



**Boulder  
County**

**Boulder County  
Land Use Department  
Publications**

# Site Plan Review

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## Site Plan Review

A **Pre-application Conference** is required prior to submitting each new Site Plan Review application. If the proposed permit or development requires Special Review, Limited Impact Special Review, Development Plan Review, Historic District review, or Subdivision or PUD, Subdivision Exemption, or Exemption Plat Review, the applicable review process shall substitute for the site plan review process, but the SPR standards shall apply to the part of the proposal requiring site plan review.

### Site Plan Review Facts

Site Plan Review (SPR), Section 4-800 of the **Boulder County Land Use Code**, was first adopted in 1993 in response to increased development in the mountains. Soon thereafter, SPR was applied to the plains as well. In both areas, the impact of development on natural resources and existing character of the surrounding neighborhood have been issues raised by Boulder County citizens experiencing the impact of new development. In particular, many of the remaining mountain lots that haven't already been built on often have poor access and steep slopes that lead to erosion problems or wildfire hazards. Plains development may have an impact on agricultural lands and the rural character of open areas. The good news is that in many cases, the impacts of new development can be minimized through careful site design.

### Time and Effort

It is true that SPR adds time to the review process and it is also true some applicants disagree with the outcome of the process. However, one only needs to compare the impact of most pre-SPR development with post-SPR examples to see the benefit to the county as a whole, and often for the landowner.

### Limits of SPR

A misconception is that the County can prohibit building on a legal building lot through the SPR process. The fact is that the County cannot prohibit building through SPR, but only can condition what is built and how the construction will occur. The impacts of proposed development are evaluated, including structure size, height, location, compatibility with neighborhood, and site disturbance.

### Professional Assistance

Boulder County does not require that a professional architect, planner, attorney, engineer, or other agent represent you during the SPR process. We often receive plans drawn up by the property owner with supporting information gathered without professional assistance. However, the complexity of a small percentage of projects may require professional submittals. Some applicants find that they can complete the majority of the application unassisted but need help with a few technical aspects, such as calculating the cubic yards of earth that will be moved.

### When is Site Plan Review Required?

Site Plan Review is required in order to issue building permits for development on **any vacant parcels**, for cumulative increases in **floor area of more than 1,000 sq. ft.** (residential or nonresidential) over that which existed on the parcel as of 9/8/98, for cumulative increases in **residential floor area which results in a total residential floor area of a size greater than 125% of the median residential floor area for the defined neighborhood** in which the subject parcel is located, and for **changes in use** unless the change in use is to a residential use. SPR is also required for **grading permits** (except for grading as part of normal agricultural or mining practices), and **Boulder County access permits and floodplain development permits** issued by the Transportation Department.

SPR is also required for **Telecommunications Facilities** that are located on an existing structure and meet the zoning districts height limit (otherwise a Special Use is required), development in a **Rural Community District**, development within a **Natural Land or Natural Area** or on **Conservation Easements held by Boulder County, Wildlife Rehabilitation** of more than 20 non-domestic animals or with outdoor caging, **Small Wind-Powered Energy Systems** up to 80 feet tall, and for **Solar Energy Systems** acting as a principal use if they disturb 5,000 square feet of land or less.

## Site Plan Review is Not Required if the Permit is only Needed for:

- Earthwork that is part of normal agriculture of mining practices.
- Restoration of a building that has been damaged or destroyed by fire, explosion, flood, tornado, riot, act of the public enemy, or accident of any kind (if replacement is applied for within 6 months of the event);
- Construction work that does not change the use or increase the existing floor area by more than 1,000 square feet, cumulatively over that which existed as of 9/9/98, unless the resulting residential floor area is greater than 125% of the median for the defined neighborhood.
- Construction of an accessory structure which is less than 1,000 square feet (unless the cumulative threshold above is exceeded, or if the property is in a Natural Landmark, Natural Area, Associated 250' buffer, or if there is a Boulder County Conservation Easement on the property).
- Developments is subdivisions approved after February 22, 1994 (unless the subdivision approval otherwise requires SPR)
- Development in Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Districts to the extent it covers the SPR criteria in its plan.

## Site Plan Review Fees

A non-refundable fee made payable to **Boulder County Treasurer** must be included with your SPR application.

New single family structures under 2,000 sq. ft.	\$400.00
New structures or additions 2,000 sq. ft. and larger.	\$1,075.00
SPR for additions and accessory structures less than 2,000 sq. ft., grading less than 500 cu. yds., changes in use, and commercial telecommunications facilities.	\$540.00
SPR for accessory structures less than 2,000 sq. ft. on a conservation easement.	\$400.00
Amendments to a Site Plan	\$540.00
Wildlife rehabilitation.	\$100.00
Renewable Energy Residential.	\$100.00
Renewable Energy Non-Residential.	\$500.00
Returned Check Fee	\$20.00

## Building Permits and SPR

The Land Use Department will accept building permit applications at any time during the Site Plan Review process; however, the applications will be placed on hold until the Land Use Director's Determination is issued.

**The Land Use Department highly encourages applicants to wait until their Site Plan Review is finalized before drafting the construction drawings necessary for Building Permit Applications.** Please note that, in most instances, Site Plan Review plans are conceptual in nature whereas Building Permit plans are highly detailed, time consuming and often expensive. Applicants submitting Building Permit Applications prior to completing SPR, do so at their own risk, with the understanding that amendments to these plans may be required to comply with the SPR approval.

Your Determination Letter will list a number of conditions which must be met before a Building Permit and/or Certificate of Occupancy are issued.

## Site Plan Review Timeline

