



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 9, 2018

**TO:** Complete Streets Commission

**FROM:** Zachary Dahl, Planning Services Manager

**SUBJECT: LOS ALTOS DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS**

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This memorandum is intended to provide the Commission with a brief overview of the City's development review and approval process for commercial, multiple-family and mixed-use projects that include new buildings and/or additions over 500 square feet. The development review and approval process for projects of this type is outlined in Zoning Code Chapter 14.78 (Design and Transportation Review). Additional information about the development review process and submittal requirements can be found on the Planning Division's webpage ([www.losaltoca.gov](http://www.losaltoca.gov)) in the commercial and multi-family design review section.

### Approval Process

1. Pre-application Study Session

Before a development application is formally submitted to the City, or during the initial staff review period, a design review study session with the Planning Commission is held to allow for early public notification and the Commission to provide early architectural and site design feedback to staff and the applicant.

2. Staff Review

Upon submittal of a development application, City staff (Planning, Building, Engineering, Fire) will review the project plans and materials for technical completeness, compliance with all applicable plans, design policies and Zoning regulations, and to ensure that all necessary information have been provided to allow for a comprehensive review of the proposed project.

3. Environmental Review

Once the application has been deemed complete, staff will review the proposed project for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Depending on the scope, size and complexity of the project, an outside environmental consultant may be retained to assist staff in the preparation of the necessary technical studies and analysis of any potential environmental effects. Depending on the findings, a project may be eligible for an exemption, it may require a more comprehensive initial study and adoption of a Negative Declaration (NegDec), or preparation a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) may be necessary.

4. Complete Streets Commission

The CSC holds the first public meeting and reviews the project design with regard to bicycle, pedestrian, parking and traffic elements. As specified in the Zoning Code, the CSC provides an advisory recommendation that will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and the City Council. This meeting does not require mailed notification and can be held during the project's environmental review period.

5. Planning Commission

The PC holds a public hearing to consider the full development application (design review, use permit, subdivision, environmental review, etc.) and makes a recommendation to the City Council. This public hearing requires public notification in a newspaper of local circulation (most often the Town Crier), mailed notices to all property owners and business tenants within 500 feet of the project and the installation of a development billboard posted along the property's street frontage. In addition, story poles are required to be installed on the site at least 20 days before the public hearing.

6. City Council

The CC holds a public meeting to consider the full development application (design review, use permit, subdivision, environmental review, etc.) and takes the final action to approve or deny the project. This public meeting requires mailed notices to all property owners and business tenants within 500 feet of the project and a development billboard posted along the property's street frontage. The story poles installed prior to the PC meeting are required to be maintained until after the CC has taken final action.

### **Required Design Review Findings**

In order to approve a project, the PC and CC must make the following design review findings per Zoning Code Section 14.78.060:

1. The proposal meets the goals, policies and objectives of the Los Altos General Plan and any specific plan, design guidelines and ordinance design criteria adopted for the specific district or area.
2. The proposal has architectural integrity and has an appropriate relationship with other structures in the immediate area in terms of height, bulk and design.
3. Building mass is articulated to relate to the human scale, both horizontally and vertically. Building elevations have variation and depth, and avoid large blank wall surfaces. Residential or mixed-use residential projects incorporate elements that signal habitation, such as identifiable entrances, stairs, porches, bays and balconies.
4. Exterior materials and finishes convey high quality, integrity, permanence and durability, and materials are used effectively to define building elements such as base, body, parapets, bays, arcades and structural elements. Materials, finishes, and colors have been used in a manner that serves to reduce the perceived appearance of height, bulk and mass, and are harmonious with other structures in the immediate area.

5. Landscaping is generous and inviting, and landscape and hardscape features are designed to complement the building and parking areas, and to be integrated with the building architecture and the surrounding streetscape. Landscaping includes substantial street tree canopy, either in the public right-of-way or within the project frontage.
6. Signage is designed to complement the building architecture in terms of style, materials, colors and proportions.
7. Mechanical equipment is screened from public view and the screening is designed to be consistent with the building architecture in form, material and detailing.
8. Service, trash and utility areas are screened from public view, or are enclosed in structures that are consistent with the building architecture in materials and detailing.

If the proposed project includes additional applications, such as a use permit, subdivision or variance, additional findings, as specified in the Zoning Code, are required as part of the approving action.