

Administrative Development Permits: Levels 3 and 4

In Santa Cruz County, many kinds of construction projects and land uses must have development permits in addition to any building permits that may be required. A planner must first visit the site and review the plans and any supporting documents to see if the project meets all Zoning and General Plan requirements and will not create an environmental hazard.

What Level of Development Permit is Required?

Applications for these permits are reviewed by the Project Review Section of the Planning Department at different decision-making levels, depending on their size and neighborhood impact.

Level 3 Projects include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Residential buildings over 28 feet in height up to 35 feet on more than 2 1/2 acres
- New houses with access by a right-of-way less than 40 feet in deeded width
- Preliminary grading approval (up to 8,000 cubic yards)
- Lot line adjustments
- Unconditional Certificates of Compliance for legally created parcels
- Temporary commercial uses
- Minor variations to approved Zoning permits
- Fences three to six feet in height in a front setback, except for front yards not abutting a street

Level 4 Projects include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Conforming additions of over 800 square feet to non-conforming structures
- New commercial buildings or changes of use in existing commercial buildings of less than 2,000 sq. ft.
- Residential buildings over 28 feet in height up to 35 feet on less than 2-1/2 acres
- Bed and Breakfast Inns
- Agricultural Buffer Determinations for single-family additions

Filing an Application

The first step is to phone 831-454-2130 between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. for information, or come in and sign the Zoning Counter waiting list for help on a first-come basis, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Find out what level of permit your project requires and what the application fee will be.

Call **831-454-3252** for an appointment to submit your application. You will be asked to submit a description of the project with whatever plans and additional materials are listed on the "List of Required Information", which the counter planner will give you. The property owner must sign either the application form or a separate owner-agent form.

Processing of Level 3 and Level 4 Applications is done by a planner in the Project Review Section. He or she will visit the site, review your plans, and prepare a report of his or her analysis. This report will contain a recommendation either for approval (usually with certain conditions) or for denial if the following findings cannot be made.

Findings

In order to approve an application, the Planning Director must make certain findings. Findings for development projects appear in Section 18.10.230(a) of the County Code. Briefly, they require that the project:

1. Will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of people living or working in the neighborhood or the general public, will not result in wasteful use of energy, and will not be injurious to properties or improvements in the area
2. Will be consistent with all County ordinances and with the allowed uses in the zone district
3. Will be consistent with the County General Plan and with any Specific Plan that has been adopted for the area
4. Will not overload utilities, and will not generate more than an acceptable level of traffic on the streets in the area
5. Will complement and harmonize with existing and proposed land uses in the area and will be similar to the design, land use intensities, and dwelling unit densities of the neighborhood.

Action

The staff report goes to the Planning Director's designee, who will decide about issuing the permit.

Public Notices

With **Level 3** applications, you will be notified by mail when action has been taken on the permit. This information is also available to the public.

With **Level 4** applications, you must place a project description sign or signs on the project site before your application will be deemed complete for processing. Your project planner will contact you with details (see the Earlier Notification Guidelines brochure for additional information). If approved, a copy of the permit and findings are sent to the applicant, and an announcement of the proposed action is published in a newspaper, posted on the site, and sent to owners of all property within 300 feet of the site, fourteen calendar days before the permit takes effect.

Appeals

The applicant may appeal the Planning Director's decision on any level of application. Any interested person may appeal Level 4 and higher decisions. (See the "[Planning Appeals](#)" page for more information).

This brochure describes the procedures for obtaining Administrative Development Permits, Levels 3 and 4. For complete regulations, see the Santa Cruz County Code, Chapter 18.10.

If you have questions about Development Permits, call the Zoning Information line at 831-454-2130.