

DEVELOPING A RESIDENCE IN FAIRFAX - THE PLANNING PROCESS

In Fairfax, as in many Marin County communities, single-family residential projects require public hearings and discretionary decisions before the Planning and Building staff are able to process building permit applications for development. In Fairfax, residential projects are subject to a two-step public hearing process with discretionary decisions made at each step. The public hearings are held before the Fairfax Design Review Board and the Fairfax Planning Commission.

A "discretionary decision" by definition can either be for approval or denial of a project. If a project is denied at a Planning Commission or Design Review Board hearing, the decision can be appealed to the Fairfax Town Council. The Council is comprised of 5 officials elected by the citizens. The Planning Commission and the Design Review Board are comprised of citizen volunteers that are appointed by the Town Council.

Before a project is scheduled for a public hearing the applicant must submit a Planning Application (see attached) with detailed information including but not limited to the following:

1. A topographical boundary survey signed and stamped by a licensed land surveyor;
2. A soils report that addresses site soil drainage, relevant watershed boundaries, relationship of the proposed construction to drainage patterns in the vicinity and cumulative effects of run-off, site geology and the safety of the proposed construction and foundation adequacy;
3. Preliminary development plans that include a site plan, floor plans, a landscaping plan and a site grading and erosion control plan;
4. Elevations of the proposed project;
5. Profiles showing the relationship between proposed structures and adjacent neighboring residences, parking structures and public roadway improvements.

The project is reviewed by the Fairfax Planning Commission for compliance with the Fairfax Town Code including but not limited to the following Chapters of the Fairfax Zoning Ordinance:

Town Code Chapter 17.22	General Zone Regulations
Town Code Chapter 17.28	Off Street Parking Regulations
Town Code Chapter 17.32	Ridgeline Development
Town Code Chapter 17.38	Hill Area Residential Development Overlay Zone
Town Code Chapter 17.42	RS 6 Single Family Residential Zone

The architectural design of a proposed residence is reviewed by the Design Review Board (DRB). The DRB determines whether the design, size and site orientation of a residence is compatible with the topography and size of the site and with the size, design and orientation of other structures and public improvements in the neighborhood (Town Code Chapter 17.12).

Only after a project is approved by both the Design Review Board and the Planning Commission is a project submitted to the Department of Planning and Building Services for a building permit. Both the Design Review Board and Planning Commission have the authority to apply conditions upon a project prior to approval.

Therefore, staff cannot predict what the outcome of the above described public hearing process would be or what conditions may be placed upon a given project, if a project is approved.

Correspondingly, staff cannot determine in advance whether the Town will ultimately issue a building permit to allow construction on any parcel within the Town limits.

Information regarding Fire Department requirements for development must be directed to the Ross Valley Fire Department (address and phone # included below). Questions regarding water hook-ups, sanitary sewer service and school impact fees should be directed to the following agencies:

Ross Valley Fire Department
777 San Anselmo Avenue
San Anselmo, CA. 94960
(415)258-4686

Marin Municipal Water District
220 Nellen Avenue
Corte Madera, CA. 94925
(415)924-4600

Ross Valley Sanitary District
2000 Larkspur Landing Circle
Larkspur, CA. 94939
(415)461-1122

Ross Valley School District
46 Green Valley Court
San Anselmo, CA. 94960

Copies of the Planning Application and copies of the Ordinances listed above can be obtained at the Fairfax Town Hall.