Preliminary Review

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

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) at sandiego.gov/development-services/zoning. This tool will help you determine the City of San Diego's planning, zoning, and/or 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/development-services 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.

I. What is Preliminary Review?

Preliminary Review is a voluntary service offered prior to 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. It is essential that you ask questions that are as specific as possible, keeping in mind 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 is valid for one year from the date of the correspondence, except if 1) the code on which this information is based is changed; 2) emergency legislation is enacted by City Council; or 3) there is a change in the project scope. Our 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.

II. Preliminary Review Options

There are two Preliminary Review options:

A. Single Discipline Preliminary Review

When your questions are best answered by only one discipline, your project could be a candidate for 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 discipline(s) based upon your specific policy questions and interpretations listed in item B.15. When listing your
specific questions in item B.15, 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.

If your questions involve more than one discipline, you have the option of submitting separate questionnaires for each discipline. Keep in mind that single discipline preliminary review does not include coordination of review between disciplines. You will be required to pay a single discipline preliminary review fee for each single discipline preliminary review.

Your project will then be assigned to a reviewer who will prepare a written response to your questions approximately five (5) working days after the submittal date. Single discipline Preliminary Review for historical determinations will take approximately 10 working days after the submittal date. 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.

B. Multiple Discipline Preliminary Review

When your questions and the information requested involve more than one review discipline, 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.

After the initial review, at the applicant’s request and in coordination with the assigned Development Project Manager, a deposit account can be opened and maintained to facilitate additional staff time to respond to any follow-up questions and/or meetings.

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 15 working days after the submittal date. The response will include submittal requirements, schedules, and processing costs, as appropriate for your project.

C. 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.

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.

III. Preliminary Review Meeting

The Preliminary Review fee does not include meetings with staff. You may request a meeting with reviewer(s) 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 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.

IV. What Do I Need to Submit for Preliminary Review?

All forms, documents and applications are now submitted electronically. Visit the Development Services Department website at sandiego.gov/DSD 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:

A. Completed Preliminary Review Questionnaire (Form DS-375)
   Please ask questions that are 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. You may attach multiple sheets if necessary.

B. Documents
   Submit documents that you believe will help staff to understand your proposed development and the current condition of your property (see Item F of the Questionnaire for suggestions). 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 exiting questions, provide a fully dimensioned and detailed exiting analysis).

V. 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:

A. Multiple Discipline Preliminary Review (Flat Fee / Mapping Fee / Records Fee)
   This fee is to pay for the initial review of your project only. Any meetings with staff, individual reviews exceeding four hours, and subsequent review(s) will be invoiced an additional hourly fee rate. If more in-depth analysis is desired, you may choose to open a deposit account in lieu of the flat fee in #1 below.

Upon request, this information is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.
DS-5513 (09-22)
1. **Multiple Discipline Review Flat Fee** ................................................................. $6,770.25

2. **Mapping Fee** ........................................................................................................ $10.00
   This fee is charged when there are plans, drawings, maps or other geographical documents utilized for project review.

3. **Records Fee**
   This fee is assessed for imaging and archiving the documents in records.
   a. Single Family/Duplex ............................................................................................... $51.82
   b. Multi-Family and Non-Residential ......................................................................... $69.09

B. **Single Discipline Preliminary Review (Flat Fee / Mapping Fee / Records Fee)**
This fee is to pay for the initial review of your project. Meetings with staff, individual reviews exceeding four hours, and subsequent review(s) will be invoiced an additional hourly fee.

1. **Single Discipline Review Flat Fee** ........................................................................ $1,319.08

2. **Mapping Fee** ........................................................................................................ $10.00
   This fee is charged when there are plans, drawings, maps or other geographical documents utilized for project review.

3. **Records Fee**
   This fee is assessed for imaging and archiving the documents in records.
   a. Single Family/Duplex ............................................................................................... $51.82
   b. Multi-Family and Non-Residential ......................................................................... $69.09
   c. 

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<td>San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC §143.0910)</td>
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<td>Land Development Manual Project Submittal Requirements</td>
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<td>Parcel Information (DS-302)</td>
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