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## APPLICANT'S GUIDE TO PLANNING COMMISSION

### INTRODUCTION

This "Applicant's Guide" explains what types of projects require Planning Commission review, and the steps involved in the review process.

### WHAT REQUIRES PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW?

All new development projects, and certain changes in existing development must be reviewed by the Community Development Department staff for conformance with the City's Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the Planning Commission usually reviews projects which require one or more of the following types of permits or approvals:

- **Use Permit** - This permit is required for land uses which have specific characteristics (e.g., large numbers of people on-site, noise, traffic) that could affect the surrounding area. (Some projects which meet all planning and zoning standards may be able to be reviewed through an administrative hearing process that does not require Planning Commission action.)
- **Planned Development Permit** - This type of permit is required for all new developments in "Planned Development" zones, as well as specific types of developments (e.g., condominiums) in other zones. (Some projects which meet all planning and zoning standards may be able to be reviewed through an administrative hearing process that does not require Planning Commission action.)
- **Major Variance** - The Planning Commission may approve a Major Variance from certain requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, if it makes specific findings regarding unique circumstances or characteristics of the property involved. (Administrative Variances to certain types of Zoning Ordinance requirements, such as setbacks and parking, may be approved by the Planning Commission or through an administrative hearing process. For more information, please refer to the "Applicant's Guide to Major/Administrative Variances.")
- **Change of Zone** - In considering a Change of Zone request, the Planning Commission determines whether the proposed zoning is consistent with the City's General/Comprehensive Plan, compatible with existing and proposed development in the surrounding area, and consistent with good zoning practices. The Planning Commission forwards a recommendation to the City Council, which takes final action.
- **Tentative Tract Map** - Subdivisions of land creating more than four new lots generally require Planning Commission review of a Tentative Tract Map. The Planning Commission forwards a recommendation to the City Council, which takes final action. (Tentative Parcel Maps creating four or fewer new parcels, and Minor Lot Line Adjustments, which would not increase the number of lots, may be reviewed by the Planning Commission with other permit requests subject to Commission review. For more information, please refer to "Tentative Tract Maps, Tentative Parcel Maps, and Minor Lot Line Adjustments Submittal Requirements.")
- **Coastal Development Permit** - This type of permit is required in the Coastal Zone when other planning permits are requested. The Planning Commission will review the Coastal Development Permit to determine conformance with the policies of the City Coastal Land Use Plan. (Projects in the Coastal Zone that do not need other planning approvals may require an Administrative Coastal Development Permit. For more information, please see the "Administrative Coastal Development Permits Applicant's Guide.")
- **Design Review Approval** - Design Review approval by the Planning Commission is needed for many projects requiring other permits from the Commission. Projects requiring Design Review are first reviewed by the City's Design Review Committee. For projects not requiring other planning permits, the Committee may grant Design Review approval. Single Family and Duplex Residential Projects are among those usually exempt from Design Review.

- **Other Types of Cases** - Other types of cases reviewed by the Planning Commission include General/ Comprehensive Plan Amendments, Flood Plain Development Permits, Annexations, Development Agreements, Zoning Ordinance Amendments, Specific Plans, Parking Determinations, and amendments to previously approved permits such as Use Permits, Planned Development Permits, etc.

## HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

A typical project requiring Planning Commission approval will involve the following steps:

- STEP 1: Preliminary Historic Resource Clearance** - A preliminary review by Planning Staff is required for any building demolition or alteration that could affect potential historic resources. Check with the Planning Division Public Counter for more information.
- STEP 2: Designing Your Project** - Early in the process of designing a project, or planning a new business in an existing building, you should consult with Planning Division staff to find out what Zoning Ordinance regulations may affect you, what types of permits may be needed, and what fees would apply. Copies of the Zoning Ordinance, zoning maps, application forms, fee schedules, submittal requirements, and other information are available at the Planning Division Public Counter.
- STEP 3: Pre-Application Review** - Prior to formally submitting plans and application forms for your project, you may want to file a Pre-Application which will provide project applicants with an informal review and feedback of conceptual plans for a proposed development. The Pre-Application process is optional, but is recommended for large or complex development proposals to avoid unanticipated costs or delays during the formal application process.
- STEP 4: Filing Your Application** - The completed application should be submitted at the Planning Division Public Counter. You will also be required to pay all application fees at this time.\*
- STEP 5: Review of Application** - The project will be assigned to a staff planner, who will contact you if questions arise regarding your application, and who will also inspect the project site. The project application will be reviewed by City staff to determine whether it is complete. If it is not complete, you will receive a letter telling you what additional information is required. If the application is found to be complete, your project will then undergo environmental review.
- STEP 6: Staff Review of Project** - Following a determination that the application is complete, the project will be reviewed in detail by the Planning Division and other City departments and divisions. Following staff review of the project, a written report to the Planning Commission will be prepared, which will include a recommended action, findings, and appropriate conditions. This report will be completed at least five days prior to the Planning Commission hearing, and a copy will be sent to the applicant and any other persons listed on the application form.
- STEP 7: Environmental Review** - Staff will determine whether your project is categorically exempt from environmental review requirements (as established in the California Environmental Quality Act), or require additional environmental review.
- STEP 8: Design Review** - Many projects requiring Planning Commission approval also require Design Review by the Design Review Committee. Applicants need to apply for preliminary Design Review of site plans, elevation plans and landscape plans as part of their original submittal. Final Design Review approval would be part of the Planning Commission's actions.
- STEP 9: Planning Commission Review** - The Planning Commission holds public hearings on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., in the City Hall Council Chambers. All property owners located within a 300-foot radius of the proposed project will be sent a mailed notice of the public hearing ten (10) days prior to the meeting. For cases that involve a Coastal Development Permit, in addition to the mailed notices to property owners, all residents within a 100-foot radius of the proposed project will be sent a mailed notice.



The applicant and/or his representative should attend this hearing and will be given an opportunity to speak about the project, as will all other interested persons. The Planning Commission is often reluctant to take action on a project when the applicant or their representative is not in attendance at the hearing. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Planning Commission may either: (1) approve the request, with or without conditions; (2) deny the request; or (3) continue the hearing to another date.

- STEP 10:** Appeals to City Council - An applicant or any other aggrieved party may file an appeal of most Planning Commission decisions within ten (10) calendar days of the date of action. Appeal forms and appropriate fees should be filed with the City Clerk.
- STEP 11:** City Council Review - The City Council must take final action on projects such as those involving a Change of Zone or Tentative Subdivision Map. City Council hearings are normally scheduled to be heard approximately three to four weeks after Planning Commission action.
- STEP 12:** Plan Check and Building Permits - Following ALL Planning approvals, the applicant may submit a building permit application, working drawings, and support documents (such as soils reports, structural and/or energy calculations, etc.) to the Inspection Services Division for plan check. The working drawings will be checked by the Planning Division for conformance with all zoning requirements and conditions of approval, and will also be reviewed by other City departments and divisions for conformance with applicable codes. At the completion of this review process, building permits will be issued for the project. For further information regarding this process, the Inspection Services Division should be contacted at (805) 654-7869.

***INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS OR POOR QUALITY GRAPHICS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.***

- HOURS:** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed alternate Fridays.  
Check City website at [www.cityofventura.net](http://www.cityofventura.net)
- LOCATION:** Ventura City Hall, 501 Poli Street, Room 117
- PHONE:** (805) 654-7725
- MAILING ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 99, Ventura, CA 93002-0099

This document is available in alternate formats by calling the City of Ventura Community Development Department at 805/654-7894 or by contacting the California Relay Service.