



PLANNING (PLN) APPLICATION GUIDE

INFORMATIONAL PACKET

QUESTIONS?

Additional information regarding the planning process can be obtained at the Planning Counter at 630 Garden Street, or (805) 564-5578, PlanningCounter@SantaBarbaraCA.gov



WHAT IS A PLANNING APPLICATION?

In order to streamline the City's discretionary review processes, submittal of a single, consolidated application for all development projects is now required. A [Planning \(PLN\) Application](#) is the means by which the Planning Division collects the information required for project analysis and to schedule a development project for discretionary review.

WHEN IS A PLANNING APPLICATION REQUIRED?

Any project that requires discretionary review must submit a Planning Application. This includes any project that requires design review and all applications for a land use entitlement (development review).

- **Design review** refers to the process by which projects are evaluated for consistency with adopted design guidelines and other compatibility criteria by one of the City's three advisory boards and commissions: Historic Landmarks Commission, Architectural Board of Review, and Single Family Design Board.
- **Development review** refers to any approval action by the Planning Commission or Staff Hearing Officer that is required before a project may secure a building permit. Development review projects require analysis by the Planning Division plus a public hearing. A decision to approve or deny a project is based on the findings in the Municipal Code.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Certain projects require a mandatory pre-application review. When requested, pre-application review must occur prior to filing the first Planning Application. Please see the [Pre-Application Review](#) handout.

WHAT MAKES AN APPLICATION COMPLETE?

In order for the Planning Division to determine that a development application is complete, it must contain all of the required information listed in the Planning Application document as well as any applicable Supplemental Applications. All forms must be completed, signed, and submitted as a PDF attachment to your electronic submittal, the application must be accompanied by all required supporting materials (architectural plan sets, photographs, etc.), and all required application fees must be paid.

In addition, the application must include adequate information necessary for project analysis including environmental review and demonstrate compliance with all applicable ordinances and codes. The City will not act on an application until it has been determined to be complete by all City divisions reviewing the application and environmental review is completed.

WHAT IS A SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION?

Supplemental Applications collect any additional information required for project-specific reviews and processes and are a required component of a complete application. Supplemental Application forms must be submitted as an attachment to the Planning Application, not a stand-alone submittal. The list of Supplemental Applications can be found online: [Planning Handouts](#), or contact the Planning Counter.

WHAT IS THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS?

1. **Starting the “Clock.”** Project review begins after all information has been received and fees have been paid. Within 30 calendar days or less (unless you agree to an extension), you will receive a determination in writing whether the application is complete.
2. **Staff Response.** If the application is incomplete, staff will detail the missing information in the letter. If design review is required, the project may then be scheduled for comments only at a conceptual review hearing. Each time you resubmit plans or missing application materials, the cycle of 30-day review will continue until the application is determined to be complete.
3. **Environmental Review.** Once staff determines the application is complete, the City has an additional 30 days to determine the level of environmental review. CEQA timelines are determined by the level of environmental review.
4. **Decision-maker Action.** After the environmental review is complete, action must be taken within 60 days for most projects. Time limits may be extended once for no more than 90 days.
5. **Finalizing Project Design.** Final design approval is required prior to building permit application.

CAN I APPEAL THE COMPLETENESS DETERMINATION?

Yes, if the application along with the submitted materials are determined to be incomplete the applicant can appeal that decision in writing along with a filing fee to the Planning Commission. A determination will be made no later than 60 calendar days after receipt of the appeal. See [Appeal Process](#) handout.

CAN I MAKE CHANGES AFTER I SUBMIT?

Yes, however once an application is determined to be complete, changes that will increase the number of units, add uses that were not previously listed, substantially change the site plan, or other changes that trigger the need for additional discretionary approvals will require a new application and restart the review “clock.”



WHAT IS THE DISCRETIONARY REVIEW PROCESS?

1

Submit an Optional Pre-Application

Pre-Application review provides information from staff or one of the City's design review bodies that might affect your project before submitting an application. It is optional for most projects, but recommended on any modification or other complex development to discover potential hurdles and identify the approvals needed.

2

Submit a Planning Application

Once you are ready for project approval, submit your Planning Application. The project will be assigned a planner who reviews the application materials, conducts the environmental review, and makes a staff recommendation. Within 30 days, you will receive a determination in writing if the application is determined to be complete.

3

Go to Conceptual Review

Conceptual review is your opportunity to get early input from the reviewing bodies on the layout and style of a project in its "conceptual" form prior to submitting a complete set of drawings. Conceptual comments on the compatibility criteria will be taken into consideration by the decision-maker prior to making a final decision on the project.

4

Decision-Maker Determination

After the application is determined to be complete, and environmental review is done, the decision-maker will approve or deny the project at a public hearing. If the determination is not appealed, the original decision stands; otherwise, the appellant body hears the appeal before rendering a final decision.

5

Obtain Final Design Approvals

If no other land use entitlement is requested, project design approval is considered to be the discretionary action. However, final approval of working construction drawings is required prior to submittal for a building permit. Development review projects must receive both project design and final approval before building permits.

6

Submit a Building Permit Application

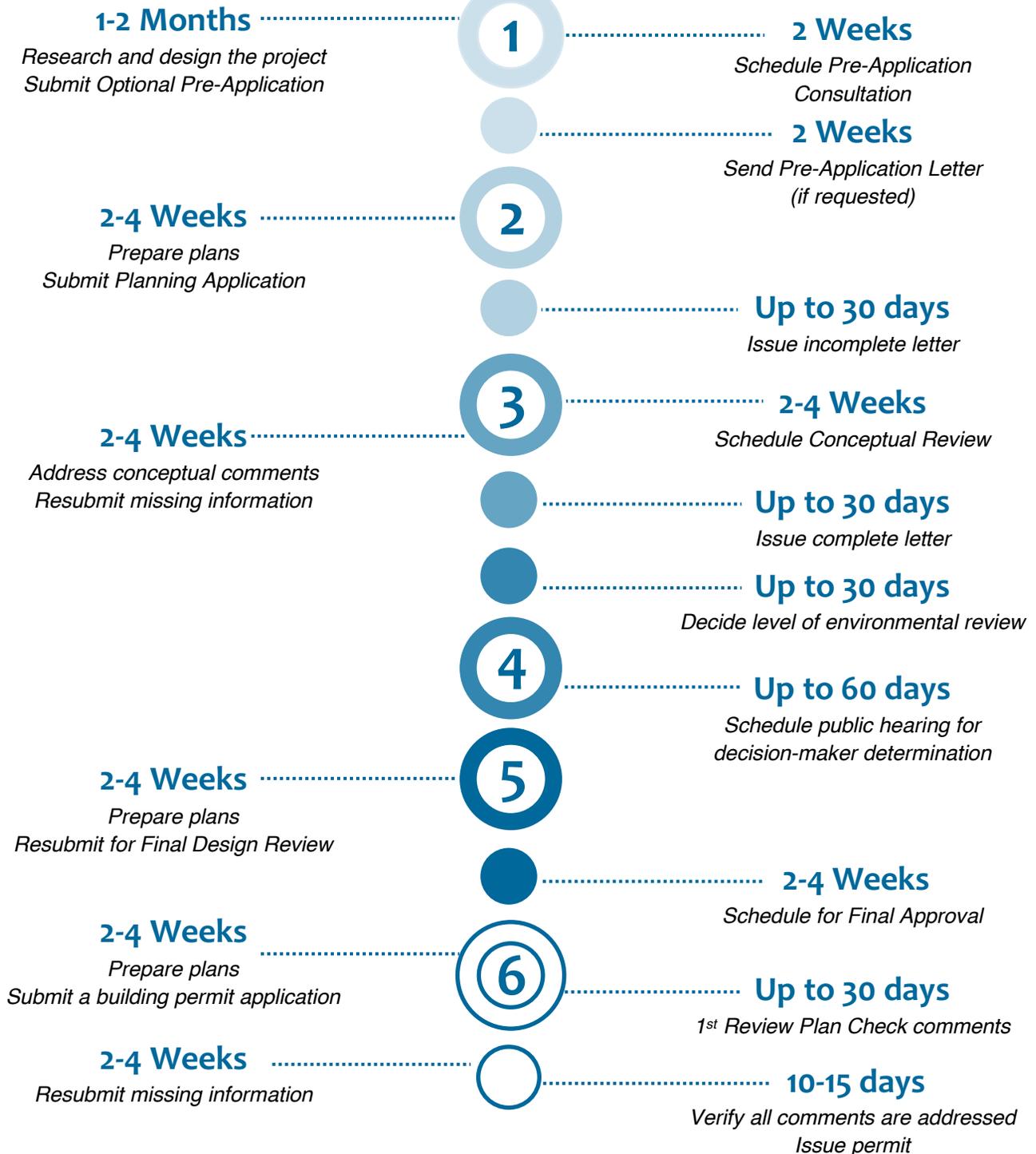
Following all discretionary approvals, you are ready to submit for a Building Permit or a Public Works permit, if required. The plans will be checked by your assigned planner and by other City departments. At the successful completion of this review process, permits will be issued for the project and construction may commence.



WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR REVIEW?

ESTIMATED APPLICANT TIME

ESTIMATED CITY TIME





WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DESIGN REVIEW?

WHY DESIGN REVIEW?

Design review is used to ensure that new development is compatible with the visual character of a community or an individual neighborhood. The design review process can also offer alternatives to certain zoning standards, such as setbacks and open space, in order to achieve a better layout. The professional volunteers who serve on the City's three design review boards and commission examine development projects at a public hearing for consistency with adopted design guidelines, and criteria addressing community character and aesthetic quality.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

Design review is just one step in the discretionary review process. First determine if design review is required for your project by reviewing the Design Review Checklist on page 6. If yes, your next step is to determine if your project qualifies for either administrative or discretionary design review.

Administrative Design Review

A number of design review projects may be approved as a ministerial action by the Community Development Director or an appointed staff representative without a public hearing. In order to be eligible, a project must comply with specific design standards. Review the criteria on the [Administrative Design Review](#) supplemental application to see if your project qualifies.

Discretionary Design Review

Discretionary design review is more flexible with regard to design standards and allows alternatives that still meet the intent of design guidelines through the exercise of judgment and deliberation.

Discretionary design review has two levels: Full Board or Commission and the Consent Calendar.

- **Consent Calendar** is intended to expedite the review of minor projects that are not eligible for administrative design review. One design review member, assisted by Staff, reviews the consent calendar. Review of the item generally occurs in one public hearing.
- **Full Board or Commission** is required for any project that is not eligible for either administrative design review or the consent calendar. It requires a public hearing, and some projects will require a mailed notice. Review generally occurs over multiple meetings, including conceptual review, project design approval, and final approval.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The City's Design Guidelines establish a set of goals, values, and qualities by which projects are evaluated in design review. The City's existing design guidelines provide detailed direction for specific areas and types of projects. However, not all guideline techniques or approaches are appropriate or practical for every development project. When designing your project, you should apply as many of the techniques as necessary in order to achieve the design objectives.



IS DESIGN REVIEW REQUIRED?

Use this checklist to determine if design review is required for your project. Start reading at the top of the list, and if you answer “yes” to **any** one question, then design review is required for your project.

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION (HLC) – SBMC 30.220.020

HLC is required for your project if it includes any of the following: (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Exterior changes to a site located in a Historic District or Landmark District | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Exterior changes to a Historic Resource (Landmark, Structure of Merit, or Inventory) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Conversion of a historic resource in the R-M/R-3 zone or O-R/R-O zone into a hotel | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Building over 50 years old referred to HLC from an Administrative Resource Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Application for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) is requested | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Archaeological Resources Report or Historic Structures and Sites Reports is required |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Minor Zoning Exception, waiver, or outdoor sales is proposed on a site subject to HLC | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Approval of a Development Plan is required on a site subject to HLC |

ARCHITECTURAL BOARD OF REVIEW (ABR) – SBMC 22.68

ABR is required for your project if it includes any of the following: (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. A permit is required for exterior changes to a site with nonresidential or 2+ residential units | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. A permit is required to create 2+ residential units on one lot (not in single-unit zones) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. A subdivision grading plan, or a grading permit is required (not in single-unit zones) | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Alterations to City-owned or leased property is proposed (includes City streets) or Hwy 101 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Substantial alterations are proposed to an ABR-approved landscape plan | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Changes to the exterior paint color of a non-residential building are proposed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Minor Zoning Exception, waiver, or outdoor sales proposed on a site subject to ABR | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Approval of a Development Plan is required for a project subject to ABR review |

SINGLE FAMILY DESIGN BOARD (SFDB) – SBMC 22.69

SFDB is required for your project if it includes any of the following: (check all that apply)

- 1. A permit is required for exterior changes to a single-unit residence within the Mission Area Special Design District or the Lower Riviera Survey Area
- 2. A permit is required for exterior changes to a single-unit residence or site within the Hillside Design District and any one of the following apply:
 - Slope of the lot, or site, is 20% or more
 - Replacement of a roof covering with different materials or colors is proposed
 - Grading outside the main building footprint is more than 50 cubic yards
- 3. A wall, fence, or gate is proposed on a site developed with a single-unit residence, and any one of the following apply:
 - Walls, fences, or gates are greater than 3 ½-feet (42-inches) in height and located in any portion of the front yard (excluding along interior lot lines)
 - Retaining walls 6 feet or greater in height are proposed anywhere on site
 - Retaining walls are proposed and the slope of the lot or site is 15% or more
 - Retaining walls are located on a lot adjacent to or contains an ocean bluff
 - Multiple retaining walls (terracing) are proposed with a combined height of 6-feet and are not separated by either a building or 10 feet of horizontal distance
- 4. SFDB review was required in the past two years; or the cumulative scope of work from the past two years required SFDB review
- 5. A permit is required for exterior changes to a single-unit residence or site, and any one of the following apply:
 - A new structure, or portion of a structure, is taller than one-story or taller than 17-feet in height (*Excludes balconies 3-feet by 7-feet or less*)
 - The cumulative floor area of all structures exceeds 4,000 sq. ft.
 - A modification for maximum net floor area (FAR) is required
 - A manufactured home, mobile home, or factory-built home is proposed
 - Relocation of a residence from another lot is proposed
 - A Minor Zoning Exception is proposed
 - Detached accessory buildings are cumulatively greater than 500 sq. ft.
 - Three or more covered parking spaces are proposed
 - A parking exception for two uncovered spaces is requested
 - Grading outside the main building footprint is more than 250 cubic yards
- 6. A subdivision grading plan, or a grading permit not connected with the construction of a structure is proposed (in single-unit zones)
- 7. Substantial alterations to an SFDB-approved landscape plan are proposed
- 8. A Hillside Vegetation Removal Permit is required for removal of 1,000 sq. ft. or more of vegetation from hillside areas



DOES MY PROJECT REQUIRE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW?

Use this table to identify *the decision-maker on development applications.*

PROJECT TYPE	STAFF HEARING OFFICER	PLANNING COMMISSION
AMEND CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	YES (for SHO-approved Projects)	YES (for PC-approved Projects)
ANNEXATIONS	NO	YES
APPEALS	NO	Staff Hearing Officer Actions and certain decisions of the Community Development Director
COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Appealable jurisdiction • In Appealable jurisdiction: single-unit residential development. < 500 sq. ft.; one story; and landward of 50-foot bluff setback and 75-year sea cliff retreat line • Accessory Dwelling Units (no Public Hearing required) 	Any project that requires a Coastal Development Permit but does not fall under the purview of the SHO
CONDOMINIUMS COMMERCIAL	< 3,000 sq. ft.	≥ 3,000 sq. ft.
CONDOMINIUMS RESIDENTIAL AND SUBDIVISIONS	4 or fewer Lots/Units, <i>if all apply</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside Hillside Design District • No Public Street Waiver • Does not abut or intercept certain creeks 	5+ Lots/Units, or if any apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Hillside Design District • Public Street Waiver required • Will abut or intercept certain creeks
CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS	NO	YES
CONDOMINIUM CONVERSION PERMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 or fewer residential units • Non-residential 	5 or more residential units
DEVELOPMENT PLANS	Additions of 1,000 to 3,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential floor area where: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An EIR is not required and 2. Another discretionary action by the SHO is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additions more than 3,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential floor area • Any nonresidential construction project where an EIR has been prepared

PROJECT TYPE	STAFF HEARING OFFICER	PLANNING COMMISSION
EIR CERTIFICATION	NO	YES
HOTEL CONVERSION PERMITS	NO	YES
GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT	NO	YES
LOCAL COASTAL PLAN AMENDMENTS	NO	YES
LOT LINE ADJUSTMENTS	Involving 4 or fewer lots	N/A (5+ lots require TSM)
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION ADOPTION	YES (for projects SHO approves)	YES (for projects PC approves)
PERFORMANCE STANDARD PERMITS	YES	NO
PLANNED RESIDENCE DEVELOPMENTS (PRDS)	NO	YES
PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUDS)	NO	YES
PUBLIC STREET WAIVER	NO	YES
REZONING OF PROPERTIES (INCLUDES SPECIFIC PLANS)	NO	YES
TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP TIME EXTENSIONS	YES	NO
ALL OTHER TIME EXTENSIONS	NO (Approved by Staff)	NO (Approved by Staff)
TRANSFER OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS	NO	TEDRs > 1,000 sq. ft.
VARIANCES	NO	YES
ZONING MODIFICATIONS	YES (Except FAR Mods and some Parking Mods and where no other approval is required from PC)	YES (if PC approval is required on the Mod request or the project)



DOES MY PROJECT REQUIRE A PUBLIC NOTICE?

The following is a summary of public notice requirements. Mailed notices are sent to property owners and tenants/occupants 10 calendar days prior to any noticed public hearing for a project. On-site posting and any required tenant noticing must also be completed 10 calendar days prior to any public hearing.



The City will prepare a **mailed notice** for all projects that require a public notice which will be sent to both property owners and tenants/occupants. However, additional on-site posting or other notices may be required that the applicant is responsible for delivering or posting at the property.



All projects that require a public notice also require a **Notice of Development sign** to be posted on site. Applicants are responsible for picking up the yellow sign at the City Planning Counter and installing at the site no later than 10 days prior to the first public hearing date.



In addition to the Notice of Development sign described above, all projects proposing **5 or more new units** under the City's Average Unit-Size Density Incentive Program (AUD) are required to post drawings of the proposed building on a sign erected at the project site.



All **single residential unit** projects subject to mailed noticing at the Single Family Design Board (SFDB) or Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) are also required to provide a hand-delivered "door to door" occupant noticing requirement in addition to the required mailed notice.



Certain projects may require an additional notice depending on the specific conditions of approval, or location (P-R Zone), or the type of review requested (Condominium Conversion). Review the Santa Barbara Municipal Code and speak to your Case Planner if you have questions about a special notice or additional submittal information.

PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE A MAILED NOTICE	DISTANCE*
<p>Development Review (PC, SHO, City Council)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Development Permit (No Public Hearing) 	<p>Owner: 100 ft* Tenant: 100 ft*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Other Coastal Development Permits 	<p>Owner: 300 ft Tenant: 100 ft*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condominium Conversions 	<p>Owner: 300 ft Tenant: On Site*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Other Development Review Projects 	<p>Owner: 300 ft Tenant: N/A*</p>
<p>Design Review (ABR, HLC, SFDB)</p> <p><i>A mailed notice is required at the first design review hearing, and when it is initially scheduled for Project Design Approval.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Multi-Unit and Non-Residential Buildings. A new main two-unit, multi-unit residential, or nonresidential building. Residential Additions. Additions over 500 square feet to an existing residential development. Upper Story Addition (ABR). A new upper story, or an addition to an existing upper story, of a residential development subject to ABR review. Upper Story Addition (HLC & SFDB). A new upper story, or an addition over 150 square feet to an existing upper story, of a single-unit residential or two-unit residential development. New Units. Any alteration that results in an additional residential unit on a lot. Nonresidential Additions. Small nonresidential additions as defined in SBMC Chapter 28.85 or Chapter 30.170 Grading. Projects involving grading in excess of 250 cubic yards outside the footprint of any main building Lighting. Projects involving exterior lighting with the apparent potential to create significant glare on neighboring parcels. Natural Features (HLC). Projects involving the placement or removal of natural features with the apparent potential to significantly alter the exterior visual qualities of real property Covered Parking Exception (HLC & SFDB). Projects involving an exception to the covered parking requirement as specified in SBMC 28.90.100.G.1.c. or 30.175.030.N.1.a.ii Minor Zoning Exception. Projects involving an application for a Minor Zoning Exception as specified in SBMC Section 30.245.050 	<p>Owner: 300 ft Tenant: N/A*</p>

**This is the minimum distance required by the Municipal Code; however, the City provides a 300 ft. radius mailed notice to all owners and tenants/occupants as a courtesy on all noticed projects.*



WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PUBLIC HEARINGS?

SCHEDULING YOUR HEARING

After staff has reviewed your application and determined it is ready for review, it will be placed on the next available agenda based on the order received. An agenda containing the meeting date for the item will be mailed to the property owner and the project applicant. Agendas are also posted on the City's website: SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

DO I NEED TO ATTEND?

Yes, the applicant's presence is required at any public hearing. If the item is scheduled on the Consent Calendar, applicants are advised to attend the hearing, but are not required to make a presentation of the project. If an applicant cancels or is not present at the hearing, a postponement fee will be charged, and the item will be continued indefinitely or scheduled to a later date.

PUBLIC HEARING ORDER

Review the [Design Guidelines](#) and [Planning Commission Guidelines](#) for detailed hearing procedures. In general, you can expect the order of the public hearing to go as follows:

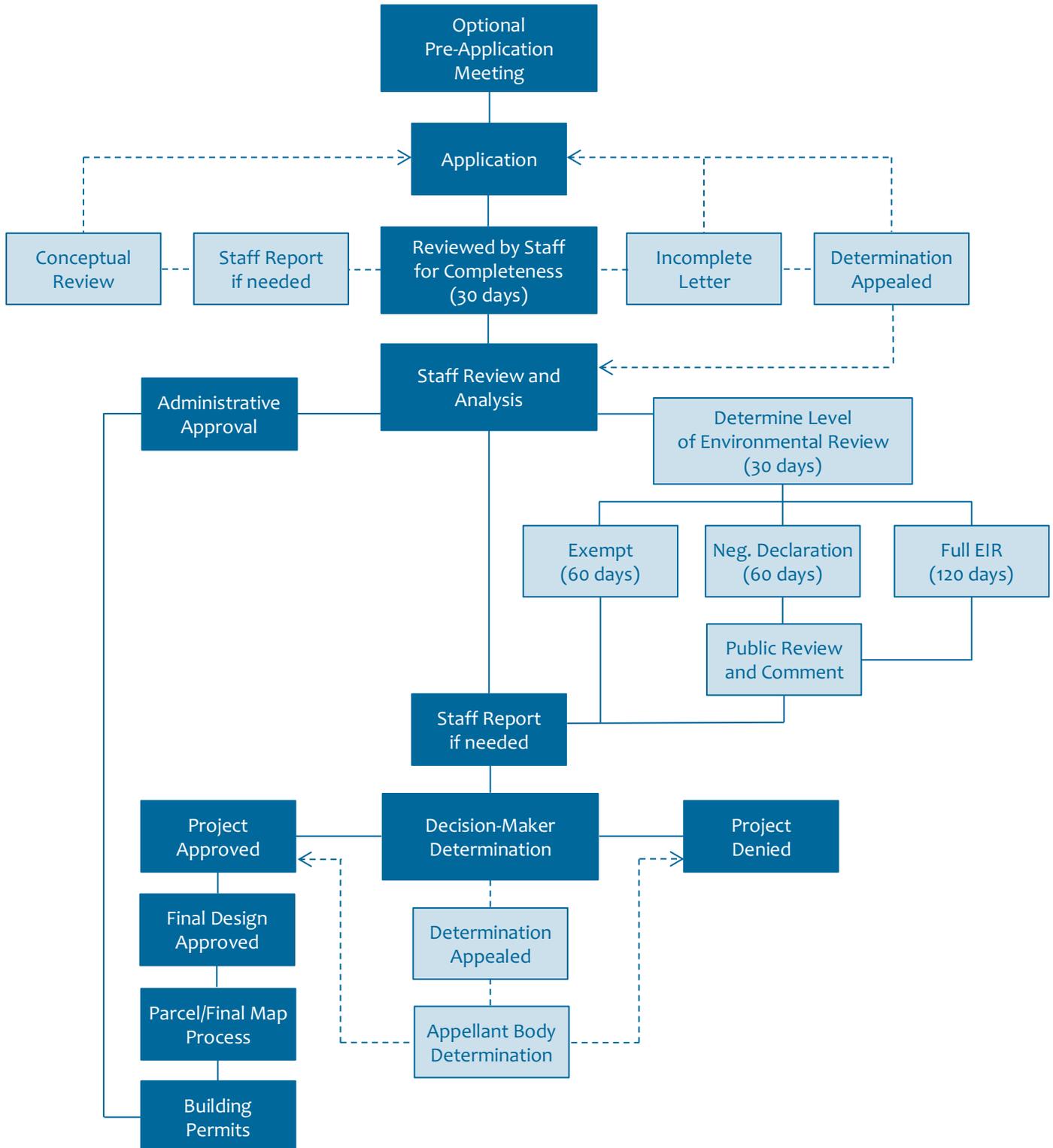
1. **Item is Opened.** The Chair opens the item by reading the address and project description.
2. **Staff Presentation.** Staff makes a presentation of the proposed project, if applicable.
3. **Applicant Presentation.** Applicant is generally given 15 minutes to present the project.
4. **Public Comment.** Public comment is opened for members of the public to speak on the item.
5. **Questions.** The Board or Commission asks questions of Staff, applicants, and others present.
6. **Comments.** The Board or Commission deliberates and has its own discussion.
7. **Motion.** The Board or Commission makes a motion for approval, approval with conditions, denial, or continuance, followed by a vote.
8. **Appeals.** The Chair announces the action and the time limit for appeal, if applicable.

APPEALS

Any decision-maker determination, including Consent Calendar decisions ratified by the Full Board or Commission, may be appealed. Appeals must be in writing, include the appeal fee, and must be filed within 10 calendar days of the meeting at which the review body took action or rendered its decision. See the [Appeal Process](#) handout for more information.

Only those persons who participated either orally or in writing on a project have standing to appeal the decision. Grounds for appeal are limited to those issues raised either orally or in written correspondence delivered to the review body at, or prior to, the public hearing.

PLANNING PROCESS FLOWCHART



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

- ✓ Take advantage of the City's **Pre-Application Services**.
- ✓ Read all application requirements carefully; be sure your submittals are correct and **complete**.
- ✓ Read the applicable **policies and zoning requirements** for your project. Be sure your project description conforms to these legal standards.
- ✓ Write a **detailed** project description.
- ✓ Quickly respond to your planner's requests for information. **Ask for clarification** if you do not understand a request.
- ✓ Review the applicable **Design Guidelines** and the **General Plan** or **Coastal Land Use Plan** policies. Failure to meet design guidelines and applicable policies may form a basis for denial of the project.
- ✓ Respond fully to comments made during conceptual review. **Review the minutes** from the previous meeting and be prepared to address each item.
- ✓ **Talk to your neighbors** and show them your design. You may be able to avoid potential significant issues without the costly delay of an appeal.
- ✓ Once your project is approved, **comply fully** with all conditions, plans, and codes. Request approvals for any revisions to approved plans.
- ✓ You are responsible for keeping track of project **time limits**. Resubmittals must occur in a timely fashion; inform your planner of any anticipated delays.