

## Problem statement

**In an effort to foster greater economic growth and development, municipalities are encouraged to create and maintain websites that provide business owners and members of the development community with adequate, upfront information when considering new projects.**

**Municipalities whose websites provide development-related information in a scattered, incoherent fashion (or only partially or not at all) risk deterring potential development long before the first site plan application is submitted.**

## Background

When considering the location of a development project, developers increasingly begin their research by visiting the websites of the municipalities in which they are considering locating.

Before ever contacting municipal staff, developers often want to find the answers to a number of questions with regard to working in a particular municipality, including:

- What is the development process?
- How long does it typically take to navigate the development process?
- What is the community's development vision/goals?
- What land use ordinances and regulations are in place?
- What development-related fees will I be charged?

## Best practices

Above all, development-related content provided on a municipality's website must be accurate, up-to-date, relevant and well organized. Ideally, all development-related information should be grouped together in a single "development" category.

Information to include, in or link to, from a municipal website's economic development category includes:

- All municipal land use and development-related ordinances, regulations and guidelines, such as:
  - Planning and zoning ordinances
  - Historic district ordinances
  - Wetlands regulations
  - Excavation regulations
  - Site plan regulations
  - Subdivision regulations
  - Storm water regulations
  - Blasting regulations
  - Floodplain development ordinances
  - Commercial design standards/guidelines

Information to include in, or link to, from a municipal website's economic development category includes: (cont.)

- All necessary forms and applications available, such as:
  - Technical review committee application/application for conceptual review
  - Site plan application
  - Subdivision application
  - Lot line adjustment application
  - Application for ZBA and/or administrative appeal
  - Site plan checklist
  - Earth excavation permit application
  - ZBA application for a special exception
  - Application for a variance
  - Application for equitable waiver
  - Lot consolidation form
  - Conservation Commission agenda request
  - Street excavation application
  - Development regulations waiver
  - Sign permit application
  - Conditional use permit application
- Approval process flowchart and timeline.
- Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals information including meeting time, agendas, meeting minutes, annual meeting calendar, submission deadlines and rules of procedures.
- Municipal zoning map
- Municipal master plan
- All development-related fee schedules (impact fees, review fees, application fees, etc.)
- Construction monitoring procedures and fees
- Project security (escrow) procedures
- Appeals process flowchart and timeline
- Any assistance offered (process navigation, etc.), with the contact name, photo and information of point person

Where possible, forms and applications should be interactive so that applicants can submit them online.

### Summary

Municipalities that can provide the above-listed information and related documentation online in a well-organized manner will find themselves more attractive to development in general, and the type of development they wish to see in their communities in particular.

### Access Greater Manchester

An initiative of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission and the New Hampshire Division of Economic Development, Access Greater Manchester is a regional economic development initiative whose mission is to encourage communities to look beyond individual borders, foster positive relationship building and cooperation among individual communities, promote and drive economic development initiatives for sustainability of the region, and collectively promote the region as a desirable place to “live, work, and play.”