



What is a Design Review Permit?

The City of San Rafael requires design review of new development projects and exterior building renovations or additions to ensure that new buildings or changes to existing development will maintain a proper balance between development and the natural environment, contribute to the attractiveness of the City, and promote design creativity and excellence. This review is not required to grant an entitlement of use, but rather to regulate design of structures and site improvements for an allowable use or activity. The review process covers site design, auto and pedestrian circulation, buildings, materials, colors, landscaping, signs, and the compatibility with surrounding characteristics. Design criteria are contained in the San Rafael Municipal Code zoning districts and Chapter 14.25, City of San Rafael Design Guidelines, Hillside Residential Guidelines Manual, Canal Design Guidelines, and the Community Design and Neighborhood Elements in the General Plan 2020.

The City of San Rafael Zoning Ordinance, General Plan 2020 and design guidelines can be viewed at the City Clerk's Office, the Community Development Department, the Library, or the City's website at www.cityofsanrafael.org. Ref. SRMC Chapter 14.25.

How do I Apply for a Design Review Permit?

A General Application Form filled out and signed by both the property owner and applicant must be submitted to the Planning Division, along with the appropriate submittal materials and application fee. General Zoning Application submittal requirements may be obtained from the City Planning Division or City website. You may also contact a City Planner to review the requirements for a particular project.

What is the Design Review Permit Review Process?

San Rafael has three types of Design Review Permits; Major, Minor and Administrative-level. Major Design Review Permits require review and approval by the Planning Commission at a public hearing, with a recommendation by the Design Review Board. Minor Design Review Permits are decided at a public hearing by the Zoning Administrator. Administrative level permits are reviewed by staff, and do not require notice or hearing. The Design Review Board serves as an advisory body to the Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and Staff on design related matters.

Prior to conduct of any public meetings on a Design Review Permit, a notice is mailed at least 15 calendar days prior to the hearing date to all property owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius of the site, and the designated Neighborhood/ Homeowner's Association, so that the public will have an opportunity to participate in the public hearing process. You are encouraged to contact the Neighborhood / Homeowner's Association about your proposed project. The Planning Division can provide the name and address of your association. Comments received from the public will be considered during the public review process conducted for the proposed project. The decision making body will take an action at the hearing, and must be able to make findings as required by SRMC Chapter 14.25.

What Are Some Common Project Types?

Some of the **common projects types** (and related level of review) are as follows:

- ❖ Major Environmental and Design Review Permit (Planning Commission Review with Design Review Board Recommendation), include: Hillside Subdivisions; New Residence within 100 vertical feet of a designated ridge; Second dwelling units over 800 square feet or in two-story detached structure or in required setbacks; Multifamily structures or additions greater than 40%; New Non-residential building or addition over 1,250 square feet; Sign Programs and Murals; New stand-alone wireless communications facilities (monopoles); Major grading (1,000 cubic feet of cut or 2,000 cubic feet of fill per year); Landscaping as part of a development or determined to significantly alter the character or appearance of a site.
- ❖ Minor Environmental and Design Review Permit (Zoning Administrator Level Review), include: New single-family residences and additions over 500 square feet in hillside areas; New two-story single-family residences; Residential accessory structures or additions in ridgeline areas; New two-story duplexes; Additions to multi-family structures under 40% of existing total building square footage; Additions to nonresidential structures less than 40% or 1,250 square feet in size; Modifications to existing wireless antenna facilities; Boat docking facilities; Sign program amendments; Grading (over 50 cubic yards of cut or fill and less than 1,000 cubic yards of cut or 2000 cubic yards of fill); Modifications to site, landscape, parking or previously approved major or minor building designs.
- ❖ Administrative Design Permit, include: Roof modifications to Eichler and Alliance homes (-EA); Decks over 100 square feet; Retaining walls over 3 feet; Detached accessory structures in hillside areas; One-story duplexes; Minor changes to approved residential, nonresidential or wireless communications facility projects; Outdoor dining areas; Satellite dishes; Outdoor storage areas

No Design Review permit is required for one-story single-family residences and decks in non-hillside areas, ordinary maintenance or repairs, installation of solar panels on existing structures or grounds. Approved projects typically are provided one-year to obtain permits and commence construction. Any subsequent changes to the approved project design including its details, colors and materials, or landscaping may require prior approval of a Design Review Permit amendment.

Application Processing Time

Planning Staff must review applications within **30 days of submittal date**, and will notify you if additional information is needed. Administrative projects typically require 3-6 weeks processing time, while projects subject to Zoning Administrator or Planning Commission review may take 6-32+ weeks to complete the review process. The amount of time required for processing varies depending on project complexity, level of review, initial completeness, whether multiple zoning entitlements are required, complexity of environmental issues, as well as the volume of projects under review. To help assure the review process runs as quickly as possible, it is recommended that the applicant meet with planning staff for an initial consultation, review plans with neighbors prior to submittal, provide accurate plans and timely resubmittals, and request prior conceptual review of larger projects.

Appeal Rights

A Zoning Administrator or Administrative Project may be appealed to the Planning Commission. Planning Commission actions may be appealed to the City Council.

revised 4/2017