



City of River Falls Development Review Packet

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222 Lewis Street
River Falls, WI
www.rfcity.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome..... 1

Introduction..... 2

Development Review Process..... 4

Development Review Checklist..... 6

Applicable Ordinance Sections and Covenants 8

Helpful Tips 9

Development Fees 10

Services and Assistance Available 11

Welcome

Thank you for choosing River Falls for your building project. We appreciate your confidence in us and your investment in our community.

As you begin the development review process, you will notice that we do not utilize a one-size-fits-all approach. We will work closely with you and your team of professionals to carefully review your site(s) from conceptual layout to full plan submittal.

Our staff-led development process:

- Establishes an open line of communication between you and City staff throughout the process;
- Builds in an early concept meeting to identify potential site-specific issues early in the process;
- Aims to build predictability into the process to shorten approval timelines; and
- Works with you to create development of lasting quality and community value.

Again, welcome. We look forward to our work together.

Sincerely,



Scot E. Simpson
City Administrator

Introduction

PURPOSE AND INTENT

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in following the development processes of the City of River Falls. This guide is not intended to be comprehensive in explaining all of the requirements and approvals, but is meant to provide general information and guidance and help explain the process for obtaining approvals. Please see the City's ordinances, for a comprehensive set of regulations.

CITY CONTACTS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Amy Peterson, Development Services Director	715-426-3425
Brandy Howe, Senior Planner	715-426-3431
Sam Wessel, Planner	715-426-3424
Dave Hovel, Building Inspector	715-426-3426

ENGINEERING

Mike Stifter, Operations Director	715-426-3406
Crystal Raleigh, City Engineer	715-426-3412
Jason Raverty, Project Manager/Engineer	715-426-3409
Zach Regnier, Civil Engineer (Stormwater)	715-426-3457
Tamara Jaworski, Engineer Technician (Utilities)	715-426-3443

FIRE, POLICE, EMS

Scott Nelson, Fire Chief	715-426-3534
Gordon Young, Police Chief	715-426-3536
Jason Stroud, EMS Director	715-425-1682

UTILITIES

Kevin Westhuis, Utilities Director	715-426-3442
Ron Groth, Water/Wastewater Superintendent	715-426-3428
Wayne Siverling, Electric Superintendent	715-426-3480

UTILITY CONTACTS

River Falls Municipal Utility	715-425-0906
St. Croix Gas	715-425-6177
Baldwin Telecom	715-684-3346
AT&T Distribution	715-839-5820
Comcast	800-934-6489

ENERGY INCENTIVES

Mike Noreen, Conservation & Efficiency	715-426-3467
Stacie Running, Energy Services Representative	715-426-3434

MEETING SCHEDULE

Applicable if rezoning, planned unit developments, or other are necessary for proposed development project.

CITY COUNCIL

Meetings held second and fourth Tuesday's each month at 6:30 pm

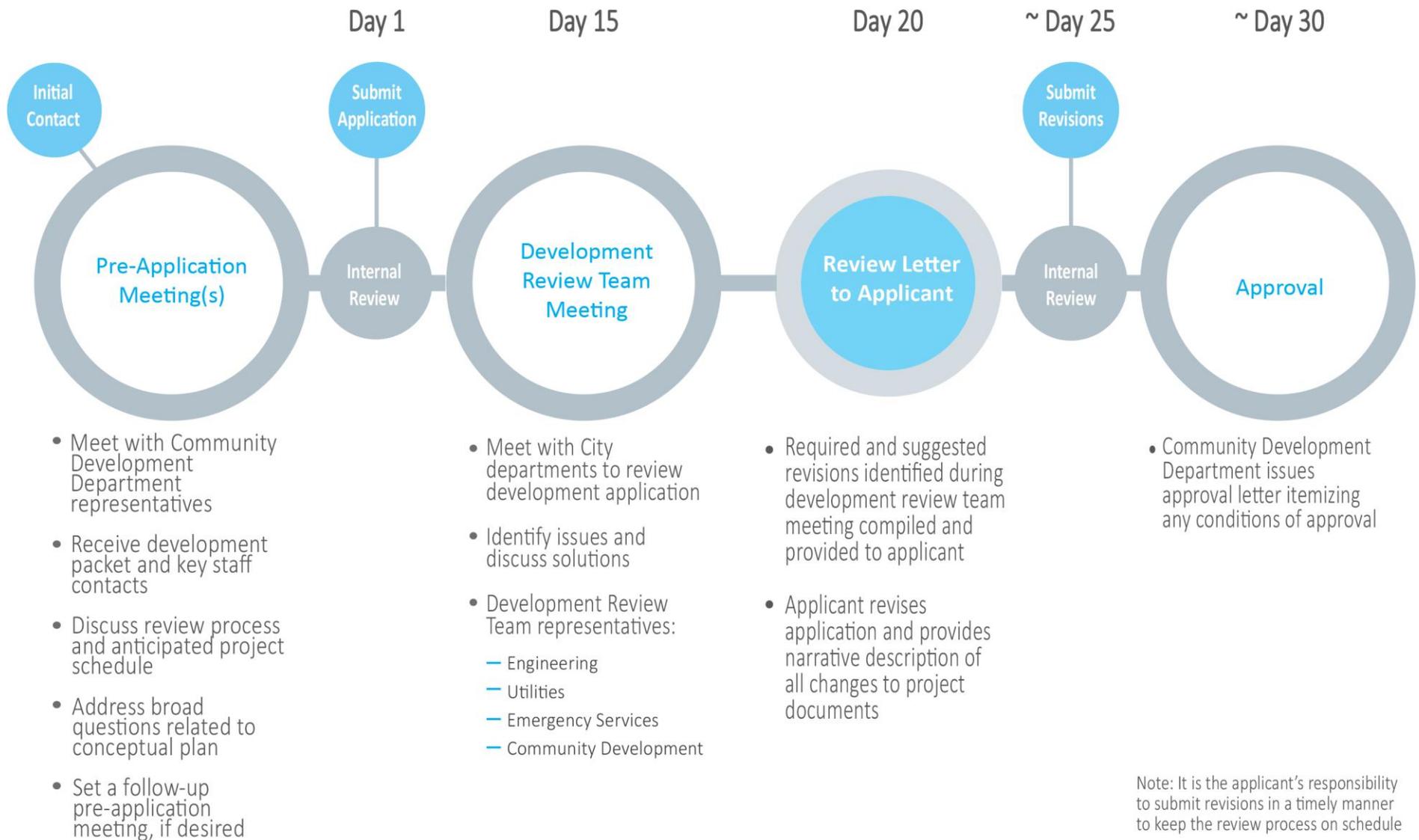
PLAN COMMISSION

First Tuesday of every month at 6:30 pm

Submittal Deadline:

First Friday of the month preceding the Plan Commission meeting

Development Review Process



Development Review Process

Development review is required for all new multi-family and non-residential development projects (including building additions). River Falls operates a staff driven review process. Most reviews do not include Plan Commission or City Council review; however, staff and/or the developer have the opportunity to take the process to the governing bodies if necessary.

STEP ONE: INFORMAL PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

To streamline project review, applicants are expected to schedule a pre-application meeting with the City. Prior to or at the meeting, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a conceptual plan and a narrative description of the proposed project. At this meeting, staff will go through the development review process and timeline, provide contact information for key staff members, and discuss the scope and nature of the proposed development. This meeting provides an opportunity for both staff and the applicant to ask broad questions pertaining to the subject site and the conceptual plan. This meeting may also uncover site-specific issues early in the process.

STEP TWO: APPLICATION SUBMITTAL AND INTERNAL REVIEW

Once the applicant has filed the [development review application](#), [stormwater permit application](#), and [fees](#), staff will review the submittal for compliance with municipal regulations and covenants and prepare a list of issues and concerns to discuss with the applicant during the Development Review Team (DRT) meeting in step three. This review may take up to **15 business days**, with the caveat that review may take slightly longer if multiple development applications are in the queue. An application is considered complete if it contains all information listed in the Development Review Checklist (see page 6). Note that once submitted, an application becomes public information and general details will be posted on the City's website.

STEP THREE: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW TEAM MEETING

Upon completion of the internal review, the City will host a meeting with the applicant and the Development Review Team. The DRT includes representatives from the Engineering and Community Development departments. At this meeting, the applicant and the DRT will discuss project details and identify issues and work through possible solutions.

STEP FOUR: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW LETTER AND REVISIONS

City staff will prepare a review letter and provide it to the applicant within **5 business days** of the DRT meeting. This letter will itemize all required and suggested changes to the proposed development as discussed during the DRT meeting. The applicant shall revise plans and provide a narrative description of how each item in the letter was addressed. In addition, all other changes should be listed in the narrative and/or depicted on plans to ensure City staff is apprised of all changes to the development project.

STEP FIVE: FINAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Upon return of revisions, City staff will again review the application to ensure the issues identified in the development review letter have been adequately addressed. This review may take up to **5 business days**

from time revisions are submitted. Once staff determines all issues have been satisfactorily addressed and the proposed development meets all requirements in the municipal code, staff will issue an approval letter to the applicant. Note that no building permits will be issued without final development approval. Development approval is good for three (3) years from the date of the approval letter.

STEP SIX: BUILDING PERMIT

Once the applicant has secured a development approval letter, they may then file for a building permit. For commercial and industrial developments, the City requires the applicant to submit a completed commercial building permit application along with one original stamped set of the state-approved building, HVAC, plumbing, and fire suppression plans prior to issuance of a city building permit. All contractors must be licensed with the State of Wisconsin. On occasion, applicants or their representatives request permission to start work prior to full development approval. The following activities may be permitted **ONLY** if the required plans and approvals are first obtained by the applicant, and then they may **ONLY** proceed at their own risk.

- Grading/excavation—requires a Wisconsin DNR land-disturbing permit and approval by the City Engineer.
- Installation of water/sewer laterals—requires an exterior plumbing plan approved by the State of Wisconsin or a ‘permission to start’ letter for plumbing from the State.
- Footing and foundation—requires a building plan approved by the State of Wisconsin or a ‘permission to start’ letter from the State.
- Interior plumbing—requires a plumbing plan approved by the State of Wisconsin or a ‘permission to start’ letter from the State.
- Building and HVAC—requires a building plan approved by the State of Wisconsin.
- Fire Alarm—requires a fire alarm plan approved by the State of Wisconsin.
- Fire suppression—requires a fire suppression plan approved by the State of Wisconsin.

STEP SEVEN: CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

Upon building completion, the applicant may request a final inspection and a certificate of occupancy. The following is required before a certificate of occupancy may be issued:

- The architect or engineer of record must file compliance statements with the State of Wisconsin for the following: building, HVAC, fire alarm, and fire suppression.
- Fire alarm and fire suppression systems must be tested and witnessed by the local fire department.
- Test and balancing of the HVAC system must be completed and all reports must be filed with the City.
- A signed long term stormwater maintenance agreement has been submitted to the City to be recorded with the County (if applicable).

STEP EIGHT: CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

The final approval for a project is a certificate of completion. Once the site has been fully developed, staff will inspect the site to ensure the development project has been completed according to approved development plans in Step 5, above. As landscaping installation is reviewed in this step, a certificate of completion may be granted several months after the certificate of occupancy has been provided, depending on the season.

Development Review Checklist

Four (4) full-size sets of civil and landscaping plans prepared by a licensed engineer as well one PDF copy. Digital copies of stormwater reports, architectural plans, sign plans, building elevations, and application forms are acceptable.

Narrative Statement including:

A description and table(s) of the development including, at a minimum, the following:

- Number of employees.
- Operational information.
- Building schedule/construction phasing.
- Total building area including number of stories, number of dwelling units, and approximate retail sales floor area.
- Traffic implications.
- Estimate of project value, including all site improvement costs.
- Other data necessary for a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed development.

Cover Sheet indicating:

- Name of the development, name(s) and address of the owner, engineer, land surveyor and/or land planner.
- Date, graphic scale, and north arrow.
- Vicinity map depicting the proposed development in relation to surrounding area.

Existing Conditions Map including the area within 300 feet depicting the following information:

- Existing topography at two (2) foot intervals.
- Lot area, property boundaries, and easements.
- Existing buildings (including overhangs) and any foundations and their dimensions.
- Streams, lakes, wetlands, floodplains, hydric soils, woods, slopes 20% and greater, and any other significant environmental features.
- Private and public facilities, such as streets, driveways, parking areas, utilities, parks, etc.
- Existing small utilities (i.e. phone, cable, gas).

Demolition Plan depicting any demolition to occur on the site (if applicable).

Site Plan depicting proposed:

- Lot dimensions, including building setbacks.
- Building layout plan with size and dimensions including location, height, all accessory structures including patios and decks.
- Exterior mechanical equipment.
- Easements for access, utilities, stormwater conveyance, etc.
- Location and detailed drawings of fences and retaining walls. Walls over 3 feet in height require engineering drawings.
- Curve radii and centerlines of existing and proposed access points, streets, and other rights-of-way with dimensions.
- Acceleration, deceleration and passing lanes with dimensions (if applicable).
- Sidewalks or pathways within the site and in the right-of-way with dimensions.
- Dimensions (including angles) of existing and proposed parking stalls, drive aisles, landscape islands, and loading zones.
- Refuse and recyclable collection areas.
- Location of fire hydrants and fire lanes.
- Site summary including site area, building area coverage, total parking spaces, pervious and impervious surface square footage.

Utility Plans depicting:

- Utility easements.
- Existing/proposed public and private water and sanitary sewer mains, services, and hydrants. (Utility under hard surfaces will be required in conduit).
- Existing and proposed above and below ground gas, electric, and telephone lines.
- Transformers and utility boxes, including locations and service requirements.
- Fire flow requirements.

Architectural Plans depicting:

- Interior plumbing details. Include domestic water meter size (see impact fees).
- Mechanical room details.
- Eave measurements (2' required for multifamily projects)

Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control Plan depicting:

- Existing and final topographic contours.
- Slopes 20% and greater and any other significant environmental features.
- Location of existing drainage courses, floodplains, streams, wetlands, hydric soils, and other water bodies.
- Site grading, proposed drainage patterns, and other stormwater management measures.
- Method of proposed drainage (detention/and retention ponds, catch basins, culverts, etc.) including grading, side slopes, depth, high water elevation, emergency overflow locations, and outfalls.
- Underground storm sewers and drains, including location and size.
- Lowest building opening elevation at which water would enter the building if the building were surrounded by water. The elevation may correspond to:
 - The lowest walkout level.
 - The lowest wall at a window well-formed by foundation walls.
 - The lowest window opening not protected by a foundation window well.
- Elevation of all property corners and ground elevation at front and rear of the building.
- Elevation at top and bottom of proposed retaining walls and loading docks.
- Proposed temporary and permanent erosion control best management practices.
- City shoreland zoning setbacks (shoreland GIS layer can be provided by the City upon request).

Storm Water Plan specifying:

- Computations showing no increase in volume of stormwater discharge for 1.5" rain event, and no increase in rate of stormwater discharge for 2, 10, and 100-year rain events.
- Computations showing compliance with ordinance for total suspended solids (TSS).

Signage Plan depicting:

- Location, type, color, material, and dimensions of all temporary and permanent entrance features or other signs on buildings or on the site.
- If no sign plan is provided during development review, the applicant will be required to file a sign permit application and fee at the time a sign is desired.

Lighting Plan specifying:

- Location, size, height, and shielding for all lighting fixtures proposed for the site.
- Detailed information on each light fixture including a copy of the manufacturer's catalog information sheet.
- Hours of illumination and degree to which the proposed exterior night lighting will affect adjacent properties.

Landscaping Plan specifying:

- Location, species, and size of all existing trees on the site including identification of what is to be removed and what is to be preserved.
- Location, species, and installation size of all proposed shrubs, trees, and other live plant material.
- Location, size, height, and construction materials for all fences, walls, berms, or other landscape screening device.
- Buffers to adjacent property, if any.

Color Elevations depicting:

- Color building elevations for all sides, including details on all exterior building materials.

Applicable Ordinance Sections and Covenants

The City's Municipal Code is available online at www.municode.com or by clicking [here](#). When completing development review, City staff ensures the submitted plans are in compliance with the requirements of Chapters 12 and 17. The following quick reference is intended to point the applicant and their consultants to the most commonly referenced code sections used to prepare development plans. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive; fire and building codes will also be taken into consideration during review. If the applicant or their consultant team has any questions regarding the requirements of these or other sections of the Municipal Code, please don't hesitate to contact the Community Development Department at 715-425-0900.

- Zoning District Standards
 - Standard Districts (17.12 to 17.64)
 - Downtown Overlay District (17.68)
 - Groundwater Protection Overlay District (17.70)
 - Floodplain Protection Regulations (17.120)
 - Shoreland-Wetland Protection Regulations (17.124)
- General Requirements
 - Lot and Building Regulations (17.08.010)
 - Driveway Regulations (17.08.020)
 - Fences and Obstructions (17.08.030)
 - Setback Requirements (17.08.050)
 - Nonconforming Building and Uses (17.08.060)
- Parking Requirements
 - Parking and Loading (17.08.040)
 - Parking Spaces and Parking Facilities (17.80)
- Multi-Family Design Standards (17.73)
- Planned Unit Development (17.72)
- Traditional Neighborhood Design (17.112)
- Signs Requirements
 - Signs (17.84)
 - Signs within the Downtown Overlay District (17.68.100(C))
- Stormwater Management (12.16)
- Industrial Park Covenants and Design Guidelines
 - [River Falls Industrial Park](#)
 - [Sterling Ponds Corporate Park](#)
 - [Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park](#)

Note that projects located in the Downtown Overlay District require **Downtown Design Review Committee** approval and projects in the Whitetail Ridge and Sterling Ponds Corporate Parks are reviewed by an **Architectural Review Committee (ARC)**.

Helpful Tips

Applicants can help manage their design costs and often speed up review by following these helpful tips:

1. **Talk or meet with Community Development before submitting an application.** Before you make significant investments in your project, our Community Development staff can help you understand the feasibility of your project, what City plans and ordinances will apply, the type of review process there will be, and how to prepare a complete application. This pre-application meeting is included in our development review process and is the best way to ensure unnecessary hurdles are avoided later in the review process. Conceptual review of preliminary plans almost always saves time, money, stress, and frustration in the long run for everyone involved.
2. **Submit a complete and thorough application.** One of the most important things you can do to make your review process less costly is to submit a complete, thorough, and well-organized application in accordance with ordinance requirements. Our development review checklist and list of applicable ordinance sections are included in this packet to help you make sure your application is complete.
3. **Consider working with an experienced professional to help prepare your plans.** Professional engineers, land planners, architects, surveyors and landscape architects should be familiar with standard development review processes and expectations. They are also generally capable of preparing high-quality plans that will ultimately require less time for staff review, saving you time and money in the long run. Any project that includes site grading, stormwater management, utility work, significant landscaping, or building remodeling or expansion generally requires professionals. For less complicated projects, it is acceptable to prepare plans yourself rather than paying to have them prepared by a professional. However, keep in mind that even though the project may be less complex, the staff needs to ensure that your proposal meets all ordinance requirements.
4. **Keep lines of communication open.** We're here to help shepherd you through the development review process. Check-in with the Community Development Department as often as needed to ask questions or receive project updates.
5. **Provide timely plan revisions.** Within 15 business days of plan submittal, City staff will provide a review letter outlining issues to be addressed in the draft plans. To ensure the review process proceeds on schedule, work with staff to address comments and submit revisions in a timely manner.
6. **Optional – hold a neighborhood meeting for larger and potentially more controversial projects.** For these types of projects, one way to help the formal review process go more smoothly is to host a meeting for the neighbors. This usually should happen before you even submit a formal development review application. A neighborhood meeting will give you an opportunity to describe your proposal, respond to questions, and address issues in an environment that is less formal and potentially less emotional than a Plan Commission meeting. Please notify the Community Development Department of your neighborhood meeting date, time, and place; make sure all neighbors are fully aware and document the outcomes of the meeting to include with your application.

Development Agreement and Fees

When development projects include public infrastructure, a development agreement or financial surety will be required; the mechanism will be determined based on the project scope and public infrastructure installed.

The City's fee schedule is amended annually and is available on the City's website [here](#). Depending on the size and scope of the project, typical fees include the following. Please check with City staff to confirm fees for your site/project.

Planning and Engineering Fees

- Development Review Fee – \$1,775
- Storm Water Management Permit – \$1,000 + \$100 per acre (1-10 acres)
- Storm Water Financial Guarantee – \$5,000 (0-5 acres)
- Right-of-way Excavation [Permit](#) - (if necessary) – requires a minimum \$1,000 corporate surety

Impact Fees

- Park Facilities Impact Fee – see fee schedule
- Library Facilities Impact Fee – see fee schedule
- Fire Facilities Impact Fee – see fee schedule

Utility Connection Fees

- Sewer Connection Fee – see fee schedule
- Water Impact Fee – see fee schedule
- Irrigation Meter Fee – see fee schedule

Building Fees

- Demolition Permit Fee – \$135
- Building Permit Fee – see fee schedule
- Plumbing Permit Fee – (included in building permit fee)
- Electric Permit Fee – (included in building permit fee)

Services and Assistance Available

The City offers the following services to assist in the development process.

PROVISION OF DATA

The City has a robust database of geographic information system information and other applicable information. Upon request, staff can compile data pertinent to your site, including easements, utilities, soils, etc. For more information, please contact Brandy Howe at bhowe@rfcity.org or 715-426-3431. Note that while we do retain site data, we may not have access to or have complete knowledge of all details of a site.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

The City seeks to actively encourage and promote the retention, expansion, and attraction of businesses and to develop and redevelop properties in our community for industrial or mixed-use projects. The City has successfully utilized tax increment financing to advance key projects where the project costs provide public benefit and further the general welfare of the residents and taxpayers of the City. Projects proposed in an existing TID should, at a minimum, have an estimated assessed value of \$2 million to be considered for assistance. Proposed projects that require the creation of a new TID should, at a minimum, have an estimated assessed value of \$4 million to be considered for assistance. Projects with a lessor anticipated increase in assessed value may be considered if they create a substantial new development or advance redevelopment goal of the City. A short summary of the City's policy on tax increment financing is available [here](#) and the full policy can be downloaded [here](#).

WPPI ENERGY NEW CONSTRUCTION DESIGN ASSISTANCE

The New Construction Design Assistance program assists prospective building owners and developers, design professionals and construction contractors in delivering a high-performance building in order to reduce the electric demand and energy use for new construction projects. Through this program, WPPI Energy will provide technical and design assistance as well as financial incentives to improve the energy efficiency of nonresidential new construction projects. An informational sheet and application form for this program is available [here](#).

FOCUS ON ENERGY

The [Focus on Energy program](#) empowers the people and businesses of Wisconsin to make smart energy decisions with enduring economic benefits. Focus on Energy's Commercial & Multifamily Design Assistance Program provides design professionals, builders, developers and building owners with energy-saving options for the design of new buildings and major renovation projects (over 5,000 square feet). Incentives can be used to reduce the upfront cost of high-efficiency measures that exceed Wisconsin's energy code requirements. Furthermore, the Multifamily New Construction program works with property owners and developers to model systems for new apartments and condominium complexes with four or more units. The New Construction program purpose is to identify energy savings opportunities pre-construction by coordinating with developers to make energy-efficient product choices. Prescriptive and custom incentives are available through this program.