

Preliminary Project Review

This Information Bulletin describes the types of preliminary project reviews that are offered to customers prior to formal submittal of an application. Please contact Development Services at (760) 602-2723 to schedule an appointment.

PURPOSE OF A PRELIMINARY REVIEW

The purpose of a preliminary review is to provide an opportunity for city staff to review a project in a preliminary form to identify substantial requirements and provide a cursory identification of potential project issues before a formal application is submitted. This will help reduce permit review times and streamline project processing once the application is officially filed. Outcomes of a preliminary review may include the following.

- Advise a prospective applicant of the current city standards, requirements and permit processes.
- Assess whether a development proposal is consistent with city standards and requirements before significant investment is made.
- Identify special studies and analysis that will likely be required and possibly identify potential project mitigation requirements.
- Provide recommendations on project design to help minimize impacts to the environment and community character.
- Meeting, if requested, for staff to walk through the comments and suggestions.

TYPES OF REVIEWS

The Community Development (CD) Department offers two types of preliminary project reviews.

- Initial Consultation

An Initial Consultation is typically conducted over the counter where Development Services Counter staff provide applicants with general process information or guidance on a single-topic issue. They are not intended to take significant city resources to complete and a formal letter is not offered. Also, this service is free to the customer.

Documents Referenced

Preliminary Request Form; [P-14](#)
SB 330 Permit Streamlining; [IB-132](#)
SB 330 Permit Application; [P-32](#)

- Preliminary Review

A Preliminary Review consists of a written assessment of a conceptual project prior to formal application

PROJECTS NEEDING PRELIMINARY REVIEW

A Preliminary Review is strongly recommended, but not required, for complex or controversial projects that require more evaluation than can be accomplished through an Initial Consultation Meeting. Examples include:

- General Plan Amendments/Rezoning
- Specific Plans
- Major Subdivisions (>25 units)
- Major Commercial/Industrial Projects
- Conditional Use Permits
- Residential projects that include affordable units
- Projects in the Commercial/Visitor Overlay Zone

Please refer to Info Bulletin [IB-132](#) for the mandatory preliminary streamline application process required for projects being processed under SB 330 (Housing Crisis Act).

APPLICATION AND COSTS

Applicants are required to complete and submit form [P-14](#) along with project information and appropriate fee to the city at 1635 Faraday Avenue. A submittal appointment is required and may be scheduled by contacting (760) 602-2723. In addition to the referenced request form applications must include the following:

- Four (4) sets of the site plan folded to 8½ x 11. Enough detail must be included to allow adequate review.
- Projects in Commercial/Visitor-Serving Overlay Zone shall provide conceptual building elevations.
- Other information to help explain the project.

- Appropriate Fee. Refer to the city’s current fee schedule: “Preliminary Review – Minor fee.”

AREA(S) OF FOCUS

To help focus staff comments, it is helpful to know what the applicant would like to accomplish from the Preliminary Review. With this information, staff can focus attention on researching and answering the applicant’s main questions(s). Below are the focus categories which are also listed on the request form.

- Site Design
Focus is on reviewing issues such as development standards (setbacks, building height, etc.), hillside compliance, landscaping, signage, open space requirements, and other physical aspects of zoning. Plans adequately illustrating these features are needed for review.
- Land Use
Focus is on determining the compatibility of the proposed land use with the existing general plan and zoning, determining whether staff could support a general plan amendment or zone change, and determining compatibility of the proposed land use with surrounding land uses.
- Architecture
Focus is on establishing quality architecture and checking compatibility with the surrounding area and against any applicable guidelines or plans. Building elevations or other architectural information are needed for review.
- Zoning Interpretations
Focus is on interpreting any aspects of the zoning ordinance.
- Engineering Standards
Focus is on reviewing all engineering-related issues, such as grading, drainage, Best Management Practices for Storm Water Pollution Control, circulation and traffic, street vacations, easements, subdivisions, etc.

PREPARATION

It is important that applicants provide as much detail about the proposed project to maximize the value of a Preliminary Review --- The more information provided to city staff, the more comprehensive the feedback

Once the application and material have been submitted, a Project Planner will be assigned and will

contact the applicant within five business days to inform them that the request has been received and is undergoing review. If the applicant checked the box to present the project to staff, the Project Planner will schedule a meeting at this time. This meeting is for the applicant to clarify aspects of the project to aid staff as they review as they consider materials to provide comments at the end of the review.

Depending upon the area of focus selected, the Preliminary Review process will generally include an interdisciplinary team of city staff (i.e., Planning, Fire, Engineering, and Building) who will review and provide comments to the Project Planner. The Project Planner will assemble the comments into one comprehensive comment letter, which will be sent to the applicant at the end of the review. Every effort will be made to have the preliminary review comment letter available within 45 days following application submittal.

The review letter will afford the applicant an opportunity to request the Project Planner to set up a meeting with select reviewers or the review team to discuss any review comments that require further clarification. The Project Planner will work with the applicant on setting a date that works with their respective schedules.

A copy of the comment letter will be kept on file in the Planning Division for two years. Should a formal application be filed, every effort will be made to assign the application to the same staff planner who processed your Preliminary Review application, but it will depend on workload at the time.

It should be noted that changes in state and local regulations occurring after the Preliminary Review may impact a project. Also, while the Preliminary Review process is intended to provide applicants with an overview of the major issues/possible solutions to address regulatory requirements, the process is not intended to represent an in- depth analysis of the project.

