

## Building & Safety Department

# Preliminary Code Review Meetings

One of the often used services - yet sometimes *under-utilized services* - made available to those planning a new building is the preliminary code review meeting. Those wanting a review of their proposed design during the initial concept, are invited to do so - and without additional cost. The first of two requirements is a set of schematic drawings. In just one hour, building owners, designers and contractors have an opportunity to sit down with City of Lincoln plan reviewers. However, the goal is not to conduct a thorough review or provide an exhaustive checklist for code compliance. But the intent is to ensure that the design is in general conformance with the Zoning ordinance, Life-Safety code, Building code, Handicap Accessibility, and perhaps one or two other local requirements. The second requirement is that a representative for the building owner (typically the project architect) will take notes related to the discussion and provide a copy of the meeting minutes for future reference by the Building Safety Department. Distribution of these meeting minutes provide yet another opportunity for the plan reviewers to make any necessary clarifications or corrections related to code compliance. During a successful preliminary code review meeting (**PCRM**), a few of the wrinkles have been identified and ironed out. This also helps everyone feel like we are on the same team as the final design will:

- 1) reduce the amount of time designing & re-designing the site plan & building components,
- 2) more likely conform to the expectations of those enforcing local regulations and life safety requirements,
- 3) and decrease the amount of time required for the plan review and re-submittal process.

As a major component of the Development Service Center (DSC), the primary goal of the Building Safety Department is to ensure that Lincoln continues to be a safe place to live and work. We also share the common goal of issuing building permits without unnecessary delay. A preliminary review of the following items helps to ensure that the design will be approved quicker compared to a design without a **PCRM**:

- 1) the property is part of an overall site plan and plat approved by the Planning Dept.
- 2) if the design or proposed use of the building does not conform to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, it may be necessary to apply for a special permit or other zoning approval which may require either Planning Commission or City Council approval. This process could add from between one to three months to the permitting process depending upon a variety of factors that are beyond the control of the Planning Department or any other section of the DSC.
- 3) minimum number of parking stalls must be in accordance with the Zoning requirements
- 4) driveway and curb cuts are designed according to the City of Lincoln Design Standards
- 5) it is possible that a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will need to be submitted to the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD)
- 6) parking lot lighting plan may need to be submitted for review and approval by L.E.S.
- 7) Neighborhood design standards (example: Fallbrook and Village Gardens)
- 8) Historic preservation requirements (if any)
- 9) minimum requirements of the State Energy Code (ASHRAE 90.1) will need to be met
- 10) minimum number of plumbing fixtures need to be provided & public / office restrooms need to meet handicap accessibility requirements. Ref: UPC 2000 Table 4-1 & 1994 Nebraska Accessibility Guidelines

- 11) the owner and designer are aware that their property may (or may not be) located in flood plain and various options for compliance may be discussed during this meeting
- 12) according to State Law and the size and occupancy type, the project may require that the building owner employ the services of a licensed architect and/or engineer
- 13) a fire sprinkler system may be required according to the size, height, and type of construction
- 14) the location of emergency exits and arrangement of corridors may need modification to meet minimum egress requirements. Floor plans are required for a preliminary review.
- 15) according to the size and type of occupancy, special inspections (IBC 1704) may be required
- 16) a brief overview of the plan submittal process and plan review is often discussed
- 17) health code requirements and exhaust hood for a new commercial kitchen
- 18) requirements for a demolition permit (if necessary)
- 19) Fair Housing requirements (if applicable)
- 20) during a **PCRM**, the owner and designer will typically express their primary concern and it is sometimes necessary to refer them to an inspector or someone outside the DSC (State Fire Marshal, elevator inspector, Health Dept., etc.).

The check list above is arranged in chronological order of importance with the first item requiring more time for the review process and approval. Again it should be stressed that the list above is an example of a very abbreviated checklist and there is not an exhaustive checklist that would encompass every conceivable project type. An effort to create an exhaustive checklist is not practical because this would require a small library of reference material that is commonly found near the desk of every design professional. It is also important to note that a **PCRM** is a convenience offered as a public service and there are no binding agreements made as a result. The purpose is to help get the project pointed in the right direction.

It is generally acceptable to expect that the complexity of a project is proportional to the size and value of a project. Therefore it is being proposed as a *general guideline* that the number of recommended **PCRMs** would be equal to the cost of construction divided by either one-half or one million dollars. Both commercial and residential plan reviewers welcome scheduled and impromptu meetings to discuss a project of any size. It is assumed that most projects will have at least one **PCRM** and sometimes two meetings for small complicated projects. It is expected that the building owner will invite everyone that needs to be there. Otherwise, these meetings can be redundant while reviewing the same issues with different groups or individuals involved with the same project.

An example might include a five story hotel or five story office building. Projects this size would warrant approximately 7 meetings between Building Safety personnel & those representing a vested interest in a \$7 million dollar project. But beyond the first 7 meetings, it will be (& has always been) according to the discretion of the Building Safety plan reviewers to assess an hourly fee (\$53) for an excessive number of meetings.

**PCRMs** are encouraged because these meetings make the plan reviewer's job easier while there are fewer code-review comments to make and these meetings make the designer's job easier because they can either reduce or eliminate the time required to respond to first-round code review comments. And the building owner appreciates a more streamlined process.

To arrange for a **PCRM**, you may contact Plan Reviewer Gary Spier 441-6448 [gspier@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:gspier@lincoln.ne.gov); Fire Investigator Bob Fiedler 441-6440; or Plan Review Engineer Rich Burton 441-6451 [rburton@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:rburton@lincoln.ne.gov)

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