



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Process Improvement Bulletin

August 2006

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- MINISTERIAL PERMITS 1
- NEW HOMES IN TRACTS 1
- ORCUTT PILOT PROGRAM 1
- APPEALS 2
- NOTICING CHANGES 2
- AGRICULTURAL PERMITS 2
- CUSTOMER SERVICE 3
- WEEKEND ZONING ENFORCEMENT 3
- ZORP 3
- REGIONAL BARS 4
- VIRTUAL ONE STOP 4
- ZONING VIOLATIONS 4
- CONCEPT REVIEW 4
- PROCESS IMPROVEMENT WORK PLAN 06/07 4

.....

Suggestions for other Process Improvements?

Please e-mail:

psaley@co.santa-barbara.ca.us

.....

John Baker
Director

Dianne Meester Black
Assistant Director

In Santa Barbara
123 E. Anapamu St.
568-2000

In Santa Maria
624 W. Foster Rd.
934-6250

In Buellton
185 W. Hwy 246 #101
686-5020

.....

Visit us on the web at:

www.sbcountyplanning.org

2005-2006 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT SUCCESSES

It has been a busy year for those involved in the process improvement efforts at the County of Santa Barbara's Planning and Development Department this past year. With the assistance of an Oversight Committee, consisting of community volunteers, P&D staff and Board of Supervisors' assistants, the department was able to focus their efforts on the five targeted priorities endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in May 2005. The objective of the five priorities was to "make the process easier to navigate, and more time efficient and cost effective, while maintaining the quality of development in the County." Progress on the five priorities is discussed in this Bulletin.

MINISTERIAL PERMITTING & APPEALS UPDATE

Streamlining the ministerial permitting process is a high priority for the Board, Oversight Committee and the Planning and Development Department. The department has made great strides to accomplish this goal. Several ordinance changes have occurred to simplify the process, particularly for new single family homes. The new Zoning Clearance process went into effect on November 18, 2005. This new process provides for staff review of a proposal for compliance with ordinance and other requirements similar to a Land Use Permit (LUP), but it does not require public noticing nor the opportunity for appeal. The long-term goal is to shift smaller, simple projects to the Zoning Clearance process where appropriate. Since its inception, over 150 projects have taken advantage of this process with many more expected to in the near future.

Streamlined Process for New Homes in Subdivisions

The first area where the new Zoning Clearance process has been applied is to new homes in tracts of five or more units approved since Jan. 1, 1990. To date, over 100 new homes have been expedited due to this ordinance change.

Orcutt Pilot Program

The Zoning Clearance process was also implemented in the Orcutt Community Plan area in March 2006. The major policies from the Community Plan were converted into a yes/no checklist, making the process much easier for applicants. Since its inception, virtually all projects proposed in the Orcutt Community area have met the "new homes in tracts" process discussed above. Most new projects in the Old Town area will be able to take advantage of this streamlined process through the Orcutt Pilot Program.

ORCUTT COMMUNITY AREA



Process Improvement Bulletin

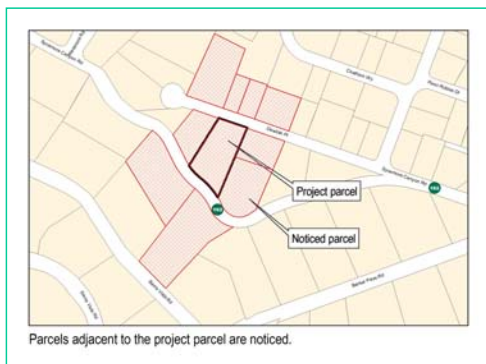
APPEALS UPDATE

Another priority is to clarify and improve the appeals process. Appeals generally occur late in the process, after applicants have spent considerable time and incurred substantial costs on plans. Changes to the appeals ordinance went into effect on November 18, 2005 for the Inland Area and on February 24, 2006 for the Montecito Area. These changes now require an appellant to have participated in the review process in some way before they can raise an appeal. Appeals of LUPs also occur much earlier in the process concurrent with Preliminary Board of Architectural Review (BAR) Approval, before the final working drawings have been prepared, when chances of resolving the issues are greater.

Improved Land Use Permit Noticing

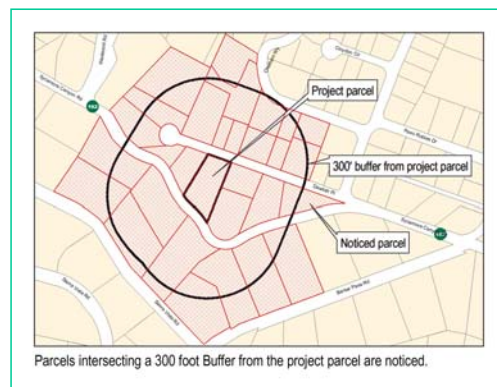
The noticing procedures for LUPs were also modified on February 24, 2006. The previous procedures required that notices be posted on a site after project approval which meant that an appeal would be filed after the working drawings were prepared. The new LUP noticing procedures provide for earlier mailed notice to adjacent property owners upon application submittal, allowing neighbors to receive notice much earlier in the process before a lot of time and money has been spent on drawings. The earlier noticing is designed to provide ample opportunity to resolve issues much earlier when an applicant is more willing to alter the plans based on neighbor input. There are two levels of notice (adjacent properties & those within 300') depending on the type of project.

NOTICE OF ADJACENT PARCELS



.....
*Level of Noticing
will depend on the
type of project
proposed*
.....

NOTICE OF PARCELS W/IN 300 FT.



AGRICULTURAL PERMITTING UPDATE

Agriculture has always been a significant part of Santa Barbara County. Given its importance, streamlining the agricultural permitting process is a priority for P&D's process improvement efforts. The first change implemented was when the Board adopted an amendment to the Grading Ordinance in 2005 to allow permit exemptions for erosion control projects funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). According to NRCS staff, the program has been extremely successful and this year marks the first time that the local NRCS office has received more applications than program funding available and the local office was able to receive another office's allocation to meet the demand.

Agricultural Advisory Committee Involvement

The Department is currently working with the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Oversight Committee on ways to simplify the review process for typical agricultural projects. Upcoming improvements slated for consideration include changing the processing of some agricultural improvements from LUP to Zoning Clearance or Exemption. Additionally, P&D is working with the AAC to review the existing threshold of 20,000 square feet of cumulative buildings on a parcel, regardless of its size, that requires development plan approval by the PC. The goal is to develop a more logical threshold limit that considers the parcel size and the type of ag-zoning involved. Ordinance amendments are scheduled for Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hearings this fall.

Process Improvement Bulletin

CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATES

The Department has also undertaken several changes aimed at improving its level of customer service. There have been many customer service improvements in the past several months. A new and improved P&D website was developed based on input from staff and the public to make the website more user-friendly and to allow for easier navigation. Feedback on the new website has been positive and website improvements will continue to be a department focus. Additionally, P&D's Email Notification Program was implemented in October 2005. To date, 135 people have registered online to receive monthly email reminders on new permits in specified zip codes. Many others access the site to find out the status of a specific project.

Customer Service Surveys

Register for Email Updates on Projects in Your Area!

Visit P&D's website at: www.sbcountyplanning.org

As a way to measure the success of process improvement efforts, a focused group of customers have been surveyed in the past and results have been gradually improving. When asked whether the department has improved over the last year, an overwhelming majority (80%) agreed that service has definitely improved. This has been a tremendous improvement compared to the 23% approval rating the department received at the beginning of 2005. The department also began soliciting feedback from permit applicants regarding the level of service received and results have also been very positive with 90-100% of customer satisfaction with staff assistance at the counter and during initial meetings, responsiveness to requests, and their overall P&D experience.

Increased Services to North County

The Planning and Development Department has increased services to North County residents this past year. The Subdivision/Development Review Committee and the Zoning Administrator now alternate their meetings between North and South County in order to provide mutually convenient locations for all customers. These meetings are linked by video conferencing to reduce travel time for customers.

Weekend Enforcement !!!

**Saturdays & Sundays
8 am to 5 pm**

**ZONING ENFORCEMENT
HOTLINE:**

**(805) 568-3558 South County
(805) 934-6250 North County**

Technical and Customer Service Trainings for Staff

The department also streamlined its training program to identify core technical trainings for staff planners. These core courses are targeted towards improving job skills necessary to provide quality and efficient customer service by reducing ambiguities in staff communication with applicants. All new and existing staff planners are required to attend the identified core courses for their specific job class.

Additionally, the department recognizes its role as a public service agency and has developed a customer service workshop for staff that is tailored towards increasing the level of service provided during interactions with the public. Due to the importance of customer service, all employees are required to participate in this workshop regardless of their job classifications. Periodic workshops will be held throughout the year for all new employees.

ZONING ORDINANCE REFORMATTING PROJECT (ZORP)

The new Land Use and Development Code was released for public review on March 17, 2006. A public review period of over three months was provided to allow ample time for review of the newly reformatted ordinance. Responses to comments received are posted on the P&D website. ZORP Phase I is a reformatted, simplified version of existing zoning ordinances, making them more consistent and user-friendly. The upcoming Phase 2 will address substantive ordinance amendments identified during Phase I. Additionally, the Montecito Land Use and Development Code was released on May 23, 2006 with comments due on June 23rd. The Final Hearing Copy of ZORP is scheduled for release in mid to late summer. Hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors are tentatively scheduled for September and October this year.

Process Improvement Bulletin

OTHER PROCESS IMPROVEMENT UPDATES

In addition to the five priorities initiated in May 2005, the department also completed several other process improvement projects that affect the permitting process.

Regional BARs

Regional Boards of Architectural Review (BARs) were created in November 2005 in an effort to better serve the local communities. There are now four BARs up and running: Montecito (pre-existing), North, Central and South BARs. Each newly created regional BAR meets once every three weeks in the local community. Regional BAR schedules and agendas can be accessed through P&D's website at:

www.sbcountyplanning.org/boards/rbar/index.cfm.



Virtual One Stop Public Information Counter

Planning and Development has been working with various County departments involved in the development review process to improve coordination and service to the public. One of the objectives of the multi-departmental coordination was to create a virtual one stop center for the public to receive input on their project early in the process. The department recently implemented the Virtual One Stop Public Counter. This service has live video linking capabilities that can bring the involved departments together in a virtual meeting room to discuss the project with the project applicant during the intake process.



Concept Review

Both the County and Montecito Planning Commissions have instituted a Concept Review process. This allows applicants to obtain feedback on a development proposal at the beginning of the process, before considerable time and money have been spent developing plans. The new process has been positively received by applicants and the public.

Zoning Violation and Enforcement Procedures

P&D is working with a subcommittee of the Planning Commission to revise zoning enforcement procedures to clarify the process. Recommendations include limiting investigations of complaints to the subject matter of the complaint and modifying the timing to abate minor violations discovered during the permit process on agricultural properties. Recommendations are expected to go to the Board in the fall of this year.

Development Activity (May 2005-May 2006)

266 Discretionary Projects Decided

- o 263 Project Approvals
- o 3 Project Denials

977 Land Use Permits Processed

- o 973 LUPs issued
- o 4 LUPs denied

147 Coastal Development Permits Processed

- o 146 CDPs issued
- o One CDPs denied

Register your email address for specific project information in your area at:

www.sbcountyplanning.org

2006/2007 PROCESS IMPROVEMENT WORKPLAN

P&D staff is busy implementing a work plan for the 06/07 fiscal year. Some upcoming improvements are:

- ✓ *Agricultural Permitting changes - Fall 2006*
- ✓ *Expanding Zoning Clearance Process to LUPs following Development Plans & CUPs - Fall 2006*
- ✓ *Inland Area and Montecito ZORP (Land Use Development Codes) - Winter 2006*
- ✓ *Review level of discretionary review for certain projects - Spring 2007*
- ✓ *Improving inter-departmental coordination - Ongoing*
- ✓ *Improving Customer Service - Ongoing*