to be notified and for assistance. Attorneys usually perform this task for applicants. Notice is required to be published in one of the Township's official newspapers (Times of Trenton and the Lawrence Ledger) at least 10 days prior to the hearing.

Decision Process

In accordance with the N.J. Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), the Planning Board is required to reach a decision on the application in a specified period of time. The amount of time is based on the type of application. Once the application is deemed complete, the MLUL clock is started.

Resolutions

Once a decision has been reached by the Planning Board, the Planning Board Attorney or the Planning and Redevelopment Office prepares a resolution which is a record of the Board's decision detailing specific conditions. A resolution of approval is needed in order to obtain a building permit. Conditions of the resolution must be complied with before the plans will be stamped and distributed.

Notice of Decision

Once action is taken by the Planning Board, a Notice of Decision is published in the local newspaper.

Attorneys and other professionals can assist you with applications to the planning and zoning boards.

Planning

The Planning Process

Planning Board Organization

The Planning Board is established and governed by the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (NJSA 40:55D-1 et.seq) and Lawrence Township Land Use Ordinance (Ord.#1511-97,600-601). The Board consists of nine members and two alternates, all of whom are appointed by the Township Council.

The Planning Board exercises approval authority over proposed development applications and the Township's Master Plan.

The following members of the Township administrative and professional staff may review each application for the Board:

- Planning Board Attorney
- Planner
- Engineer
- Construction Official
- Administrative Officer

In addition, the application may be reviewed by the following advisory committees; which may recommend conditions to be included with an application.

- Environmental Resources Committee
- Historic Preservation Advisory Committee
- Public Safety Coordinating Committee
- Shade Tree Advisory Committee

Planning Board Schedule

The Planning Board meets the first and third Monday of each month at 7:30PM in the Municipal Building. Special meetings are scheduled when needed. Public notice of the meeting agenda is posted in the Municipal Building. Please refer to www.lawrencetwp.com for any meeting schedule updates.

Planning Board members are appointed by the Township Council and volunteer their time and expertise without compensation.

Zoning

Application Filing Procedures

A residential “C” variance application must be filed with the Administrative Officer at least twenty-one days prior to the Zoning Board meeting.

An application must be submitted according to the type of proposed action. Application forms are available in the Planning and Redevelopment Office. Applications are reviewed for completeness by the Administrative Officer before being placed on the Zoning Board agenda.

Public Notice Requirements

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-12, the applicant is required to serve public notice at least 10 days prior to the date of the Zoning Board hearing. Applicants may contact the Engineering Division for the list of property owners to be notified and for assistance. Attorneys usually perform this task for applicants. Notice is required to be published in one of the Township’s official newspapers (Times of Trenton and the Lawrence Ledger) at least 10 days prior to the hearing.

Decision Process

The Zoning Board of Adjustment is required to reach a decision on the application within 120 days of the application being deemed complete by the Administrative Officer.

Resolutions

Once a decision has been reached by the Zoning Board, the Zoning Board Attorney prepares a resolution which is a record of the Board’s decision. A resolution of approval is needed in order to obtain a building permit. Conditions of the resolution must be complied with before the plans will be stamped and distributed.

Notice of Decision

Once action is taken by the Zoning Board, a Notice of Decision is published in the local newspaper.

Zoning Board members are appointed by the Township Council and volunteer their time and expertise without compensation.

Zoning

Application Types

Appeals

Filed when the applicant alleges that there is an error in any order, requirement, decision, or refusal made by the Zoning Officer in enforcing the Land Use Ordinance.

Interpretations

Filed when an applicant requests an interpretation of the Zoning Map or Land Use Ordinance.

“C” Variance (Bulk)

Filed when an applicant seeks an exception to the strict application of the Land Use Ordinance.

The applicant must provide proof that strict adherence to the Land Use Ordinance would create exceptional practical difficulties and undue hardships (for example, building an addition to a house that will not meet setback or lot coverage requirements).

“D” Variance (Use)

Filed by an applicant for one of the following reasons:

- To construct or create a use or principal structure in a zoning district that has restrictions against such use or principal structure.
- To expand a non-conforming use.
- To deviate from a conditional use requirement.
- To increase the permitted floor area ratio.
- To increase the permitted density.
- To increase the height of a principal structure.

The regulations for each zone are listed in the Land Use Ordinance which may be viewed at www.lawrencetwp.com

Zoning

The Zoning Process

Zoning Board Organization

The Zoning Board of Adjustment is established and governed by the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, Chapter 291, Section 40:55D-69 and the Lawrence Township Land Use Ordinance.

The Board consists of seven (7) voting members and two alternates, all of whom are appointed by the Township Council.

The following members of the Township administrative and professional staff may review each proposed variance application for the Board which may recommend conditions.

- Zoning Board Attorney
- Planner
- Engineer
- Construction Official
- Administrative Officer
- Health Officer

In addition the application may be reviewed by the following advisory committees; which may recommend conditions to be included with an application.

- Environmental Resources Committee
- Historic Preservation Advisory Committee
- Public Safety Coordinating Committee
- Shade Tree Advisory Committee

Zoning Board Schedule

The Zoning Board of Adjustment meets the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30PM in the Municipal Building. Additional meetings are scheduled when needed. Public notice of the meeting agenda is posted in the Municipal Building. Please refer to www.lawrencetwp.com for any meeting schedule updates.

Fees

Development Application Fees

Subdivisions	Fee	Escrow*
Informal Plan	\$250	\$500 minimum
Minor Subdivision	\$400	\$600
Preliminary Subdivision	\$500	\$200 per lot up to 20 lots \$150 per lot over 20 lots
Amendment to Preliminary Or Final Subdivision	\$500	Varies depending upon the amount and complexities of amendments
Final Subdivision	\$500	\$100 per lot
Engineering Inspection Escrow	5% of Engineer's estimate for site improvements	

Site Plans	Fee	Escrow*
Informal site Plan	\$250	\$500 minimum
Preliminary Site Plan: Residential Non-residential	\$500	\$75 per acre + \$.10 per sq. ft. up to 20K sq. ft. & \$.07 per sq. ft. over 20 K sq. ft. \$750 minimum.
Final Site Plan: Residential Non-Residential	\$500	\$35 per acre + \$.05 per sq. ft. up to 20K sq. ft. & \$.03 per sq. ft. over 20 K sq. ft. \$375 minimum.
Amendment to Preliminary Or Final Site Plan	\$500	Varies depending upon the amount of complexities of amendments.

Affordable Housing Fees are applicable to site plan/subdivision approvals. Residential units are assessed a fee of 1% of the "equalized assessed value". Non-Residential fee is 2% of the "equalized assessed value".

Fees

Development Application Fees

Variance Relief	Fee	Escrow*
Appeals to Zoning Board of Adjustment	\$200	None
Interpretation Residential/Non-residential	\$200	\$200
“C” Variance (Bulk) Residential Non-Residential	\$100 \$250	\$400 \$2,000
“D” Variance (Use) Residential/Non-residential	\$250	\$2,000
A fee of ten dollars (\$10.00) or \$.25 per name, whichever is greater, is charged to provide and certify a list of names and addresses of owners to whom an applicant is required to give public notice. A fee of ten dollars (\$10.00) is charged to update a list.		

*Escrow

There are two cost components to the application submission, the application fee and the escrow deposit. The application fee is a non-refundable charge to cover direct administrative expenses.

The escrow deposit is authorized by State law (NJSA 40:55D-53.2) and is established to cover the cost of professional services including engineering, legal, planning, and other expenses connected with the review of an application and the appearance before the Zoning or Planning Board. The law provides for the recovery of costs of consultant services.

Additional information is available at the Township Managers Office.

Water

Lawrence Township is served by three different water companies. Water service area maps are maintained by the Township Engineering Division. These maps show which areas of Lawrence Township are serviced by Trenton Water Works, Lawrenceville Water Company, or New Jersey American Water Company. Check with the Township Engineering Division for general information regarding the availability of water service and which water company services your area. Detailed infrastructure information is available from the individual water companies.

Lawrenceville Water Company

12 Gordon Ave.
Lawrence Township, NJ 08648
(609) 896-0919

New Jersey American Water Company

120 Rader Blvd.
Belle Mead, NJ 08502
1-800-652-6987

Trenton Water Works

333 Cortland Ave.
Trenton, NJ 08638
(609) 989-3223

Sewer

Approximately two thirds of the Township is provided sewer service by the Ewing-Lawrence Sewerage Authority (ELSA). The remaining properties, generally in the northern part of the Township, are served by individual on-site septic systems.

Ewing-Lawrence Sewerage Authority

600 Whitehead Rd.
Lawrence Township, NJ 08648
(609) 587-4061

Permits

When is a Permit Needed?

A permit must be obtained prior to any new construction or alteration, with the exception of ordinary repairs.

For expansions or additions, applicants must first contact the Zoning Officer to assure compliance with Land Use Ordinance requirements such as setback from property lines. Once approval of the Zoning Officer is received, applicants may proceed by applying for a permit. If a proposal does not comply with land use requirements, then the applicant must either revise the plans to conform to ordinance requirements or apply to the Zoning Board for a variance.

(See Zoning information in this booklet.)

Architectural Plans

A homeowner - occupant may submit his/her own plans for any kind of work on residential property, but must certify that each sheet was personally prepared by them. If a homeowner uses a contractor to perform home improvements, the contractor must be licensed by the State of New Jersey as a Home Improvement Contractor. For owners and/or occupants of commercial property, a New Jersey architect's or engineer's sealed plans (3 sets of plans minimum) are required with the exception of minor work. Check with the Construction Office for guidelines for minor work. Commercial building and mechanical contractors need to be licensed by Lawrence Township.

About the Permit Application

An application for a permit must be filled out in detail for all work related to a project. This may include electrical, plumbing, fire, mechanical, building, etc. If assistance is needed in filling out an application, help is available at the Construction Code Office.

Time Frames for Permits

The Construction Code Office has 20 business days to approve or deny a construction permit application. This approval often takes less than the 20 business days allowed. If important details are missing in the submission of the application, the applicant will be advised by phone or fax. When all information is in order, the application will be reviewed again and a permit will be issued.

**Who is liable for the permit?
The property owner is responsible for all permits,
even if the contractor signs for it.**

Permits

Types of Permits

Construction Permits

Construction permits are issued for work including demolition, building, plumbing, electrical, fire, elevator devices, pools, fences (above 6 ft.), fences around pools, sheds (over 100 square feet of floor area), decks, asbestos abatement and lead hazard abatement.

Before the Construction Official can issue a construction permit, the Zoning Officer must determine compliance with residential site standards for the installation/construction of fences, sheds, decks, pools, hot tubs, spas or building additions. To make that determination, the Zoning Officer requires three copies of the property survey including:

For New Structures & Additions, the location and dimensions of the structure/addition drawn to scale.

For Decks, the location and dimensions of the deck drawn to scale, listing the height of the deck above grade.

For Fences, the location of the fence drawn on the survey, and a signed copy of the zoning form on fences.

For Sheds, the location of the shed drawn to scale, listing the height and square footage.

For Pools, (*Both above and in-ground pools*) the location of pool must be drawn to scale. All pool areas must be surrounded by a fence, which must also be shown on the survey. Hot tubs and spas may have an approved locked cover.

The Zoning Officer will determine if minimum setbacks are met, and the Municipal Engineer will, on an as-needed basis, determine if a grading plan is necessary.

Alterations classified as ordinary repairs do not require a construction permit. Ask the Construction Code Office for a list of ordinary repairs. All other construction requires permits and approvals. The cost of your permit is set by Township ordinance. Payment is due when you pick up your approved permit.
[Unsure?](#) Call the Construction Office for more details.

Permits

Permits - Inspections

Inspections

Inspections are required for all phases of work.

They include the following:

- Footings
- Foundations
- Slabs
- Rough Framing, Sheathing
- Electrical and Plumbing
- Insulation
- Final Building, Electric, Fire, Plumbing, HVAC

Other inspections may be required depending upon the scope of the project. Check with the Construction Office for additional inspections.

Certificates of Approval or Occupancy are not issued unless all inspections have been completed and approved.

Inspectors are available for office calls:

Monday through Friday 8:30 A.M. - 9:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. - 4:30 P.M. On-site inspection hours are 9:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS:

Contractors doing residential work are not required to have a local contractors license but must have a Home Improvement Contractor license issued by the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General. Contractors doing commercial work in Lawrence Township are required to register with our Construction Code Office with the exception of plumbing, electrical, alarm and sprinkler contractors who are licensed by the State. An application form must be completed and a copy of liability insurance certificate must be submitted along with a \$75.00 registration fee. Homeowners doing their own work are not required to be registered.

Housing Inspections

Transfer of Ownership

As per Lawrence Township Ordinance, all residential properties that are being sold must have a housing inspection and receive a Certificate of Inspection prior to the transfer of ownership.

Rental Properties

All residential properties that are being rented must also have an inspection and receive a Certificate of Inspection prior to a new tenant moving in. All non-owner occupied residential rental properties of one or two units shall be registered with the Lawrence Township Clerk (Municipal Ordinance No. 1932-07)

Procedure for Obtaining a Certificate of Inspection

In order to schedule an inspection, the Housing Office must receive a completed Property Transfer Application along with the required fee of \$75.00. The application may be picked up at the Housing Office Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Inspections

Housing inspections are performed on Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:15 and 11:15 a.m. and 1:15 and 3:15 p.m.

Infill Development Ordinance

All new development or expansion/renovation of single family homes within the R-3, R-4 and R-5 zones are subject to size and intensity limitations based on the Infill Development Ordinance. Renovation or rehabilitation of existing residential buildings that do not create an increase of more than 40 percent of the Square Footage of Living Area (SFLA) or 750 SFLA are not subject to this ordinance. Square Footage of Living Area (SFLA) is generally comprised of the heated floor area within the outer walls of all structures on a residential lot but not including an unfinished basement or attic.

Fire Inspections

Annual Fire Registrations

All businesses are required to register with Lawrence Township under the New Jersey Uniform Fire Code. It is mandatory that registration be renewed on an annual basis. All registration applications can be picked up at the Code Enforcement Office, Monday through Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Fees

The fee schedule, as adopted by Lawrence Township ordinance, is based on the square footage of the business premises. Current fee schedules are available at the Lawrence Township Fire Marshal's Office.

Renewals

Renewals are sent to each business every January and include an invoice for the required fee and the property information currently on file. You must return the invoice and fee and make any corrections or updates to the information provided.

Fire Inspections

In addition to the registration, all businesses must have an annual fire inspection performed by the Lawrence Township Fire Marshal's Office. The purpose of the inspection is to locate any fire code violations and make sure they are corrected. Once a business is cleared of any violations, a Certificate of Inspection will be issued.

YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

The Lawrence Township Growth and Redevelopment Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 P.M. in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building. You are invited to attend and participate.

You may also direct your comments in writing to the:

**Lawrence Township Growth & Redevelopment Committee
P.O. Box 6006
Lawrence Township, NJ 08648**

Directory

Administrative Officer	844-7076
Business Advocate	844-7076
Construction Office	844-7060
Engineering	844-7087
Finance	844-7013
Fire Marshal	844-7018
Housing Inspection	844-7032
Municipal Clerk	844-7000
Municipal Manager	844-7005
Planning & Redevelopment	844-7076
Police	896-0225
Tax Assessor	844-7040
Tax Collector	844-7041
Zoning Officer	844-7076

www.lawrencetwp.com

