



Special Public Interest (SPI) District

HAMILTON COUNTY
Rural
Zoning
Commission

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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- **What is a Special Public Interest (SPI) District?**

A Special Public Interest (SPI) District is an additional set of regulations or standards pertaining to geographic features or land uses located within a specified boundary. These regulations are applicable to a property in addition to the “base” zoning district regulations. The SPI regulations may relax or further restrict the standard zoning district regulations, upon finding that conditions peculiar to such district and the achievement of adopted community plans require supplemental regulations. Once adopted, the new regulations become the governing “as-of-right” restrictions for all the property included in the SPI District.

- **How is the Special Public Interest District Utilized?**

The SPI District may be utilized to protect or improve the quality of specific geographic areas exhibiting or planned to contain special and distinctive characteristics. These characteristics include natural phenomena, such as unique geologic strata, soil formations, slopes, vegetation, water flow, significant scenic views or other similar natural features, or have physical development features such as substantial public investment in public improvements or community plans that coordinate public and private investment, or have characteristics that include institutional uses or neighborhood support services in residential neighborhoods or village developments in suburban metropolitan areas. An SPI may be established in an area that is of significant public value or has some special importance to the community based on adopted strategies and that is unusually vulnerable due to inadequate control of cumulative effects under conventional zoning regulations.

- **What are the Categories of SPI Districts?**

SPI Districts may be created in four categories:

Natural Resource (SPI-NR) - for assuring appropriate development in the vicinity of hillsides and other natural features.

Neighborhood Quality (SPI-NQ) - for balancing the benefits of growth and development of nonresidential support services with the livability of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Suburban Center / Suburban Corridor (SPI-SC) - for providing and protecting economic resources and community character.

Suburban Village (SPI-SV) - for development and conservation of village and hamlet character within the expanding metropolitan area.

- **What are the Criteria for Evaluation of a SPI District?**

Each of the 4 categories of SPI regulations are required to protect the public and property owners in the district in one or more of the following ways:

- a) From blighting influences that might be incrementally caused, extended, or worsened by the application of conventional land use regulations to properties and areas of sensitive and special public interest.

- b) From significant damage to neighborhoods that contain large institutional and other nonresidential uses or support services.
- c) From significant damage or destruction of prominent wetlands, floodplains, hillsides and/or valleys or other natural resources caused by improper development thereof.
- d) From significant damage to the economic value and efficiency of operation of existing properties and/or new developments due to the interdependence of their visual and functional relationships.
- e) From soil erosion, stream siltation, and development on unstable land.
- f) From the loss or destruction of mature and/or valuable trees and other natural resources.
- g) From the detrimental cumulative effects of incremental development decisions in suburban centers, corridors, neighborhoods and villages on:
 - 1) Conservation and correction of the character, integrity, safety, access, and circulation.
 - 2) Preservation and enhancement of pedestrian safety and views from the public right-of-way.
 - 3) Balance of convenience and compatibility between residential and nonresidential areas.
 - 4) Coordination of useful and attractive signage and streetscape elements.
 - 5) Minimization of traffic congestion and coordination of land use intensity with local capacities and goals.

- **How do I apply for an SPI District?**

In order to apply for an SPI Strategy or Text and Map Amendment, a meeting must be scheduled with the Administrative Official to discuss the procedures, standards, and current schedule for submitting an SPI application. **An application for and adoption of an SPI Strategy by the Regional Planning Commission is a mandatory prerequisite to the zone amendment application for an SPI District.**

- **What are the Processing Procedures for an SPI District?**

Application for an SPI Strategy:

- a) Applicant meets with the Administrative Official of the Regional Planning Commission for informal discussion of process and review of the strategy.
- b) Applicant files the strategy by submitting a complete application containing:
 - 1) Application form
 - 2) Boundary map for the proposed district
 - 3) Justification for establishment of the district standards and boundaries including development goals and policies for the area within the proposed boundary
 - 4) Specific supplemental standards proposed for achieving the SPI strategy
- c) A Press Release is prepared for the RPC public hearing and is sent to the local newspaper, township trustees, and appropriate citizens and township groups.
- d) A staff report and recommendation is prepared.

- e) **Regional Planning Commission holds a public hearing** and takes action on the proposed Strategy.

Application for a Zoning Text and Map Amendment:

Following the approval of a SPI Strategy, the approximate processing time for an SPI zone amendment will range from four (4) to six (6) months. Amendments must be heard at the regular monthly meeting dates of township and county Boards and Commissions, while also complying with time limits established by the Ohio Revised Code.

- a) Applicant meets with the Administrative Official for informal discussion of process and review of adopted plans.
- b) Staff performs concept review and sends memo to the applicant and township.
- c) Applicant submits a pre-application concept of the development, and a letter of intent to the Administrative Official.
- d) A Public Prehearing Conference is scheduled by the Administrative Official and shall be conducted within 21 days following request of such by applicant.
- e) Notice of the Public Prehearing Conference is sent to township officials, a local newspaper, and to property owners located within 200' of the site.
- f) **Public Prehearing Conference** is facilitated by RZC staff and is held in the township for public information and input. This is an informal meeting where interested parties are invited to learn about the project and provide input.
- g) Applicant officially files the proposed amendment by submitting a complete Zone Amendment application packet containing the appropriate application form, a letter of intent, concept drawings and documents, and the application fee to the Administrative Official.
- h) The RZC establishes a Public Hearing date and transmits a copy of the application to the RPC.
- i) An RPC staff report and recommendation is prepared according to factors identified as "Standards for Amendments" and incorporating comments from other departments, agencies and officials.
- j) **Regional Planning Commission** holds a public meeting (not a public hearing) at a regular meeting of the RPC, usually the first Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm. The RPC will consider the same factors, determine consistency with adopted plans, and make a recommendation to the Rural Zoning Commission for approval, denial or approval of some modification of the amendment.
- k) Notice of the RZC Public Hearing is sent to township officials, a local newspaper (Legal Advertisement) and to owners located within 200' of the site.
- l) **Rural Zoning Commission holds a public hearing** at a regular meeting of the RZC, usually on the Third Thursday of the month at 1:00pm. The RZC will consider the same factors, the RPC staff report, RPC recommendation, and all relevant testimony and correspondence received and will make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for approval, denial or approval of some modification of the amendment.
- m) Notice of the BCC Public Hearing is sent to township officials, a local newspaper (Legal Advertisement) and to owners located within 200' of the site.

- n) **Board of County Commissioners holds a public hearing** at a regular meeting of the Board, usually three (3) to five (5) weeks following the RZC public hearing. At the conclusion of the BCC public hearing, the Board will consider all factors, recommendations, testimony, and correspondence and will approve, deny, or approve a modification of the amendment.
- o) Once an SPI District has been approved by the BCC, there is a 30-day referendum period prior to the amendment becoming effective. Following the referendum period, the SPI zone text is added to the Hamilton County Zoning Resolution and the Official Zoning Map is modified to reflect the new SPI designation.

- **How can an Established SPI District be Modified?**

Supplemental standards (except intensity/density) may be modified or varied, on a case by case basis, by the Rural Zoning Commission after a public hearing as part of the official SPI Modification process. The Zoning Commission's actions are limited by certain criteria related to public benefits and creative site planning. If the boundaries of the district are to be modified or a text amendment is initiated, the applicant must reapply through the process for a new zone amendment.