



**MINOR AND STANDARD VARIATION
GUIDE & APPLICATION**
**An Overview of the Review Process for Minor and
Standard Variations**

City of Des Plaines
Planning, Zoning, and Licensing Division
Community and Economic Development Department
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2026



INTRODUCTION

What is the Minor and Standard Variation Guide? The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of the application and review process for minor and standard variations. A clear understanding of the process will help with the timely processing of your application.

The information contained in this guide is general in nature. A meeting with Planning and Zoning staff is essential and required to confirm the need for an application and the documents required to be submitted with the application.

What is a variation? A variation is a request to deviate from the Zoning Code (e.g., constructing an addition that is closer to a lot line than permitted by Code). We have four different types of variations based on the type or extent of the request: **minor, standard, major** and **sign**. Staff will let you know which type of variation you need to apply for, if any. This guide is to be used for minor and standard variations only.

How long does it take for the City to review an application for a minor or standard variation? The process typically takes 30-45 days, depending on when we receive a complete application. The process may be longer if we are missing information from the applicant.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Step 1: Meet with Planning and Zoning staff. All applicants are required to meet with a representative from Planning and Zoning prior to the submittal of an application for a minor or standard variation. At the meeting, staff will explain the type of variation required and clarify the documents to be submitted for an application.

Step 2: Submit the application. Submittal deadlines occur twice a month, except for November. Please contact staff with any questions regarding the application and/or documents required to be submitted. We are here to help. Once submitted, staff will review the application to ensure that all required information is included. If not, staff will request revisions or additional documentation.

Step 3: (IF MINOR VARIATION) The Director of Community and Economic Development reviews the application and makes a determination as to whether the minor variation is approved or denied. With minor variations, the application is reviewed by the Director of Community and Economic Development only; it is not reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) or the City Council. You do not need to attend any meetings with this type of variation. The Director of Community and Economic Development has final authority over minor variations. You will

typically hear back on the status of the minor variation within 30 days of submitting a complete application.

Should the Director of Community and Economic Development deny the minor variation, you have 30 days to appeal the decision and have the case heard before the PZB.

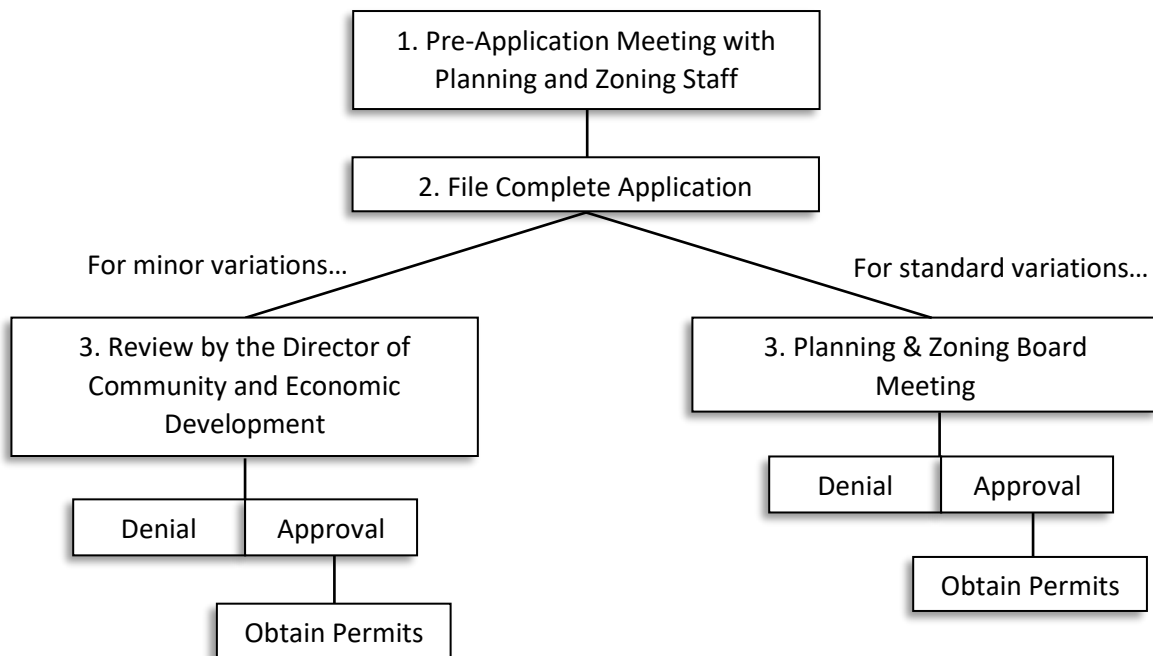
OR

Step 3: (IF STANDARD VARIATION) A public hearing is held with the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB). PZB meetings are held twice a month, on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Your request will typically be heard by the PZB about 30 days after the submittal of a complete application. At the meeting, the applicant will describe the variation request. The PZB will review the proposal and ask the applicant questions to gain a better understanding, if necessary. As this is a public hearing, anybody in the audience who wishes to ask a question or make a statement regarding the request is permitted to do so. At the end of the discussion, the PZB will vote on the request. The PZB has final authority over standard variations.

Should the PZB deny the standard variation, you have 30 days to appeal the decision and have the case heard before the City Council.

Step 4: Obtain building permits (if variation is approved). Most site and building work requires a permit. Contact the Building Division at 847-391-5380 for more information. Please also note that all businesses in Des Plaines require a business license.

MINOR AND STANDARD VARIATION PROCESS FLOW CHART



SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

One electronic copy of the following shall be provided except for the fee which shall be provided as a physical check made payable to the City of Des Plaines:

Development Application

- Application must be signed and dated by both the applicant and property owner. The original copy of the application is required.

Standards [see provided standard sheet for the requested application(s)]

- All variations must meet certain standards outlined in the Zoning Code. Please provide thorough responses (a minimum of 2-3 sentences) for each standard; do not just write yes or no. You are justifying your request. The Director of Community Development or the PZB will use these standards to assess the request and make their determination of approval or denial.

Letter of Acknowledgement

- To be signed by the property owners on either side of the subject property.
- Please make sure to use the correct form; the Letter of Acknowledgment for Minor Variations is located on page 10 and for Standard Variations on page 11.

Proof of Ownership/Property Interest

- Please provide one of the following: (1) A deed; (2) A copy of title insurance policy; or (3) A certified copy of a land trust agreement.
- If applicant is not owner, please also submit a tentative lease agreement or contract to purchase and submit with the application.

Fee(s)

- **Minor Variation:** No Application Fee
- **Standard Variation:** \$250.00

Current Plat of Survey

- Required to be prepared by a registered Illinois land surveyor and must include the entire legal description, which must be legible, and all current permanent structures. The plat of survey does not necessarily need to be new, though it should be completely accurate as to what is currently on the site.

Site Plan

- The plan must show all existing and proposed structures and be fully dimensioned, including proposed setbacks.

Other Requirements (as requested by staff):

Building Elevations

Floor Plans

Sign Plans

Photos of Existing Conditions

Other: _____



PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD HEARING DATES & 2026 APPLICATION DEADLINES

Regularly scheduled meetings of the Planning and Zoning Board are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, except for December, at 7:00 pm in Room 102 of City Hall (1420 Miner St, Des Plaines).

Applications must contain all of the required information and be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Division of the Department of Community and Economic Development (Room 301) by 4:00 pm on the application deadline.

PLANNING & ZONING BOARD 2026 DATES		
HEARING DATE	APPLICATION DEADLINE	LEGAL NOTICE/SIGN POSTING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13	MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025	MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2025
TUESDAY, JANUARY 27	MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2025	MONDAY, JANUARY 5
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10	MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2026	FRIDAY, JANUARY 16
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24	FRIDAY, JANUARY 16	MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2
TUESDAY, MARCH 10	MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2	FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13
TUESDAY, MARCH 24	FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13	MONDAY, MARCH 2
TUESDAY, APRIL 14	MONDAY, MARCH 9	MONDAY, MARCH 23
TUESDAY, APRIL 28	MONDAY, MARCH 23	MONDAY, APRIL 6
TUESDAY, MAY 12	MONDAY, APRIL 6	MONDAY, APRIL 20
TUESDAY, MAY 26	MONDAY, APRIL 20	MONDAY, MAY 4
TUESDAY, JUNE 9	MONDAY, MAY 4	MONDAY, MAY 18
TUESDAY, JUNE 23	MONDAY, MAY 18	MONDAY, JUNE 1
TUESDAY, JULY 14	MONDAY, JUNE 8	MONDAY, JUNE 22
TUESDAY, JULY 28	MONDAY, JUNE 22	MONDAY, JULY 6
TUESDAY, AUGUST 11	MONDAY, JULY 6	MONDAY, JULY 20
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25	MONDAY, JULY 20	MONDAY, AUGUST 3
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15	MONDAY, AUGUST 10	MONDAY, AUGUST 24
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22	MONDAY, AUGUST 17	MONDAY, AUGUST 31
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13	FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4	MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27	MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21	MONDAY, OCTOBER 5
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10	MONDAY, OCTOBER 5	MONDAY, OCTOBER 19
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24	MONDAY, OCTOBER 19	MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8	MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2	MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

STANDARDS FOR VARIATIONS

In order to understand your reasons for requesting a variation, please answer the following items completely and thoroughly (two to three sentences each). Variation applicants must demonstrate that special circumstances or unusual conditions prevent them from following the specific regulations of their zoning district. Applicants must prove that the zoning regulations, in combination with the uncommon conditions of the property, prevents them from making any reasonable use of the land. Keep in mind that no variation may be granted that would adversely affect surrounding properties or the general neighborhood.

1. **Hardship:** No variation shall be granted pursuant to this subsection H unless the applicant shall establish that carrying out the strict letter of the provisions of this title would create a particular hardship or a practical difficulty.
2. **Unique Physical Condition:** The subject lot is exceptional as compared to other lots subject to the same provision by reason of a unique physical condition, including presence of an existing use, structure, or sign, whether conforming or nonconforming; irregular or substandard shape or size; exceptional topographical features; or other extraordinary physical conditions peculiar to and inherent in the subject lot that amount to more than a mere inconvenience to the owner and that relate to or arise out of the lot rather than the personal situation of the current owner of the lot.
3. **Not Self-Created:** The aforesaid unique physical condition is not the result of any action or inaction of the owner or its predecessors in title and existed at the time of the enactment of the provisions from which a variance is sought or was created by natural forces or was the result of governmental action, other than the adoption of this title.
4. **Denied Substantial Rights:** The carrying out of the strict letter of the provision from which a variance is sought would deprive the owner of the subject lot of substantial rights commonly enjoyed by owners of other lots subject to the same provision.

5. Not Merely Special Privilege: The alleged hardship or difficulty is neither merely the inability of the owner or occupant to enjoy some special privilege or additional right not available to owners or occupants of other lots subject to the same provision, nor merely the inability of the owner to make more money from the use of the subject lot.

6. Title And Plan Purposes: The variation would not result in a use or development of the subject lot that would be not in harmony with the general and specific purposes for which this title and the provision from which a variation is sought were enacted or the general purpose and intent of the comprehensive plan.

7. No Other Remedy: There is no means other than the requested variation by which the alleged hardship or difficulty can be avoided or remedied to a degree sufficient to permit a reasonable use of the subject lot.

8. Minimum Required: The requested variation is the minimum measure of relief necessary to alleviate the alleged hardship or difficulty presented by the strict application of this title.

