

Preliminary Review

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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This service helps you obtain the answers needed to determine project feasibility and learn the steps to submit the project for review successfully.

Preliminary Review is not a comprehensive plan review. It is not intended to replace services provided by design professionals (architects, engineers, land use attorneys, code consultants, etc.). It is designed to answer specific project questions only.

Before considering the preliminary review service, you should begin your project planning by obtaining information regarding zoning and overlays for your property. Zoning information is available via the [Zoning and Parcel Information Portal \(ZAPP\)](#). ZAPP will help you determine the City of San Diego's planning, zoning and building regulations that apply to your project. Additional information is referenced in the [Land Development Manual, Project Submittal Requirements, Section 1 \(Guide to Project Submittal Process\)](#). By evaluating this information *BEFORE* designing your project, you can avoid mistakes, save time, and reduce processing costs.

Information regarding the Land Development Code and zones can be found at [sandiego.gov/dsd](#) or [sangis.org](#). If you have additional questions regarding the Preliminary Review process, you can schedule a virtual appointment with a Planner at [sandiego.gov/development-services/virtual-appointments](#).

What is Preliminary Review?

Preliminary Review is a voluntary service offered before formal submittal to the City for required permits and reviews. This service provides general information on the regulations applicable to your project. You can find out which permits are required, learn more about the review process that applies to your development, and obtain interpretations on how the City will apply code provisions. Staff responses to your specific questions will be documented. The service is tailored to your project information needs and your knowledge of the City's development requirements and processes. **You must ask questions that are as specific as possible**, considering that preliminary reviews are not a full plan check. For multiple discipline reviews (see below), please indicate which review discipline you want to answer each question.

Preliminary Review is a limited service with a fixed number of hours to answer your questions. The information provided during Preliminary Review expires one year from the deemed complete date, except if:

- The code on which this information is based is changed.
- City Council enacts emergency legislation; or
- There is a change in the project scope.

The goal is to give you the information you need to make informed decisions about how to proceed with your project. You will need to formally submit plans to Development Services for a complete plan review and approval before permit issuance.

Preliminary Review Options

There are two Preliminary Review options:

• Single Discipline Preliminary Review

When your questions are best answered by only one discipline, your project could be a candidate for a single-discipline preliminary review. For example, steep hillside issues would be addressed by Planning Review; means of egress by Structural; grading permits by Engineering Review, etc. The Preliminary Review questionnaire and all documents will be taken in and routed to the appropriate discipline based on your specific policy questions and interpretations listed in question 5 of [DS-375](#). When listing your specific questions in question 5 of [DS-375](#), keep in mind that Preliminary Review is a limited service, is not a plan check, and staff has a fixed number of hours to answer your questions.

Your project will then be assigned to a reviewer who will prepare a written response to your questions approximately 20 business days after the date of submittal and payment of the invoice. Single discipline Preliminary Review for historical determinations will take approximately 20 business days after the date of submittal and payment of the invoice. Additional charges and extended review times will be applied for more complex projects. The discipline supervisor will contact the applicant to inform them of additional fees and extended turnaround times for these complex projects.

• Multiple Discipline Preliminary Review

When your questions and the information requested involve more than one review discipline, you have the option of selecting more than one discipline and providing a maximum of 10 questions. The project is considered a multiple-discipline preliminary review, where coordination of the review between disciplines is requested. A Development Project Manager (DPM) is assigned to all applications submitted for multiple discipline preliminary review, and you will be required to pay a preliminary review fee for each single discipline review.

Based upon the information provided and specific questions asked on the attached Preliminary Review Questionnaire, the Development Project Manager coordinates the staff team from the most appropriate staff to fulfill the needs of your Preliminary Review. The Development Project Manager will coordinate the reviewer's written responses to your specific issues and forward them to the applicant approximately 20 business days after the date of submittal and payment of the invoice. The response will include submittal requirements, schedules, and processing costs, as appropriate for your project.

• Senate Bill (SB) 330 Preliminary Review

Effective as of Jan. 1, 2020, and expiring on Jan. 1, 2025, [California Senate Bill \(SB\) 330](#), otherwise referred to as "The Housing Crisis Act of 2019," allows for eligible housing development projects (as defined below) seeking approval enhanced streamlining and vesting opportunities, such that the project is only subject to the ordinances, development regulations, policies, standards, and fees at the time the Preliminary Review application is deemed submitted. Fee increases resulting from an automatic annual adjustment based on an independently published cost index that is referenced in the ordinance establishing the fee will be applied at final inspection.

A housing development project, as defined per SB-330, includes any of the following:

- Residential units only (two or more units);
- Mixed-use developments consisting of residential and nonresidential uses with at least two-thirds of the square footage designated for residential use; or
- Transitional or supportive housing

In order to utilize the development regulations, policies, standards, and fees at the time the application is deemed submitted, the application must be "deemed complete" – meaning, the application must provide all criteria specified per [California Government Code Section 65941.1](#) (see [Section G. of Form-375](#)) and the Preliminary Review application fee is paid.

There are limited instances when a housing development project is subject to ordinances in effect after the preliminary application is submitted, as outlined per California Government Code Section 65589.5(o)(2)(6)(7).

To utilize the regulations that were vested as part of this Preliminary Review application, the applicant has six months (180 days) to respond to City comments and submit a complete application for a development or construction permit

Preliminary Review Meeting

The Preliminary Review fee **does not** include meetings with staff. You may request a meeting with reviewers to discuss the results of the preliminary review. An additional fee is required for this meeting, based upon an hourly rate for each staff person requested to attend the meeting. You may request this meeting after receiving the draft preliminary review written response. The assigned Development Project Manager will schedule the meeting for multiple discipline preliminary reviews. Single-discipline preliminary review meetings are scheduled with the individual reviewer directly and may be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

What Do I Need to Submit for Preliminary Review?

All forms, documents and applications are now submitted electronically. Visit the [Online Permitting Portal](#) to create an account and begin the submittal process. A detailed [user guide](#) is also available. For a Preliminary Review Submittal, please provide the following:

• Completed Preliminary Review Questionnaire (Form DS-375)

Please list each question separately and make them as specific as possible, keeping in mind that preliminary reviews are not a full plan check. For multiple discipline reviews, please indicate which review discipline you want to answer each question.

• Documents

Submit documents that you believe will help staff to understand your proposed development and the current condition of your property. The completeness and depth of our response to your specific questions will depend largely on the amount and detail of the information that you provide to us. You should carefully consider the information you are seeking and adjust the documents and level of detail provided accordingly (e.g., for existing questions, provide a fully dimensioned and detailed existing analysis).

Fees

Most Development Services fees change at least once annually; please make sure you have the most recent copy of this Information Bulletin. The following fees are required at the time of Project Submittal:

• Multiple Discipline Preliminary Review (Flat Fee / Mapping Fee / Records Fee)

This fee includes up to four hours of staff time per discipline for the initial review of your project only. Any meetings with staff or additional staff review time exceeding four hours per discipline will be billed an additional hourly fee.

Multiple Discipline Review Flat Fee * Note: Hourly fee charges will be charged to projects that require review from the Planning Department. Hourly Planning AP: 138.11 Hourly Planning SP: 173.01	\$6,770.25
Mapping Fee This fee is charged when there are plans, drawings, maps or other geographical documents utilized for project review.	\$10.00
Records Fee This fee is assessed for imaging and archiving the documents in records.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single Family/Duplex Multi-Family and Non-Residential 	\$51.82 \$69.09

• Single Discipline Preliminary Review (Flat Fee / Mapping Fee / Records Fee)

This fee includes up to four hours of staff time for the initial review of your project. Individual reviews exceeding four hours will be billed an additional hourly fee.

Single Discipline Review Flat Fee	\$1,319.08
Mapping Fee This fee is charged when there are plans, drawings, maps or other geographical documents utilized for project review.	\$10.00
Records Fee This fee is assessed for imaging and archiving the documents in records.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single Family/Duplex Multi-Family and Non-Residential 	\$51.82 \$69.09