How to AVOID the Most Common Public Works Engineering Plan Check Comments

These are the most common issues which immediately generate plan check comments and increase the chance of 3rd or 4th round submittals. If you take the time to address these items you increase the chance of a quicker approval.

Commercial Projects

(1) **Third Party C.3 Certification:** PWE requires a qualified third party to review and approve the C.3 design of C.3 regulated projects. If this certification is not included in the initial submittal package, this will be a plan check comment from PWE. ([Third Party Certification Form](#))

(2) **Response Letter to PWE Conditions of Approval:** A response letter to PWE COAs, including where the condition is addressed in the plans (i.e. “Note 6 on Sheet C1.1”) or in the additional submitted documents (i.e. “See page 6 of soils report”), greatly helps PWE reviewers to confirm the conditions have been addressed in the first round submittal. If they cannot locate where these have been addressed or if they aren’t addressed, this will be a plan check comment from PWE. Including a response letter also speeds up the PW plan review process.

(3) **Mapping:** If the proposed project requires any mapping or certificate of compliance (COC) for lot line adjustment or lot merger, per your Condition of Approval, the map or COC must be recorded with the County prior to PWE approval of the Building permit. If this has not taken place, this will be a plan check comment.

(4) **Approval from Other Jurisdictions:** If an applicant is proposing any work in another entity’s jurisdiction (i.e. in a SCVWD easement, in a PG&E easement, on a County Road, removing a SCVWD monitoring well on site, etc.), PWE needs to see approval from the applicable easement holder or governing jurisdiction prior to approval of your permit (and/or the proposed work). If the approval of the other jurisdiction is not included, this will be a plan check comment.

(5) **Dewatering:** If the project is proposing underground structures (i.e. basement or underground garage), the applicant needs to submit sufficient information for PWE to confirm if dewatering will be required for the construction of the underground structure. If dewatering is required, all applicable dewatering submittals should be included or they will be requested as a plan check comment. Dewatering submittal guidelines can be found [here](#). If your project will require dewatering, we strongly recommend you meet with PWE ahead of
your first submittal to go over required dewatering submittals and hopefully reduce dewatering related plan check comments.

(6) **Rough Grading Plan:** If the project includes the construction of underground structures (i.e. basement or underground garage), applicant needs to submit a rough grading plan with their submittal package. If a rough grading plan is not submitted in the first round, this will be a plan check comment.

(7) **Logistics Plan:** Commercial projects are required to submit a logistics plan for PWE review and approval. This can be shown on one or more plan sheets incorporating all of, but not limited to, the following items: construction fence, construction entrance and exit, stockpile areas, equipment and material storage area, workers parking area, construction office trailer, temporary bathroom, measures for dewatering if needed, crane location, working hours, contractor’s contact information, truck traffic route, setbacks from environmentally sensitive areas, erosion and sediment control measures to be implemented during construction. If a complete logistics plan is not submitted, this will be a plan check comment.

(8) **Impervious Area Worksheet:** If the project creates or replaces 500 square feet or more of impervious area, this impervious area worksheet needs to be filled out and submitted for Public Works review. If a completely filled out worksheet is not submitted, this will be a plan check comment.

**Extra Credit!** **Grading Permit Application:** If the grading and/or excavation for the proposed project is over 100 cubic yards (cut + fill, not NET), a grading permit from PWE is required for the project. A completely filled out grading permit application and all applicable attachments listed in section H of the application must be submitted before you can get your Building permit. (Grading Permit Application & Instructions).

**Residential Projects**

(1) **Flood Zone:** If the project is located in a special flood hazard area (SFHA) and is either a substantial improvement to an existing structure or if any new structures are proposed, all applicable flood zone information and requirements should be included on the plans. Please reference Palo Alto Municipal Code 16.52 and this handout for more information. Public Works uses this checklist to confirm flood zone requirements are shown on plans prior to plan intake. Initial permit submittals are screened at the counter and if any of the flood zone information is found to be missing in the first submittal, you may not be able to submit for a building permit and it will certainly be a plan check comment/s.
(2) **Response Letter to PWE Conditions of Approval:** A response letter to PWE COAs, including where the condition is addressed in the plans (i.e. “Note 6 on Sheet C1.1”) or in the additional submitted documents (i.e. “See page 6 of soils report”), greatly helps PWE reviewers to confirm the conditions have been addressed in the first round submittal. If they cannot locate where these have been addressed or if they aren’t addressed, this is a **plan check comment from PWE.** Including a response letter also speeds up the PW plan review process.

(3) **Easements:** Indicate all existing easements for the property in the submitted plan set. No new structures (or their roof eaves!) shall be built within an existing easement area. Include appropriate notes and dimensions to verify on plans (includes roof overhangs for structures). If these are not delineated on plans, this will be a plan check comment.

(4) **Dewatering:** If the project is proposing underground structures (i.e. basement or underground garage), the applicant needs to submit sufficient information for PWE to confirm if dewatering will be required for the construction of the underground structure. If dewatering is required, all applicable dewatering submittals should be included or they will be requested as a plan check comment. Dewatering submittal guidelines can be found [here](#). If your project will require dewatering, we strongly recommend you meet with PWE ahead of your first submittal to go over required dewatering submittals and hopefully reduce dewatering related plan check comments.

(5) **Grading & Drainage Design:** Grading and drainage for single family homes must comply with [City of Palo Alto drainage standards](#). It would be most helpful to submit this checklist with your submittal to confirm all requirements are addressed. If the design does not comply with these standards, this will be a plan check comment.

(6) **WORK IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY:** The plans must clearly indicate any work that is proposed in the public right-of-way, such as sidewalk replacement, driveway approach, or utility laterals. The plans must include notes that the work must be done per City standards and that the contractor performing this work must first obtain a Street Work Permit from Public Works at the Development Center. If a new driveway is in a different location than the existing driveway, then the sidewalk associated with the new driveway must be replaced with a thickened (6” thick instead of the standard 4” thick) section. Additionally, curb cuts and driveway approaches for abandoned driveways must be replaced with new curb, gutter and planter strip. If this isn’t shown on the plans, then this will be a plan check comment.

(7) **Provide the following note on the Site Plan and adjacent to the work within the Public road right-of-way:** “Any construction within the city’s public road right-of-way shall have an approved Permit for Construction in the Public Street prior to commencement of this work. **THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS WORK IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY THE BUILDING PERMIT ISSUANCE BUT SHOWN ON THE BUILDING PERMIT FOR INFORMATION ONLY.**” If this isn’t shown on the plans, then this will be a plan check comment.
(8) Provide the following note on the Site Plan and Grading and Drainage Plan:
“Contractor shall not stage, store, or stockpile any material or equipment within the public road right-of-way.” Construction phasing shall be coordinated to keep materials and equipment onsite. If this isn’t shown on the plans, then this will be a plan check comment.

(9) SIDEWALK, CURB & GUTTER: The applicant may be required to replace portions of the existing sidewalks, curbs, gutters or driveway approaches in the public right-of-way along the frontage(s) of the property. Contact Public Works Inspection Services at 650-496-6929 to arrange a site visit so that the inspector can discuss the extent of replacement work required. Include a scanned copy of the Site Inspection Directive obtained from the Public Works Inspector in the plan set. If the Site Inspection Directive is not shown on the plans, then this will be a plan check comment.

(10) STORM WATER POLLUTION PREVENTION: The City's full-sized "Pollution Prevention - It's Part of the Plan" sheet must be included in the plan set. Copies are available from Public Works on our website. Refer to link for pdf of sheet. http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/2732 If this sheet isn’t included in the plans, then this will be a plan check comment.

(11) Impervious Area Worksheet: If the project creates or replaces 500 square feet or more of impervious area, this impervious area worksheet needs to be filled out and submitted for Public Works review. If a completely filled out worksheet is not submitted, this will be a plan check comment.

(12) Logistics Plan comment: Provide the following as a note on the Site Plan: “The contractor may be required to submit a logistics plan to the Public Works Department prior to commencing work that addresses all impacts to the City’s right-of-way, including, but not limited to: pedestrian control, traffic control, truck routes, material deliveries, contractor’s parking, concrete pours, crane lifts, work hours, noise control, dust control, storm water pollution prevention, contractor’s contact, noticing of affected surrounding properties, and schedule of work. The requirement to submit a logistics plan will be dependent on the number of applications Public Works Engineering receives within close proximity to help mitigate and control the impact to the public-right-of-way. If necessary, Public Works may require a Logistics Plan during construction.” If this isn’t shown on the plans, then this will be a plan check comment.

Extra Credit! Grading Permit Application: If the grading and/or excavation for the proposed project is over 100 cubic yards (cut + fill, not NET), a grading permit from PWE is required for the project. A completely filled out grading permit application and all applicable attachments listed in section H of the application must be submitted before you can get your Building permit. (Grading Permit Application & Instructions).