



CERTIFIED SITES VS. GOLD SHOVEL DESIGNATION

The state of Wisconsin has two site designations: Certified and Gold Shovel Ready. These designations are designed to help site selectors and businesses identify development-ready sites. The state's Certified Sites Program identifies the state's prime sites that are fully ready for development. Audited by a third-party consultant, Deloitte, these sites satisfy a variety of key criteria with high thresholds, so developers can feel confident that projects on these properties will not be held up with costly delays. A Certified Site results in faster permitting, quicker approvals and lower development risks. To become a Certified Site, the site must have shown that no development hazards or potential restrictions are located on the site.

Gold Shovel sites are administered and awarded by a local regional economic development organization, and require specific documentation identifying potential development delays or restrictions. While the criteria are similar to those for a Certified Site, the threshold for a Gold Shovel Ready site is slightly lower, merely aiming to ensure that all potential development hazards have been identified prior to the start of a project—but not ruling out development if hazards exist. This allows projects to be proactive in addressing site limitations, ensuring a smoother process with fewer surprises.

Following is a side-by-side comparison identifying the differences between a Certified Site and a Gold Shovel Ready site.

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Requirements

	Certified Sites	Submittal	Gold Shovel Sites	Submittal
Identification	Proposed property must be clearly identified and delineated	Master Site Plan and aerial photograph	Site Map/survey showing dimensions and acreage of the total site and each individual lot, if subdivided	Site map/survey/Aerial photo
Zoning	Industrial zoning (or equivalent) currently in place	Zoning Certificate	Industrial zoning (or equivalent) currently in place	Site map with zoning/letter from municipality or county verifying zoning
Site Acreage	At least 20 acres of contiguous, generally regular-shaped and free of impediments to development	Master Site Plan	No minimum size	Master Site Plan
Site Position	No part of the site may be located on (or directly adjacent to) a flood plain.	FEMA produced floodplain map	Cannot be located in or adjacent to a 100-year floodplain	FEMA produced floodplain map
Ownership	Entire site must be wholly controlled by a single owner with documented willingness to sell to an industrial user.	Certificate of title	Can be public or private owned.	Documentation showing site ownership
Asking Price	Current asking price for sale or lease of the land must be indicated.	Letter from property owner/option holder stating that site is for sale and asking price	Certificate of ownership and terms of sale, including price.	Documentation showing terms of sale, including price
Utilities	Electric Power, Natural Gas, Water, Wastewater, Telecom service currently to site, or plan in place for necessary extensions.	Map(s) of existing utility infrastructure and proposed extensions (with descriptions) where necessary	Site preference is to be serviced by electrical and natural gas providers or additional options including cost or timeline for build out or available alternatives.	Map showing electrical and natural gas locations
Road Infrastructure	Access roads in place to site, or plans in place to extend access road(s) to site	Map(s) showing road access currently to site, proposed improvements/extensions, and truck access to nearest highway(s)	Site must have adequate access suitable for development.	Site map showing road access to site and any proposed improvements.
Development Readiness	No known obstacles to development (i.e. easements, wetlands, environmental, geotechnical, archaeological, endangered species etc.)	Confirmation that no known impediments to development exist	Cannot have significant environmental, historical, or archeological issues limiting development	Statement indication that no known impediments exist
American Land Trust Association (ALTA) Survey	Required	ALTA Survey	Not Required	Not Required

Surrounding Uses	Current uses compatible with industrial development	Existing/ planned zoning of surrounding land (Future Land Use Plan); Codes, Covenants, and Restrictions on site and surrounding sites	Current uses compatible with industrial development	Identification of surrounding land uses
Avoidance of flight path	Site outside of FAA-designated flight path	FAA Produced flight path map or letter from FAA indicating maximum building height on site (if site is less than 2 miles from airport)	N/A	Not Required
Environmental Assessment	No known environmental impediments to immediate industrial development (Phase I Environmental)	Environmental Phase I Site Assessment (Phase II if required)	Cannot have significant environmental, historical, or archeological issues limiting development	Statement indicating that no known impediments exist
Wetlands	Wetland delineation by Assured Delineator. Demonstrate that a user can utilize at least 20 contiguous acres not affected by wetlands	Assured wetland delineation report and supporting materials	Cannot have significant wetland wetland issues limiting development	Map showing presumed or delineated wetland areas on site or adjacent to site.
Easements	Site not intersected by utility or any other easement	Maps of all utility infrastructure directly proximate to (or intersecting) the site.	Cannot have easements (utility or other) that would prevent development	Site map showing all easements on and adjacent to the site
Topography	No significant topography issues that could present major obstacles to industrial development of the site (contour intervals of 2' or less)	Topographic map with clearly defined contour intervals of 2' or less	Cannot have significant topography issues limiting development (area slopes that are greater than 20%)	Topographic map of site and identify any areas of slopes that are 20% or greater
Geotechnical	Minimum of 5 soil borings; no presence of sink holes or limestone caves; suitable water content/ water table depth	Geotechnical Study results	Not Required	Not required
Archaeological/ Historical	No known archaeological/ historical impediments to immediate industrial development	Archaeological/ Historical study results	Cannot have significant archeologic issues limiting development	Statement indicating that no known impediments exist
Endangered Species	No known impediments to immediate industrial development related to endangered species	Endangered Resources Review (ERR) by DNR or a Certified Reviewer	Not Required	Not required
Fire Rating	Fire Insurance Classification Rating	Fire Insurance Classification Rating	Not Required	Not required
Roadway	Proximity to interstate and other highways providing convenient access for labor and logistics	Transportation maps of surrounding region indicating distances and access routes	Site must be serviced by roads. Highway access - adjacent highways and distance to nearest four-lane highway	Map showing highway and road access/ infrastructure noting any road restrictions

Rail (if Applicable)	Feasibility of service (if site is to be marketed as rail-served)	Map of existing rail, letter of support from the rail provider, and/or proposed costs and timing of rail spur extension/development	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Rail access, if any, or nearest location and distance to rail access	Map showing rail access or nearest location and distance
Commercial Airport	Access to airport(s) with commercial service	Driving distance to proximate commercial airport(s)	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Airport availability - nearest location and distance for passenger service	Map showing nearest location and distance for passenger travel
Freight Airport	Access to airport(s) with freight air service	Description of the handling capacity of each proximate freight airport (e.g. current tonnage / year, runway length), and distance to freight airport	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Airport availability - nearest location and distance for freight service	Map showing nearest location and distance for freight service.
Electric Power	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Proximate electric power infrastructure availability and capacities	Name of service providers; current size and location of transmission lines, distribution lines, and substations; available capacity that could be provided to the site; description of dual feed potential; cost, timing, and funding responsibility of improvements to provide service to the site.	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Site must be serviced by electrical provider. If none, must include correspondence from the utility outlining options including costs and timeline.	Documentation and map of electrical capacity and service to site and distance to nearest electrical substation.
Natural Gas	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Proximate natural gas infrastructure availability and capacities	Name of service providers; current size and location of transmission lines and/or distribution lines; available capacity and pressure that could be provided to the site; cost, timing, and funding responsibility of improvements to provide service to the site.	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Site must be serviced by natural gas provider. If none, must include correspondence from the utility outlining options including costs and timeline.	Documentation and map of gas capacity and service to site and distance to nearest gas substation.
Water	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Proximate water service infrastructure availability and capacities	Name of service providers; current size and location of water service lines and storage facilities/resources relevant for industrial use; available capacity and pressure that could be provided to the site; cost, timing, and funding responsibility of improvements to provide service to the site.	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Site must be serviced by water, or community must be willing to install improvements within a reasonable timeframe OR private utilities will be allowed.	Site map or documentation showing size and location of water services. (i.e. line, size, GPM, PSI) 208 Conformance Letter

Wastewater	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Proximate wastewater service infrastructure availability and capacity	Name of service providers; current size and location of wastewater service lines and treatment facilities/resources relevant for industrial use; available capacity and pressure that could be provided to the site; cost, timing, and funding responsibility of improvements to provide service to the site.	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Site must be serviced by water, or community must be willing to install improvements within a reasonable timeframe OR private utilities will be allowed.	Site map or documentation showing size and location of sewer services and fire flow. (i.e. line, size, GPM, PSI), 208 Conformance Letter
Telecom	Site must have adequate access suitable for development. Telecommunications service providers with existing infrastructure in proximity to the site	Name of service providers; High-level description of existing infrastructure (Central Office, Points of Presence, trunk lines, service lines) in proximity to the site for each service.	Site must be serviced by voice/data provider	Documentation showing provider(s) and service capabilities and speeds.