

**CITY OF CARPINTERIA  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**



**PLANNING COMMISSION  
PERMITS AND APPROVALS**

**APPLICANT'S GUIDE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this guide is to explain the City's process for reviewing projects that require Planning Commission and City Council approval:

- What types of projects require Planning Commission review?
- What steps are involved in the review process?

Please take a few minutes to review this guide and if you have further questions, please contact the Community Development Department at (805) 684-5405, ext. 410.

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**WHAT REQUIRES PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW?**

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

- ❖ CONCEPTUAL PLAN/PRE APPLICATION REVIEW - Due to the City's need to implement Coastal Plan and General Plan Policies and integrate citizen participation and environmental review, the Conceptual Plan/Pre-application Review process helps applicants understand if and how a proposal might cause public policy conflicts and/or environmental impacts.
- ❖ ANNEXATION PROPOSAL/SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AMENDMENT - Development proposals for properties outside the City that may be annexed into the City. A Sphere of Influence boundary has been adopted to assist planning. If property outside the City is not within the sphere, the sphere also needs to be amended prior to consideration of a development proposal.
- ❖ COASTAL PLAN AMENDMENT/ GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT - State law requires every coastal city and county to adopt a Coastal Plan and General Plan. Any development proposal that changes Coastal Plan or General Plan policy or map property designation requires a plan amendment.

- ❖ REZONING AND ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT - In considering a change of zone request, the Planning Commission determines whether the proposed zoning is consistent with the City's General Plan, compatible with existing and proposed development in the surrounding area, and consistent with good zoning or planning practices. Some proposals may include a zoning ordinance text amendment.
- ❖ SPECIFIC PLAN - State law and the City's Coastal Plan and Zoning Map require the preparation of a Specific Plan for properties so designated on the Zone Map. Any proposal involving multiple properties or phasing could be benefited by including the preparation of a Specific Plan.
- ❖ DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT - This type of permit is required for all new developments in most zone districts. The Planning Commission reviews the design and operational characteristics of the proposed development, and may impose conditions of approval as deemed necessary. Unless otherwise exempted from the State Coastal Act, any land use activity that fits within the definition of "development" requires a Coastal Development Permit. In Carpinteria, any entitlement for development including Development Plan, Conditional Use Permit, Grading Permit, etc. constitutes a Coastal Development Plan as well.
- ❖ CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT - This permit is required for land uses that cannot be readily classified as principal permitted uses in individual districts by reason of their special character or possible effect on surrounding areas or the general community. The Planning Commission may impose conditions on such projects relating to both design and operation, and will require public review of the permit to ensure compliance with conditions.
- ❖ ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW - Most land use activities that result in physical design changes requires architectural review. Those changes that are associated with a Development Plan or Conditional Use Permit application will require Architectural Review Board approval, in addition to Planning Commission approval.
- ❖ TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION, TENTATIVE PARCEL MAPS, AND CONDOMINIUM CONVERSIONS - In conjunction with review of other permits and approvals for a development project, the Planning Commission will also review a proposed subdivision or parcel map.
- ❖ VARIANCE - The Planning Commission may approve a variance from certain requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, if it makes specific findings regarding unique circumstances or characteristics of the property involved.

In summary, the Planning Commission reviews all of the above applications. It has final review authority for Development Plan, Coastal Development Permits, Conditional Use Permits, Architectural Review, Tentative Parcel Map, Condominium Conversions, and Variances. The Planning Commission's decision

may be appealed to the City Council or the City Council may appeal a Planning Commission decision to itself. The Planning Commission reviews and makes recommendations to the City Council for Annexations, Sphere of Influence Amendments, Coastal Plan and General Plan Amendments, Zone Changes and Zoning Text Amendments, Specific Plans, and Tentative Subdivision Maps. All of the City Council decisions, except for the Tentative Subdivision Map are subject to review and approval by the State Coastal Commission.

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## HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

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

- STEP 1: Designing Your Project - Early in the process of designing a project, or planning a new business in an existing building, you should consult with Community Development staff to find out what Zoning Ordinance regulations may affect your project, what type of permits may be needed, and what fees are required. Copies of Zoning Ordinances, zoning maps, application forms, fee schedules, submittal requirements, and other information are available at the Community Development Department public counter.
- STEP 2: Pre-Application Review - Prior to formally submitted plans and application forms for your project, you may want to meet with Community Development staff to review those materials and determine whether any additional information is necessary. You can schedule such a meeting by calling the Community Development Department at (805) 684-5405, ext. 410.
- STEP 3: Filing Your Application - The completed application should be submitted at the Community Development Department public counter. A staff person will review the application to make sure all required materials are provided. An incomplete application WILL NOT be accepted. You will also be required to pay all application fees at this time.
- STEP 4: Review of Application - Within 30 days of the application being filed, it will be reviewed by staff to determine if 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 be reviewed by the City's Environmental Review Committee.
- STEP 5: Environmental Review - At the time your application is filed staff will determine whether your project is required to be reviewed by the City's Environmental Review Committee. If your project is found to be categorically exempt from environmental review requirements (as established in the California Environmental Quality Act), then no further

environmental review is necessary. If the project is not exempt, then it will be reviewed by the Environmental Review Committee, which will make one of the following determinations:

1. If the Committee finds that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment, then a Negative Declaration will be issued, and the project can proceed unless the Negative Declaration is appealed.
2. If it is found that a previously prepared environmental impact report adequately addresses any possible environmental impacts, then a Notice of Subsequent Use is issued, and the project can proceed.
3. If it is found that the project may have a significant impact on the environment, then either a Mitigated Negative Declaration will be issued, or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required. If an EIR is required, processing of the project cannot proceed until further required environmental studies are completed and approved by the Environmental Review Committee.

**STEP 6:** Staff Review of Project - Following a determination that the application is complete, the project will be reviewed in detail by the Community Development Department, other City departments, and other jurisdictions having review authority. The project will be assigned a staff planner, who may contact you if questions arise regarding your application, and who will also inspect the project site.

**STEP 7:** Architectural Review Board - Once the application has been deemed complete and an ERC recommendation has been received (if applicable), the project will be scheduled for architectural review. You must apply for Preliminary Architectural Review Board review of site plans, building elevations, landscape plans, and signage. Final review of the project by ARB will follow Planning Commission approval.

**STEP 8:** Planning Commission Review - Following staff review and ARB recommendation of the project, a written report to the Planning Commission will be prepared, which will include a recommended action, findings, environmental document, and appropriate conditions of approval. This report will be completed at least three 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. The Planning Commission holds public hearings on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. All property owners within a 300-foot radius of the proposed project are sent a mailed notice of the public hearing at least 10 days prior to the meeting. The applicant and/or his/her 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 reluctant to take action on a project when the applicant or his/her 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; (3) continue the hearing to another date.

- STEP 9: Appeals to the City Council - An applicant or any other aggrieved party may file an appeal of Planning Commission decisions within 10 calendar days of the date of action. Appeal forms and appropriate fees should be filed with the City Clerk.
- STEP 10: CITY COUNCIL REVIEW - The City Council must take final action on projects involving a change of zone, tentative subdivision maps, or amendments to the General Plan. City Council hearings are normally scheduled to be heard approximately three to four weeks after Planning Commission action.
- STEP 11: Appeals to the Coastal Commission - Any project within the coastal appeals overlay district can be appealed to the Coastal Commission. For specific appeal procedures contact the Commission office at 641-0142.
- 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 Building Department for plan check. The working drawing will be checked by the Community Development Department for conformance with all zoning requirements and conditions of approval, and will also be reviewed by all appropriate departments or jurisdictions for conformance with applicable codes. When this process is completed, a permit may be issued.

In order to better assist you, the following is a summary of State Law regarding who is legally qualified to prepare plans for various types of buildings. You must have your building plans prepared by the individuals qualified to prepare them and all necessary professional stamps and license numbers must be noted on the plans submitted or the plans WILL NOT be accepted.

1. Structural engineers may design buildings of any type.
2. Civil engineers may design any building except hospitals or schools.
3. Architects may design any building except for the structural portion of a hospital.
4. Unlicensed persons MAY NOT design any component that affects the safety of any building or its occupants, including by not limited to structural or seismic components.
5. Unlicensed persons MAY ONLY design the following:
  - a. Single family dwellings of wood frame construction not more than two (2) stories and a basement in height.

- b. Multiple dwellings containing no more than four (4) dwelling units of wood frame construction not more than two (2) stories and a basement in height with a maximum of four (4) dwellings per lot.
- c. Garages or other structures appurtenant to dwellings which are of wood frame construction and not more than two (2) stories and a basement in height.
- d. Agricultural and ranch buildings of wood frame construction unless the Building Official having jurisdiction deems that an undue risk to the public health, safety, or welfare is involved.
- e. Non-structural storefronts, interior alterations or additions, fixtures, cabinet work, furniture, or work necessary to provide for their installation.
- f. Non-structural alterations or additions to any building necessary to or attendant upon the installation of such storefronts, interior alterations or additions, fixtures, cabinet work, furniture, appliances, or equipment.

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**WHERE TO FILE**

Carpinteria City Hall  
Community Development Department  
5775 Carpinteria Avenue  
Carpinteria, CA 93013  
(805) 755-4410

**OFFICE HOURS**

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Monday through Friday

**\*Please contact Community Development to inquire about current submittal options**