

City of Los Altos Development Roadmap

Yellow Light:

Due Diligence

Consult with qualified professionals and City staff to understand your project's requirements before submitting an application.

Environmental Review

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of proposed projects. While many projects qualify for exemptions from CEQA, others require environmental studies. If your project requires a CEQA document, the environmental review process will occur during application review (after your application is complete).



This guide is to be used for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the Los Altos Municipal Code and City website, which contain detailed regulations and requirements related to the development process.

1 Planning (Preliminary) Application Submittal

Once you've completed your due diligence, prepare your planning application to submit to the City. You may elect to submit a preliminary application to the City before submitting a formal application for high level feedback.

2 Planning Application Review

Your application will be reviewed by the Planning Division and other City departments (Building, Fire, Public Works, etc.) for completeness and compliance with City standards and policies.

3 Project Decision and Environmental Determination

Once your planning application review and CEQA review (if applicable) is complete, a decision will be made on your project. Certain projects require one or more public hearings by the Zoning Administrator, Historic Commission, Planning Commission, and/or City Council. Typically, once your project is approved, you will receive an approval letter and a list of conditions of approval.

Yellow Light:

Appeals

If a member of the public or the project applicant is dissatisfied with the decision of a project, the decision can typically be appealed. The appeal period typically lasts 2 weeks following a decision on a project.



4 Building Permit Submittal

Once the appeal period for your project has past, you may submit building permit applications to the building division. Information about the building permit submittal process is available on the [Building Division Webpage](#). If your project requires permits from Public Works (such as an encroachment permit), they can generally be submitted at this time as well.



Outside Agency Review

Certain projects will require review and/or permit(s) from outside agencies, such as Valley Water, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, etc. If outside agency permits are required, they will generally need to be addressed prior to issuance of your building permit.

5 Building Permit Plan Check

Once your building permit is submitted, it will be routed to City departments for review. Your permit application will be reviewed for compliance with building code requirements, City standards and policies, and consistency with your approved Planning permit. During building permit plan check, you will also be required to demonstrate compliance with project conditions of approval and implement any required mitigation measures that were adopted if your project required a CEQA document to be prepared. During the building permit plan check process, you may also be required to execute agreements related to your project, such as inclusionary housing agreements.

6 Fee Payments

Prior to issuance of your building permit, you'll be required to pay building permit fees. Additionally, if your project includes conditions of approval requiring impact or in-lieu fees to be paid, they will generally need to be paid before the building permit can be issued.

TOLL BOOTH AHEAD

7 Building Permit Issuance

Once your building permit application demonstrates compliance with all requirements and you've satisfied all project conditions of approval, you will be issued a building permit and may begin construction. Please be advised that your Planning approval will expire after a certain amount of time (typically two years from the approval date) if you have not received a building permit. It is the responsibility of the project applicant to ensure that a building permit is obtained in a timely manner to avoid expiration of the Planning approval.



8 Construction and Inspections

Throughout the construction process, your site will need to be inspected by a building inspector. Building inspections can be scheduled [online](#). Other reviewing department may also require inspection(s) of your project. You will need to coordinate with other City reviewers directly to schedule inspections.

9 Final Inspection and Occupancy

Once construction is complete, your site will be inspected by all required departments. During final inspection(s), staff will verify that your project is consistent with approved construction drawings. Your project is not ready for final inspections until all work is complete, including landscape installation and site clean up. Once you've passed all final inspections, you will receive a certificate of occupancy and may occupy the site. Congratulations!

Questions?

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