



APPLYING FOR A VARIANCE

WHAT IS A VARIANCE?

A Variance is an entitlement granted to property owners to provide relief from certain zoning regulations when a property has special physical constraints, or when the zoning regulations would subject development of a site to substantial hardships, constraints, or practical difficulties that do not normally arise on other sites in the same vicinity and zoning district. Variances can only be granted if a project meets all of the findings listed in [PAMC Section 18.76.030\(c\)](#). (See: [Variance Submittal Checklist](#))

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Preliminary Meeting: A preliminary meeting with a planner to review the feasibility of a Variance is strongly recommended. Please call (650) 329-2441 to schedule an appointment.

Application Submittal: Applications are required to be filed with a planner during an appointment. A planner will determine if all of the submittal requirements have been met (see [Variance Submittal Checklist](#)). Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Please call (650) 329-2441 to schedule an appointment.

Review and Decision process:

1. Submitted plans and attachments are routed to all concerned City departments and outside agencies for review/plan check. Notices will be mailed to property owners and occupants within 600 feet of the property to inform them of the project submittal. The City has 30 days to determine the application complete or incomplete.
2. Following review/plan check of the application, a tentative decision of the Director will be mailed to property owners and occupants within 600 feet of the property.
3. The Director's decision will become final fourteen days after the tentative decision is mailed, unless a [request for a hearing](#) is filed.
4. If a hearing request is received, the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) will review the project and make a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council can vote to approve the PTC's recommendation or vote to hear the project and render a decision. In either case, the City Council decision is the final decision.

[See Palo Alto Municipal Code Section 18.76 & 18.77](#)