

DATE ISSUED: March 21, 2001

REPORT NO. 01-057

ATTENTION: Committee on Land Use and Housing
Agenda of March 28, 2001

SUBJECT: Land Development Manual - Project Submittal Requirements

SUMMARY

Issue(s) - Should the Committee on Land Use and Housing (LU&H) recommend that City Council approve the Project Submittal Requirements (Attachment No. 1) amending Volume I of the Land Development Manual to consolidate all project submittal requirements for development activities in the City of San Diego?

Manager's Recommendation - Recommend that LU&H forward the Project Submittal Requirements to the City Council with a recommendation of approval.

Planning Commission Recommendation - The Planning Commission hearing on this item will be held on March 22, 2001. Their recommendations will be provided to LU&H at the Committee meeting.

Other Recommendation(s) - A draft of these submittal requirements have been in use since the effective date of the Land Development Code on January 3, 2000. Over the past year, staff have collected suggested revisions from project customers and City staff and have incorporated those changes into revised Project Submittal Requirements being proposed for approval. In addition, staff has held public forums on the proposed revisions on February 21, 2001 and March 21, 2001 (over 120 attendees). Staff will report any additional recommendations resulting from these meetings at LU&H at the public hearing.

Environmental Impact - This activity is not a "project" and therefore exempt from CEQA pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 c (3).

Fiscal Impact - Consolidating the project submittal requirements for all projects will help both customers and staff save time in the submittal and project review process. By helping staff to receive better submittals at the beginning of project review and clearly informing customers of what the City considers a complete application, the submittal process will be more consistent and predictable. For some projects, this could result in a reduction in the number of project review cycles and thus, reduce a customer's time and costs in the review process.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the Land Development Code (LDC) going into effect, project submittal requirements for

development were found in various sections of the Municipal Code, in numerous public information bulletins, in a variety of guidelines, and in multiple submittal manuals used in different City staff work groups. With the adoption of the new LDC, the number of permit types were reduced and new permit types were created. To address these changes in the code, a draft of the Project Submittal Requirements was created. Along with a comprehensive overview of the submittal process, existing requirements were combined, format and terminology were made consistent, and unnecessary and redundant requirements were eliminated to create the draft.

The draft Project Submittal Requirements were released in January 2000 and applied to all development projects submitted to the City. As part of this draft, staff solicited comments from users regarding ways to improve, clarify, and simplify the requirements. During the past year, staff received more than 30 written comments on the draft from customers and staff and numerous verbal suggestions for ways to make the requirements better.

These suggestions have now been incorporated into revised Project Submittal Requirements (Attachment No. 1) that staff is recommending for approval.

DISCUSSION

Overview

Project submittal requirements must be sufficiently detailed to provide staff and the decision maker (City Council, Planning Commission, etc.) with enough information to determine a project's compliance with City regulations and land use policies. A key challenge in creating successful requirements is achieving balance between the needs for City review and the needs of the project customer who must often use the same plans and documents to bid the project and to guide project construction.

A design professional's plans would typically include most of the information required by the City's submittal requirements because of the need to clearly communicate to the owner and contractor the extent of the project, the materials used, the details for construction, and the relationship with adjacent improvements. City staff, however, sometimes require more than the typical plan and technical study would provide to confirm a project's compliance with specific City regulations. In some cases, staff must require that customers complete and submit details of project design that they would normally put off to a future date (e.g. requiring plans showing tenant improvements for a building at the same time plans for a building foundation are being reviewed). Both of these components of a project must often be reviewed at the same time to insure all provisions of the building code can be met now, and in future construction phases.

These issues require some flexibility in the project submittal requirements and a clear understanding of how they relate to the construction process. The organization and format of the City's proposed requirements attempts to achieve this balance and facilitate efficient project review.

Organization

The proposed project submittal requirements have been organized into sections, similar to the format of the permit and approval regulations of the LDC. While most projects are not subject to more than one section of the manual, consolidating all requirements in one place provides a complete guide to submitting any type of development to the City for review and approval.

Section 1, Guide to the Project Submittal Process, is an overview of the project submittal and review process, and provides helpful tips on how to successfully approach a project's design and submittal to the City for all types of permits and projects.

Section 2, Construction Permits - Structures, details submittal requirements for the many types of permits required to construct a building or structure in the City.

Section 3, Construction Permits - Grading and Public Right-of-Way, shows all of the submittal requirements for construction permits to perform grading and to do improvement work in the public right-of-way, such as curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.

Section 4, Development Permits/Approvals, covers submittal requirements for discretionary actions such as coastal development permits, conditional use permits, and planned development permits.

Section 5, Subdivision Approvals, details City submittal requirements related to subdividing land, vacating public rights-of-way, and other lot entitlement actions.

Section 6, Policy Approvals, covers submittal requirements for discretionary actions that would impact City land use policies such as land use plan amendments, rezonings, and development agreements.

While the submittal requirements will be offered to customers as a complete document, they will also be published as individual sections as a convenience to those who only do one type of permit business with the City.

Format

Each section of the manual is formatted into matrices that show the number and type of documents the City requires for each permit or approval and the information that each document must contain. A user of the manual first looks for the type of permit or approval they need, find the quantity and type of documents required, and then refer to the minimum submittal requirements checklist for the detail that must be included on each document. Details are either always required, conditionally required, or are recommended because they make staff review more efficient. At each project submittal session, staff uses this checklist to make sure the minimum information (always required detail and conditionally required detail) is provided. Customers can use the checklist in the same way to prepare their plans and other technical documents to make sure their submittal process goes smoothly.

Future Steps

The proposed submittal requirements will be made available on the City's website. Once approved, the final version will also be made available that enables customers to print tailored versions of the submittal requirements for their project along with the necessary forms to make a complete submittal. They will also have access to many helpful information bulletins that explain a variety of services that the Development Services Department offers for development customers.

Other improvements to the project submittal process are also underway. As part of the LU&H Technical Advisory Committee, City staff and project customers have developed several project submittal templates. These templates organize common information required for different City permits into consistent locations in a set of drawings, acting as standardized "cover sheets" for a set of plans. Customers that choose to use these standard project templates will be offered enhanced submittal and project review services from the City, including streamlined project completeness checks and less project review cycles. The templates will also be made available for customers to download from the City's website.

Another project submittal enhancement is the formation of a comprehensive team with technical expertise in all areas of project review. Staff providing project submittal services to customers now include planners, civil engineers, structural engineers, project managers, and plan review specialists. This team is part of the Project Management Division and takes in all submitted project plans and documents for any development activity in the City. Having technical staff as part of the submittal review process improves the quality of initial submittals. In turn, this can help shorten time for project review by reducing the number of staff review cycles. Where customers are proposing atypical projects, technical staff also assist in appropriate submittal requirement modification to fit the circumstances and still provide sufficient detail for project review staff. In addition, having a dedicated submittal team improves consistency in the way submittal requirements are implemented.

CONCLUSION

The revised Project Submittal Requirements cover all development projects and activities that require approval from the City of San Diego. Proposed revisions are aimed at clarifying submittal requirements and eliminating unnecessary standards. Staff, therefore, recommends that the Committee on Land Use and Housing forward the revised submittal requirements to City Council for approval and direct staff to continue to work with the Technical advisory committee and other customer groups to develop ways to improve the project submittal and review process.

ALTERNATIVES

Recommend approval of the Project Submittal Requirements with modifications.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina P. Christiansen, A.I. A.
Development Services Director

Approved: George I. Loveland
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LOVELAND/KGB

Attachment: 1. Draft Project Submittal Requirements