

SKETCH PLANS

TECHNICAL BULLETIN

When a preliminary plan is submitted for a land development application, the site engineering is often substantially complete, and the applicant has already made considerable investment in the preliminary plan. As a result, the applicant is reluctant to make dramatic, or even modest, changes that are then reflected in the final plan. A Sketch Plan for a proposed subdivision or land development provides an incentive for the applicant to meet with municipal officials in order that both parties may discuss the project at the conceptual level before the preliminary engineering begins. A sketch plan is an informal plan—not necessarily exact scale—indicating the tract's topographic and other notable existing features, surroundings and general layout of the proposed subdivision or land development.

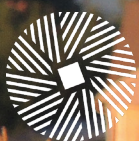
Discussion allows the municipality and the developer to articulate their goals for the project and to discuss site layout and design alternatives. It benefits both parties—by facilitating the approval process for the developer (which may include potential financial savings), and the municipality can achieve its community development objectives.

There are two types of plans that will need to be reviewed:

1. Land Development Plans – proposed uses by-right prior to going through preliminary/final development plan review process
2. Conditional Use Plans – proposed uses by conditional use prior to going through preliminary/final development plan review process

PURPOSE OF A SKETCH PLAN

- **Ensures consistency with a municipality's Vision for the Future:** Allows municipal input early in the process to ensure the development is consistent with the long-term vision for the municipality's development, considering factors like architectural guidelines, natural resource protection, trail planning, and environmental sustainability.
- **Guides Land Use Decisions:** Ensures organized development and zoning alignment with community goals. This is relevant for municipalities that are in the path of new development or potentially subject to future development pressures.
- **Supports Sustainable Development:** Promotes environmentally responsible and balanced development, considering conservation of natural resources and native plantings. This could also mean incentivizing adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- **Provides a Framework for Infrastructure Planning:** It helps local governments plan for necessary infrastructure, including roads, water systems, sewage, parks, and other public services, ensuring that these services are available to support future growth.
- **Ensures Consistency and Coordination:** Helps coordinate efforts among different departments, levels of government and neighboring communities (e.g., local, regional, and state) and ensures that development decisions align with the larger regional goals and policies.
- **Enhance Quality of Life:** By planning for green spaces, recreational areas, public amenities,



and transportation systems, the overall quality of life for residents is enhanced specifically related to livability and community cohesion.

- **Resource Protection:** This is an effective tool for municipalities with scenic roads or byways, scenic rivers, historic resources, prime agricultural soils, transportation improvement plans, open space preservation plans, and/or greenway plans to ensure greatest protection of existing conditions.

STEPS FOR REVIEWING A SKETCH PLAN

- Ensure critical information is included within the sketch plan: summary of proposed development, lot lines, existing/proposed infrastructure (i.e., streets, driveways, parking lots, trails), proposed stormwater management, zoning districts and corresponding requirements, existing site features (i.e., dwellings, structures, etc.), existing site conditions (e.g., topography, soils, woodlands, etc.), environmentally protected areas.
- Utilize GIS mapping software and existing Zoning maps to evaluate the location of proposal and adjacent features, including trails, historic features and any critical natural features.
 - The Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances may cite specific provisions of distances from specific features necessary to follow.
- Examine any relevant adopted plans (not drafts or conceptual plans) to ensure consistency with a municipality's long-term planning goals. Documents for review are identified below.
- Review ordinances, with focus on what waivers are being sought by the applicant. Specifically focus on woodlands, riparian buffers, pedestrian connections, and historic resources. Ordinances for review are identified below.

- Municipal engineer collects all comments and compiles them into one review to be presented to the applicant.

DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

- Review for consistency with local adopted plans, including, but not limited to:
 - Municipal Comprehensive Plan
 - Critical features maps (i.e., natural resource maps, trails, historic resources)
 - Inventory sections (i.e., Historic Resource Inventory, Natural Resource Inventory, Parks and Recreation Inventory, Transportation Inventory)
 - Future Land Use Map: Ensure the proposed development aligns with the designations of the future land use map
 - Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan
 - Official Map
 - Active Transportation or Trails Plan
 - Any other relevant municipal planning document



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- A photograph showing two women in a meeting room. The woman on the left, wearing a grey jacket and black pants, is leaning over a table and pointing at a large map. The woman on the right, wearing a black jacket and a blue patterned scarf, is standing and looking at the map with her hand on her hip. The map on the table appears to be a geographical map with various colored markers. The background shows other people and tables in a large room.

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Sketch Plan from Warwick Township, Lancaster County

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code

Delaware Code

The Delaware Code Title does not define the term “sketch plan,” but does require a development plan for transportation and trail planning, Title 2, Chapter 21, Section 2103.

