



Development  
Services

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## LAND DEVELOPMENT MANUAL

Volume I, Chapter 1

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# Project Submittal Requirements

## Section 1

### Guide to Project Submittal Process

**[DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT](#)**

Visit our web site at [www.sandiego.gov/development-services](http://www.sandiego.gov/development-services)

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# Guide to the Project Submittal Process

## Important Steps to Project Approval

Following the basic steps listed below will assist you in completing your project submittal package and help lead you to a successful project approval. To determine the City of San Diego’s planning, zoning, subdivision, and/or building regulations that apply to your project, you must obtain the Parcel Information ([DS-302](#)). By evaluating this information **PRIOR** to designing your project, you can avoid mistakes early in the process, save time, and reduce processing costs.

This information can be obtained by emailing the request to [DSD-Parcel@sanidiego.gov](mailto:DSD-Parcel@sanidiego.gov) or through Zoning and Parcel Information Portal ([ZAPP](#)).

NOTE: Project Submittal Requirements (Section 2-6) requires all parcel information to be on the plans.

### Important Note:

**Other permits, approvals, and fees may be required from outside agencies that are not handled by the City of San Diego Development Services Department, e.g. school districts, public utilities, County Health. Contact the appropriate agency for information on their procedures.**

## 1. Determine the zoning designation of your property

Zoning is the legislative method by which land use, intensity of development, site design, and architectural design are controlled. Some zones apply to all or many parts of the City while other zones, such as those within Planned Districts, apply only to very specific sections of the City.

Overlay Zones are another type of zoning that may add special regulations to the underlying zone. To research zoning and property information visit the [Zoning and Parcel Information Portal \(ZAPP\)](#). This online service helps

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<a href="#">Section 1</a>	Guide to the Project Submittal Process
<a href="#">Section 2</a>	Construction Permits – Structures
<a href="#">Section 2A</a>	Single Dwelling Unit/Duplex/Townhomes and Accessory Structures
<a href="#">Section 3</a>	Construction Permits - Grading and Public Right-of-Way
<a href="#">Section 4</a>	Development Permits/Approvals
<a href="#">Section 5</a>	Subdivision Approvals
<a href="#">Section 6</a>	Policy Approvals

users conveniently access real-time information from their computer or mobile device 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Official Zoning Maps were adopted by Council on February 28, 2006 and currently only represent base zone information. In the future, it is intended the maps will also provide overlay zone and Planned District information. Until then it is recommended you request confirmation of your zoning using one of the methods listed below.

Base zones govern the uses permitted and the development regulations of the site. Once you have determined the base zone, refer to Land Development Code Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 1-6 for your property development regulations. If your property is in a Planned District, refer to Chapter 15. A Planned District is a legally described geographic area which has been designated by the City Council and adopts different development controls than city-wide base zones.

## 2. Determine what uses are allowed on your property

After you have determined your zoning, refer to Municipal Code Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 1-6 to find the uses permitted in each zone. Divisions 2-6 contain use regulations tables that list the permitted uses for each zone, uses

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that are allowed with specified limitations, and uses that require a use permit. If your property is located within an overlay zone, you will also need to refer to Chapter 13, Article 2 to find any supplemental regulations. If your property is in a Planned District, refer to Chapter 15 for permitted uses.

### 3. Identify regulations governing the size and scale of development

To find the basic development regulations that apply to your site, refer to the development regulations tables in Municipal Code Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 2-6. These regulations govern the size and scale of development and include requirements for lot size, setbacks, structure height, and permitted density. Each division contains a development regulations table that lists the basic development regulations for each base zone. The tables also refer to other sections in the Municipal Code that contain additional regulations that are applicable in the base zone. If your property is in a Planned District, refer to Chapter 15 for property development regulations.

### 4. Identify other development regulations that apply to your property

Once you have found the use and development regulations for your base zone and any overlay zones, if applicable, look in Municipal Code Chapter 14 for additional city-wide, general development regulations that apply in all zones. All development is subject to the general development regulations in Chapter 14, Article 2, whether or not a permit or other approval is required. This article includes regulations for grading, drainage, fences, landscaping, parking, equipment screening, loading areas, outdoor storage, and signs. If the regulations require that you obtain a permit for certain types of development, an applicability table will refer you to the appropriate sections within each division for the type of construction or development permit needed.

### 5. Determine if your property contains environmentally sensitive lands

Environmentally Sensitive Lands include sensitive biological resources, steep hillsides, sensitive coastal bluffs, coastal beaches, and special flood hazard areas. If you are developing property that contains Environmentally Sensitive Lands, refer to Municipal Code Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 1 for the supplemental regulations.

If any portion of your property contains environmentally sensitive lands, you will be required to provide more information to assist City staff in determining the type of permit you will need.

If your property contains environmentally sensitive lands and you do not qualify for exemption pursuant to Municipal Code Section 143.0110(c), you will need to obtain either a Neighborhood Development Permit or a Site Development Permit. To determine which type of permit you need refer to Table 143-01A Applicability of Environmentally Sensitive Lands Regulations in Municipal Code Section 143.0110.

If you can qualify for an exemption pursuant to Municipal Code Section 143.0110(c), you will not be required to obtain either a Neighborhood or Site Development Permit. If the exemption you qualify for is 143.0110(c)(1), you will be required to provide a statement on the site or grading plan signed by the property owner acknowledging that “the development activity will not encroach into the environmentally sensitive lands during or after construction and that further development on the property is not permitted unless the development is reviewed and approved pursuant to Chapter 14, Article 1, Division 1 of the Municipal Code.”

### 6. Determine if your property contains historical resources

**a. Potential Historical Resource:** If the project site contains a structure that is 45 or more years old AND is not a designated Historic Site, Structure or in a Historic District, see Information Bulletin 580 (Potential Historical Resource Review) for additional submittal and review requirements.

**b. Designated Historical Site or District:** If the project site or structure is designated Historical OR located within a Historical District, see Information Bulletin 581 (Designated Historical Resource Review) for review requirements.

### 7. Geologic Hazards

Geologic conditions exist within the City of San Diego that can pose serious problems when land is developed. Unstable slopes, slide-prone geologic formations, faults, and liquefaction-prone soils occur in many parts of the City. Geologic conditions within the City have been categorized and the relative risk of hazards have been mapped as part City of San Diego [Seismic Safety Geologic Hazards and Faults Maps](#). These generalized maps may be used in conjunction with Information Bulletin 515 and [San Diego Municipal Code §145.1803](#) to determine when site-specific geotechnical investigation reports are required for submittal with proposed development and construction plans. Information on geotechnical reports is provided in the City's [Guidelines for Geotechnical Report](#).

## 8. Identify code requirements

The California Codes are adopted and modified by the City of San Diego to safeguard life, health, property and public welfare. The provisions of these codes apply to the construction, alteration, moving, removal, demolition, repair, conversion, maintenance and use of all buildings or structures in the City of San Diego. The codes adopted by the City of San Diego are:

- California Building Code
- California Mechanical Code
- California Plumbing Code
- California Fire Code
- California Electrical Code
- California Energy Code
- California Historic Code
- California Residential Code
- California Green Building Standards Code

The City modifies the State codes through the San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 14.

## 9. Determine the type of permit or approval review

The Municipal Code establishes four categories of permit/approval types: Construction Permits, Development Permits/Approval, Subdivision Approvals, and Policy Approvals. Before proceeding with a Construction permit application, it is important that you verify if a Development Permit, Subdivision Approval, or Policy Approval is required for your proposed development. These approvals must be obtained before a construction permit may be issued.

Refer to the Permit/Approval Table for a complete listing of all the permit/approval types identified in the Municipal Code.

- **Construction Permits:**  
Construction permit review is a review of construction plans which include building, grading, and public right-of-way permits. The decision maker's review is administrative or ministerial – the permit is approved if the regulations are met or denied if the regulations are not met. There is no public hearing or public noticing of these projects.
- **Development Permits/Approvals:**  
Development permit review is a review of architectural and site design plans. The decision maker must exercise some discretion in determining whether the proposed development meets the applicable regulations, standards, and guidelines. A public hearing is required for projects subject to development review where the appropriate decision maker decides on the

project. If a Development Permit/Approval is required, it must be approved before a Construction Permit can be issued.

- **Subdivision Approvals:**

Subdivision approvals regulate the division of lands and the associated design of improvements, and the acquisition and vacation of public rights-of-way and public easements with the City. Some subdivision approvals are administrative and do not require a public hearing. Some are discretionary and require a public hearing.

- **Policy Approvals:**

Policy approvals involve requests to amend existing City policies such as changing the zoning designation of a site or amending a community plan. These types of approvals require a public hearing.

## 10. Determine the decision process

Applications for permits, maps, and other approvals are reviewed through one of the five decision processes depicted in the Decision Processes and Notices diagram. The zoning, conditions of the site and proposed project determines the process that is followed for each application. For more information on these processes, refer to Municipal Code Chapter 11, Article 2. If more than one type of decision process is required for your project, then the decisions are consolidated (except for Process One decisions) and taken to the highest decision level (per Municipal Code Section 112.0103).

Typically, projects that fall under Process One, Two, or Three take less time and cost less money than projects that fall under Process Four or Process Five. Applicants should be familiar with thresholds in the development regulations that determine the decision processes. If you can design your project to fall under one of the lower decision processes, it could save substantial time and money in the review and approval process.

## 11. Determine the review process

Most projects are required to be submitted which results in a ten to twenty-day plan review. There are some minor projects, however, that can be reviewed through Rapid Review process.

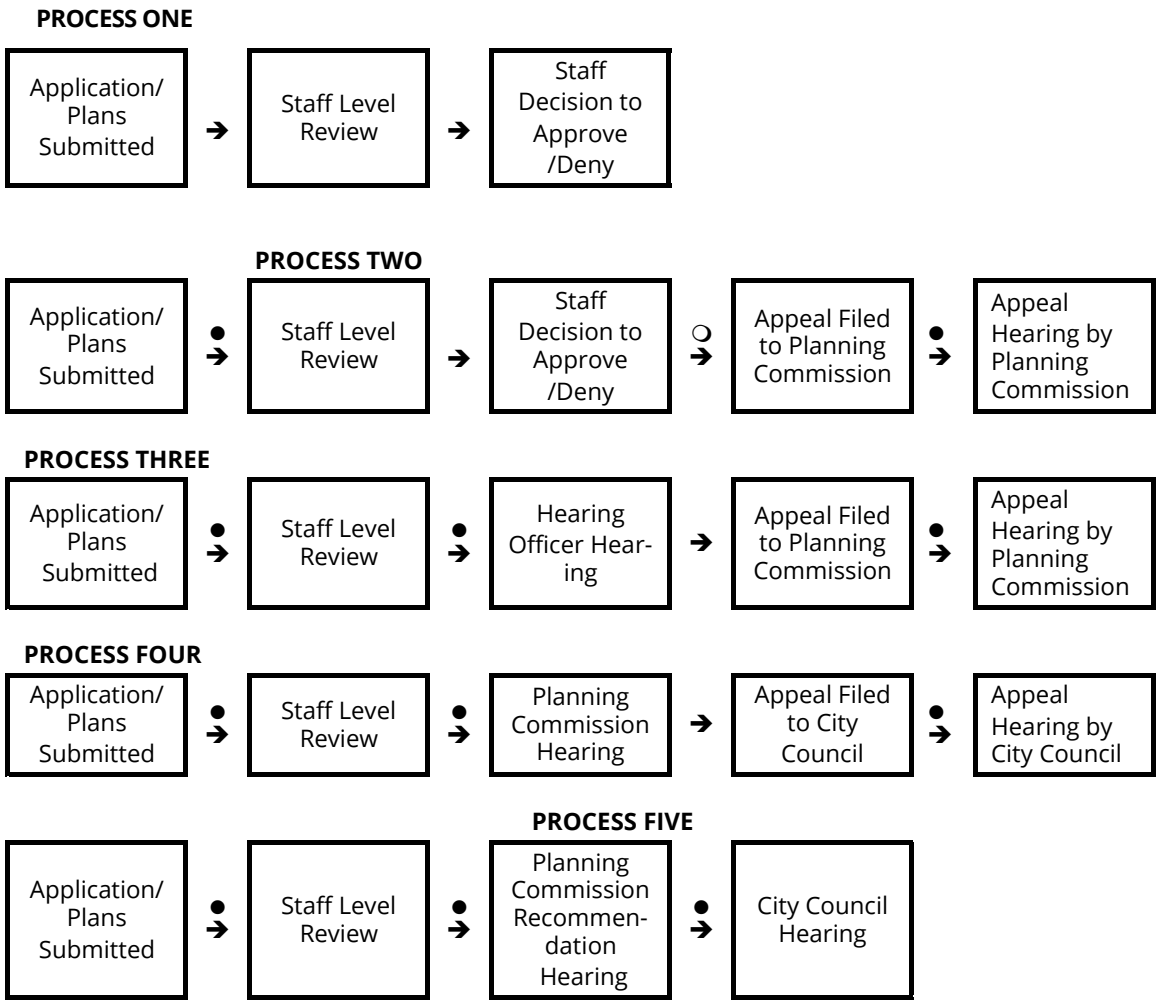
Eligibility for Rapid Review is determined at Submittal based on the proposed scope of project. If eligible, staff will automatically process the project through Rapid Review.

## PROJECT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Rapid Review eligible minor projects include:

1. Accessory structures for single-dwelling units (carports, patio covers, fences and retaining walls) using City of San Diego standard designs contained in Information Bulletins:
  - a. Retaining walls (one wall type, maximum 6 feet in height)
  - b. Awnings (up to two types)
  - c. Deck/stair repairs
  - d. Equipment platforms
  - e. Roof-mounted equipment
2. Production phase master plan pool or spas accessory to a non-residential or multiple dwelling unit use, up to 6 feet in depth.
3. Right-of-way permits as identified on Information Bulletin 165, "How to Obtain a Public Right-of-Way Permit for Standard Public Improvements."
4. Sign Permits.
5. Single-story and single-dwelling unit additions. See Information Bulletin 140, "How to Obtain a Permit to Build a Residential Addition."
6. Tenant improvement projects for Group B, M, F or S occupancies (as defined by the California Building Code) not exceeding 10,000 square feet in area or not more than two floors and not associated with any structural work.
7. Fire alarm affidavits (Form DS-163), sprinkler monitoring systems, office Tenant Improvement fire alarm systems not exceeding 10,000 square feet in area and fire alarm control unit upgrades/replacements.
8. Fire sprinkler affidavits (Form DS-161), kitchen hood suppression systems, fire underground serving a single building and office Tenant Improvement sprinkler systems not exceeding 50 sprinkler heads.

**Decision Processes and Notices**



**Key:**

- Public Notice to all Property Owners, Tenants, Community Planning Groups within 300 Feet of the development, and Anyone Requesting Notice
- Public Notice to Applicant, Community Planning Groups within 300 feet, and Anyone Requesting Notice

## **12. Determine the project submittal requirements**

Using the information you have gathered to this point, refer to the applicable sections of this publication to determine the forms, documents, and plans that must be submitted for project review and approval.

It is necessary to evaluate all projects being submitted to ensure that the required information is provided to review the project. This is known as the completeness review or prescreening of the project. Once it is determined that your submittal is complete and applicable plan check fees and/or deposits paid your application is submitted for review.

Some projects (as identified in Sections 2-6 of the Project Submittal Requirements Manual) will need to go through a Submitted Completeness Review. The Submitted Completeness Review allows staff more time to review the plans/documents for the required detail and set up the project for review. After the Submitted Completeness Review, staff will notify the applicant whether the application is ready to be submitted for review or whether additional information or clarification is required.

Development approvals (also referred to as discretionary) always require a public noticing package. For complete information on a public noticing package see Information Bulletin 512, "How to Obtain Public Noticing Information."

## **13. What happens next?**

### **Plan Review**

Once you have successfully submitted your application, plans, documents, etc., and have paid the required fees or deposits, City staff can begin their review. The review time could range anywhere from two to four weeks or longer, depending on the complexity of your project.

**Ministerial Reviews** - As each reviewing discipline has completed their review, they will send their issues (if not approved), and a Submittal Requirements Report (if required to resubmit) to the applicant by electronic mail.

**Discretionary Reviews** - All discretionary reviews are assigned a Development Project Manager (DPM) to actively manage your project. The DPM will evaluate the comments received from the various reviews and forward the applicant's project point of contact a project status letter detailing any outstanding issues.

### **Environmental Review**

As part of the review process for your project, it will be

determined if your project is subject to environmental review. All development activities that are subject to Process Two, Three, Four, or Five Decisions require compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); i.e., discretionary review triggers CEQA. The purpose of CEQA is to provide accurate, objective, timely, and orderly evaluation and disclosure of potential environmental impacts of proposed projects to the decision makers (Hearing Officer, Planning Commission, or City Council). The application for a development permit also serves as the application for environmental review. First, the environmental staff will identify if a CEQA exemption can be granted. If not, an environmental initial study will be conducted to identify any potential environmental issues that may be associated with the project and to determine what type of environmental document will need to be prepared. For more information, please refer to Municipal Code Chapter 12, Article 8, Divisions 1-3.

### **Infrastructure Requirements Identified**

As part of the review process and based on the scope and details of your project, City staff will determine the infrastructure improvements (i.e., sidewalk, street or alley improvements, bus stops, pedestrian ramps, public right of way dedications etc.) that may be required for your project. Fronting public improvements may be required to be brought up to current City standards or to mitigate impacts of the new development in accordance with Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 6 of the Municipal Code.

### **Permit Issuance**

Construction permits can be issued once the project has been signed off by all required review disciplines. You will receive an Inspection Record card at the time of permit issuance. The Field Inspector signs this card as the construction is inspected and approved.

Development permits and other approvals requiring a public hearing cannot be issued until the hearing body approves the project, all rights of appeal have been exhausted, and the permit is re-recorded in the Office of the County Recorder and issued as set forth in Section 126.0106 and 126.0107 of the Municipal Code. At this point, you can proceed with the construction permit stage.

A wide variety of helpful information on development regulations can also be obtained online at <http://www.sandiego.gov/development-services>. Development regulations, fee schedules, submittal requirements, and forms are all conveniently located online.



## **OPTIONAL PROJECT REVIEW SERVICES**

The optional review services below are offered to save you time in the plan preparation process. These services offer an opportunity for you to submit limited information and get preliminary feedback from staff regarding a potential project or modification to an already approved project. This can be done prior to formal submittal for a required approval, allowing you to determine how you would like to proceed in processing your project with the City.

### **Preliminary Review**

Preliminary review helps you obtain the answers that you need to determine the feasibility of your development project and to be successful in submitting the project for City review.

Preliminary Review is an optional, fee-based service. This service is offered prior to your formal submittal to the City for required permits and review. For complete information on the preliminary review service and for the Preliminary Review Questionnaire, see Information Bulletin 513, "Preliminary Review."

### **Substantial Conformance Review**

Substantial Conformance Review (SCR) is a service available to customers who are proposing to modify their projects after a discretionary permit has been approved by the City. If the only prior discretionary action, however, was a tentative map or vesting tentative map, and a final map for the project has been approved, then this service is not available.

The goal of SCR is to determine if the change proposed for a project is consistent and in conformance with the previously approved permit. This service is offered to allow customers to provide only the information needed to make a conformance determination, without having to go to the expense of preparing complete construction documents. The process does not include a review for conformance with other City regulations, which is performed when an application for a construction permit approval such as a building, grading, or public improvement permit is made.

Instead of SCR, customers may choose to include their project changes as part of a complete construction permit application (building permit, grading permit, public improvement permit, etc.). Staff will review the project change for conformance with the prior permit as part of the process of checking the plans against applicable regulations. If the project changes are not deemed to be in

conformance with the previously approved discretionary permit, minor to significant project redesign or an amendment to the previously approved permit may be required. The applicant makes the choice to risk a full construction permit submittal, or to opt for the more tailored SCR service.

This service is offered prior to your formal submittal to the City for required construction permits. For complete information on SCR, see Information Bulletin 500, "Substantial Conformance Review."

### **Public Project Assessment**

This optional service is intended to assist public project applicants in determining required permits and approvals and to provide an environmental assessment of the project. Public projects are defined as a project originated by a City department or lessee or a project located on City-owned property. Many public projects require a City Council or City Manager action that subjects the project to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process. The Assessment of Public Projects is a vehicle to assist the applicant in obtaining information on any necessary permits and required CEQA documentation. For complete information on the Public Project Assessment service, see Information Bulletin 510, "Assessment of Public Projects."

## **SUBMITTING IN RESPONSE TO A CODE ENFORCEMENT CASE**

Plans submitted in response to Code Enforcement cases have specific requirements.

The following plan requirements for open cases in the Code Enforcement Division (CED) are in addition to those required for any given project, as identified in this Manual.

Ensure that plans submitted in response to Code Enforcement cases also include:

1. Scope of Work - The scope of work must be listed on the first page and include the words "Code Enforcement Case" along with the case number (Example: CE-0123456).
2. The following labels must be used on all plan drawings for submittal:
  - a. "Proposed" - All work to be reviewed is proposed. This can be unpermitted or newly added work.

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b. "Existing" - Only work that was legally permitted and that will remain unchanged can be labeled "existing."

c. "Non-permitted or unpermitted" - Use these designations for all unpermitted construction to remain or be removed.

3. Define areas that are unpermitted on the plans:

a. These areas can be shaded or darkened (highlighted) in the unpermitted areas to denote they are installed without permits.

b. A legend can be provided to identify the unpermitted work and a numbering symbol can be placed next to the work area.

c. Clarify what is "to remain" and what is "to be removed." Work must be identified as "non-permitted to be removed" or "non-permitted to remain."

4. Additional Work:

a. If an applicant wishes to add new construction (work not yet started) to the plans along with legalizing the unpermitted construction (work already completed or in progress without the required permits) both must be clearly shown and labeled on the plans.

b. The scope of the work and the drawings need to identify which areas are "new construction" and which areas are "unpermitted."

The Submittal Requirements Checklists provide a detailed description of what the content of each of the required forms, documents, and plans must be. You can also refer to the Information Bulletins referenced in the Submittal Matrices that provide further information. Keep in mind that the completeness of your submittal package will help the reviewing disciplines expedite the processing of your application.

## PROJECT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Once you have identified all the applicable regulations and have designed your project accordingly, you are ready to prepare your submittal package. The table below provides a listing of all permit/approval types, the corresponding Municipal Code section that will tell you when that type of permit/approval is required, and which sections of this manual contain the information you will need to submit your project. For example, if you are applying for a building permit you would reference Municipal Code Section 129.0202 to find out when a building permit is required. You would then turn to Section 2 of this manual, titled Construction Permits – Structures, to find out which items you need to submit.

You can use the Submittal Matrices and the Minimum Submittal Requirements Checklists found in each section to identify the forms, documents, and plans that are required for certain types of permits and approvals. The Submittal Matrices are easy-to-use tools to help you quickly identify the items you need to submit to the City.

**PROJECT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

**Permit/Approval Table**

<b>Permit/Approval</b>	<b>When is it re- quired? (Code Section)</b>	<b>Decision Level</b>	<b>Submittal Manual Section</b>
Amendments to Development Permits and Tentative Maps	126.0114	Process 2, 3, 4, or 5	Section 4
Building Permit	129.0202	Process 1	Section 2 and Section 2A
Certificate of Compliance	125.0210	Process 1	Section 5
Certificate of Correction	125.0140	Process 1	Section 5
Coastal Development Permit	126.0702	Process 2 or 3	Section 4
Conditional Use Permit	126.0303	Process 3, 4, or 5	Section 4
Dedication of Right-of-Way	144.0230	Process 1	Section 5
Demolition/Removal Permit	129.0502	Process 1	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 710</a> , "Permit Instructions, Procedures for Building Demolition/Removal"
Designation of Historic Resource	123.0202	Process 4	Section 6
Development Agreements	124.0102	Process 5	Section 6
Easement Vacation	125.1010	Process 2 or 5	Section 5
Electrical Permit	129.0302	Process 1	Section 2
Electrical Vehicle Charging System	129.0302	Process 1	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 187</a> , "How to Obtain a Permit for Electrical Vehicle Charging Systems"
Encroachments within Public Right-of-Way	129.0715	Process 1,2 or 4	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 576</a> , "How to Obtain a Permit for Encroachments within the Public Right-of-Way"
Extension of Time (Tentative Map or Development Permit)	126.0111	Process 3, 4 or 5	Section 4
Final Map	125.0610	Process 1	Section 5
Grading Permit	129.0602	Process 1	Section 3
Land Use Plan/Local Coastal Program Amendment	122.0106	Process 5	Section 6
Lot Line Adjustment	125.0310	Process 1	Section 5
Map Waiver	125.0120	Process 3	Section 4
Neighborhood Development Permit	126.0402	Process 2	Section 4
Neighborhood Use Permit	126.0203	Process 2	Section 4
Parcel Map	125.0501	Process 1	Section 5
Parking Lots (Building Permit) adding 4 or more parking spaces	142.0505, 142.0402	Process 1	Section 2
Planned Development Permit	126.0602	Process 3, 4, or 5	Section 4
Plumbing/Mechanical Permit	129.0402	Process 1	Section 2
Public Right-of-Way Permit	129.0702	Process 1	Section 3
Public Right-of-Way Vacation	125.0910	Process 5	Section 5

**PROJECT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

<b>Permit/Approval</b>	<b>When is it re- quired? (Code Section)</b>	<b>Decision Level</b>	<b>Submittal Manual Section</b>
Reimbursement Agreement	61.2215 & General Plan PF-A.2.c	Process 5	Visit <a href="#">Facilities Financing</a> web site
Reversion to Acreage	125.0810	Process 5	Section 5
Rezoning	123.0102	Process 5	Section 6
Sidewalk Cafe	141.0621	Process 1 or 2	Section 2, 3, 4
Sign Permit	129.0802	Process 1	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 111</a> , "General Procedures, Sign Plan Check to Permit Issuance."
Site Development Permit	126.0502	Process 3, 4, or 5	Section 4
Site Reconnaissance and Testing	143.0110	Process 1	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 560</a> , "How to Obtain a Grading Permit for Site Reconnaissance and Testing."
Site Restoration	142.0150	Process 1	Section 3
Solar Photovoltaic Systems	129.0302	Process 1	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 301</a> "How to Obtain a Permit for Installation of Solar Photovoltaic Systems"
Street Name Change	125.1110	Process 1 or 5	Section 5
Substantial Conformance Review	126.0112	Process 2 in the Coastal Overlay Zone; Process 1 else- where	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 500</a> , "Sub-stantial Conformance Review"
Subdivision Improvement Agreement	144.0401	Process 1	Section 3
Temporary Construction Permit	129.0117	Process 1	See <a href="#">Information Bulletin 533</a> , "How to Obtain a Temporary Use Permit"
Temporary Use Permit	123.0401	Process 1	Section 2
Tentative Map / Vesting Tentative Map	125.0410	Process 3, 4, or 5	Section 4
Variance	126.0802	Process 3	Section 4
Tolling of a Development Permit	126.0116	Process 5	
Tolling of a Tentative Map	125.0150	Process 5	

**Other Helpful Resources:**

[City Website](#)

[Land Development Code](#) (Chapters 11-15)