

# **APPLYING FOR SITE & DESIGN REVIEW**

City of Palo Alto, California

## **WHAT IS A SITE AND DESIGN REVIEW?**

The Site and Design Review Combining District (D) is intended to provide a process for review and approval of development in environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas. The goal of the process is to assure that development will be harmonious with other uses in the general vicinity, compatible with environmental and ecological objectives, and consistent with the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. The (D) district is always combined with another zone district which will define allowable uses and site development regulations. It is also incorporated by reference into the Open Space (OS) and Agricultural Conservation (AC) zone districts.

## **WHERE TO APPLY**

Department of Planning & Development Services  
Fifth Floor  
Palo Alto City Hall  
250 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94301  
(650) 329-2441

The information in this booklet is a compilation of relevant sections of Palo Alto Municipal Code and City procedures. The Municipal Code should be consulted for specific wording governing Site and Design applications (Chapters 18.82 and 18.99 PAMC).

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURE (Major Application)**

**Advisory Meeting:** A preliminary meeting with the Zoning Administrator to review the feasibility of a Site and Design application is strongly recommended. Please call (650) 329-2441 to schedule an appointment.

**Pre-application Meeting:** Your application will not be considered complete until the Zoning Administrator or his/her designee determines that all of these submittal requirements have been met. Applications are required to be filed directly with the Zoning Administrator or designated planner during an appointment or scheduled drop-in time. To schedule an appointment, please call (650) 329-2441 or refer to the monthly calendar schedule posted at the Planning Division counter.

**Submittal Requirements:**

1. **APPLICATION FORM** Complete items 1 -5 on the application form (property owner must sign the form). Written authorization from Stanford University is required if the property is located on Stanford land.
  
2. **LETTER OF APPLICATION** (12 copies) The letter should give a detailed description of the proposed project and should explain how the Site and Design complies with the following objectives (18.82.060 PAMC):
  - a. To ensure construction and operation of the use in a manner that will be orderly, harmonious, and compatible with existing or potential uses of adjoining or nearby sites.
  
  - b. To ensure the desirability of investment, or the conduct of business, research, or educational activities or other authorized occupations, in the same or adjacent areas.
  
  - c. To ensure that sound principles of environmental design and ecological balance shall be observed.
  
  - d. To ensure that the use will be in accord with the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan.

If the project is located in the Open Space (OS) zone district your letter should also address the 10 Open Space Development Criteria, adopted by the City Council on October 20, 1986. A copy of the development criteria can be obtained at the Planning Division counter.

**3. Environmental Impact Assessment Worksheet (12 copies)**

**4. Geological Soils Investigation and Report (3 copies):** For projects in the OS zone district, the applicant must submit a geological soils investigation and report prepared by a registered geologist certified by the state of California (18.71.140(a)).

**5. Plans (12 copies) including:**

**a. Site Plan** (at least 1/8"=1'0") showing:

1. the property address, north arrow, and scale;
2. property lines and easements (dimensions indicated);
3. adjacent sidewalks and public right-of-way between the sidewalk and property line;
4. footprint and overhang of all existing and proposed structures;
5. tabular data which includes lot area, allowable lot coverage, gross floor area and allowable impervious coverage (if applicable), and existing and proposed lot coverage, gross floor area, and impervious coverage (if applicable);
6. driveways and parking areas;
7. tree location, species, size, dripline area (including trees located on neighboring property that overhang the project site) and public trees within 30 feet of the project,
8. any other significant existing or proposed features (e.g. outdoor areas, fences, landscaping, etc).

**b. Floor plans** (at least 1/4"=1'-0") showing:

1. all existing and proposed exterior and interior walls ; and
2. proposed uses for each room.

**c. Elevations** (at least 1/4"=1'-0") showing: elevations of each side of all proposed structures (even when obscured by fencing, landscaping, etc.).

**d. Sections:** Sections are not always necessary, but may be required to accurately represent height, daylight plane and floor area measurements. Please be advised that the need for a section could arise during the review process and you may be asked to supply one.

**e. Site Cross-Sections:** Supply cross-sections of the subject property as it relates to adjacent property.

**f. Aerial Photograph:** Supply an aerial photograph of the site and adjacent land within

250 feet of the site.

6. **Photographic Display:** Photographs showing the relationship of the proposed project to adjacent buildings, the neighborhood and adjacent public lands (e.g. trails, roads, parks, etc.).
7. **Colors and Materials:** Samples of actual colors and materials mounted on a board, to be retained by the City as part of the permanent file.
9. **MAILING LABELS:** to be used for the City's mailing of hearing notices to all property owners and residents within a 300' radius of the subject property (including yourself). To create these mailing labels, you must use the microfilmed ownership records and blank self-sticking labels which are available at the Planning Division counter. The counter technician can assist you with developing your mailing list.
10. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** such as a designated planner may deem essential to the application (e.g. property survey, tree report).
11. **FILING FEE:** Refer to Planning Division fee schedule.

NOTE: PLEASE BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE APPLICABLE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND MICROFILM FEES IN THE AMOUNT OF YOUR CHECK.

## **REVIEW, DECISION AND APPEAL PROCESS**

### **Major Site and Design Applications:**

1. Submitted plans and attachments are routed to all concerned City departments and outside agencies for a completeness review/plan check. The City has 30 days within which to determine the application complete or incomplete.
2. Staff will prepare a written report. It will incorporate comments and recommendations of all departments and include recommendations of approval, denial, or approval with conditions and the findings and grounds for the recommendation. Conditions may include measures required to mitigate environmental, safety, traffic and other detrimental impacts, and other conditions. A copy of the report will be sent to the applicant.

3. The Planning Commission will consider the application within 90 days of the date on which the application is deemed complete. The Commission may recommend approval, approval subject to conditions, or denial. It may recommend changes necessary to accomplish the objectives listed in Section 18.82.060 PAMC.
4. Notice of the time and place of the hearing will be published in the Palo Alto Weekly and sent to the applicant and each person listed on the mailing labels, 12 days prior to the date of the hearing.
5. If the Commission recommends approval or approval subject to conditions, the application shall then be submitted to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) (unless the project is a singly developed, single-family residence) for a public hearing and recommendation. If the Commission recommends denial, the application shall be submitted directly to the City Council.
6. The Planning Commission and ARB (if necessary) recommendations are forwarded to the City Council for action. Fifteen copies of plans, revised if necessary to comply with the Commission and ARB recommendations, shall be submitted by the applicant at least 10 days prior to the Council meeting.

The applicant is sent an agenda and advised to attend the Council meeting. Applications which receive unanimous recommendation from the Commission and ARB are placed on the Council Consent Calendar.

7. The Council may approve, approve modified plans, or deny the application. The City Council's decision is final, and is effective immediately.
8. Notice of the Council's decision shall be mailed to the original applicant and to any other person who has filed a written request to receive a copy of the Council's decision.

**Minor Site and Design Applications:**

Under the Chapter 18.99, minor changes to an existing building or structure included in an approved Site and Design plan may be diverted by the Director of Planning & Development Services for administrative approval, provided there is no change in use, no change in the character of the structure(s) and no exception or variance required. Also, no application shall be diverted for administrative approval if:

- a. The proposed change is not minor when considered in conjunction with other minor changes to the same project approved or under consideration, even though such changes relate to different plans, buildings, or structures of the project.

- b. In the opinion of the Director of Planning & Development Services, the proposed change will be controversial, or probably will be denied by the Director of Planning & Development Services or the City Council.

**Review Process (Minor):**

1. The diversion of an application shall suspend any time period requirements for action by the City Council, Planning Commission, or ARB for 90 days or until the application is returned to its normal review procedure, whichever is less.
2. The Director of Planning & Development Services shall refer a diverted application directly to the ARB for review and recommendation although the appeal procedure for ARB actions shall not apply.
3. Upon receipt of the ARB recommendation, the Director of Planning & Development Services shall expeditiously approve or disapprove the application.
4. The Director of Planning & Development Services shall render the decision in writing, stating the reasons for the decision, and mail a copy to the applicant. Copies will also be forwarded to the City Council, and notice of the decision will be published in the Palo Alto Weekly.
5. Unless an appeal is filed within 10 days of the publication of notice of the determination in the Palo Alto Weekly, the decision of the Director of Planning & Development Services shall become final.
6. If the application is disapproved, the decision shall have no force and effect, and the application shall be returned to the normal review procedure.

**APPEAL PROCEDURE (MINOR):**

1. An appeal may be made to the Planning Commission by any person, firm, or corporation aggrieved or affected by any determination of the Director of Planning & Development Services on an administrative approval of minor changes to a Site and Design Plan.
2. The appeal shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Planning Division within 10 days of the publication notice of the determination in the local newspaper. An appeal application form may be obtained at the Planning Division counter.
3. There is a filing fee (see current fee schedule).

4. The letter of appeal must state the grounds for appeal.
5. The filing of an appeal shall stop all proceedings (i.e. Parcel Map application) in furtherance of the action appealed until the appeal is decided.
6. The Preliminary Parcel Map applicant must provide 26 additional sets of plans for distribution to the Planning Commission and City Council.
7. A public hearing is held by the Planning Commission within 30 days of the date of the filing of the appeal.
8. The Planning Commission shall make findings and recommend to the City Council that the decision of the Director be affirmed, reversed, or modified.
9. Within 30 days of the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the City Council shall consider the appeal. The Council may, at its option, conduct a public hearing on the matter.
10. The City Council may reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modify any decision, determination, or requirement recommended by the Planning Commission.
11. The City Council's decision is final, and is effective immediately.
12. Notice of the Council's decision shall be mailed to the original applicant, and to any other person who has filed a written request to receive a copy of the Council's decision.

### **Public Participation**

Any interested person may review a Site and Design application file in the Planning Division; appear and present his/her views at the public hearing; and request a notice of the decision.

### **APPROVED PLANS**

1. The applicant must apply to the Building Inspection Division and the Fire Department for building or any other required permits.
2. Construction drawings and contract plans, subsequently submitted with applications for required permits or other construction approvals shall conform substantially to the preliminary design plans, and shall be subject to all applicable review and permit



requirements in effect at the time of approval and permit issuance.

## **TERM AND EXPIRATION**

In the event actual construction of the project is not commenced within two years of the effective date of approval thereof, said approval shall expire and be of no further force or effect.

## **QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION**

Application and Review  
Procedure and Zoning Ordinance  
(see Chapter 18.90\* for Conditional  
Use Permit provisions)

Department of Planning &  
Development Services  
Fifth Floor  
(650) 329-2441

Building Code (Title 16\*)

Building Inspection Division  
Fifth Floor  
(650) 329-2496

Traffic

Transportation Division  
Fifth Floor  
(650) 329-2520

Construction in  
Public Right-of-Way

Public Works Department  
Sixth Floor  
(650) 329-2151

Fire Code (Title 15)\*

Fire Department  
Sixth Floor  
(650) 329-2184

Utilities (electric, water, gas and  
wastewater)

Utilities Department  
Second Floor  
(650) 329-2273

\* Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC)