Navigating the Change of Use Process

In order to be in compliance with local laws and receive the benefits and protections of the Urban Agriculture Ordinance in Detroit, the land owner must change the land use type to "agriculture". This formal change is fairly simple and is accomplished by completing a Building Permit Application with the City of Detroit's Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED). This guide is designed to walk growers through the process. Remember, only the property owner can complete this process so if you are requesting a change of use on behalf of a business or non-profit organization you will need a signed letter of authorization!

**STEP 1: Fill Out Application**

In order to navigate the Change of Use process, the property owner must fill out the Building Permit Application with the City of Detroit's Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED). This guide is designed to walk growers through the process. Remember, only the property owner can complete this process so if you are requesting a change of use on behalf of a business or non-profit organization you will need a signed letter of authorization.

**Things to Include in a Simple Site Plan:**
- Property owner's name and contact information
- Address and parcel id number of the property being described
- Directional orientation or North arrow
- Dimensions of the property
- Setbacks or spaces between property lines and start of active growing areas
- Location and dimensions of all adjacent and accessory structures

Simple site plans don't have to be fancy or complicated. A simple drawing done by hand on graph paper where 1 box = 1 foot should be sufficient. Once you're finished, remember to make a copy of your plan for your records! Three copies are required for submission.

**STEP 2: Create a Simple Site Plan**

After your plan review, the final step in the Change of Use process is scheduling a site visit with BSEED. To schedule a site visit call (313) 224-2733 within 6 months of submitting your Building Permit Application. On your appointment date, BSEED will come out to ensure that your developed project reflects your site plan. This process is usually quick and easy and they will issue you a certificate of acceptance that day. Call the inspector when you’re ready to build structures.

**STEP 3: Submit Application & Plan with Fee**

Take a copy of your completed Building Permit Application, Simple Site Plan, and Payment (usually $150 paid by check or credit card) to BSEED's desk located at 2 Woodward Ave, Room 409. If you applied for a lot combination bring this too (see lot combination guide) or if you are installing a hoop house you will need to submit a copy of the installation instructions. You should bring proof of ownership and a valid driver's license, and signed letter of authorization if working on behalf of an entity. Ask for a receipt and make sure you write down the name, title, and contact information of the person that you speak with for your records.

**STEP 4: Schedule Site Visit**

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This resource guide was prepared by Keep Growing Detroit. If you are trying to navigate the property ownership maze in Detroit and/or are trying gain land security for where you currently garden, KGD is here to help. Contact us at (313) 757-2635 or keepgrowingdetroit@gmail.com.