

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
Phone: (650) 941-7222
www.losaltoshills.ca.gov



Site Development Review FAQ's

What projects are subject to site development review?

- All existing structures involving exterior modifications and/or expansion, all new structures, and any new coverage (decking, patios, walkways, etc.) must be reviewed for compliance with Town Zoning and Site Development Ordinances.

At what stage do I file for site development review?

- You are required to apply for and obtain planning approval (site development permit) prior to applying for a building permit.
- Most projects (those with any expansion of floor and/or development area) also require a zoning permit which can be processed along with the site development permit.
- Some projects (new residences and major additions) also require a geotechnical report to be submitted for review by the Town Geologist. This review is done concurrently with the processing of the zoning and site development permits.

Are my plans reviewed at a public meeting?

- Depending on the scope of the project, a public hearing may be required. See attached "Site Development Review Process".

What must I do to file for site development approval?

- First, a site analysis meeting with a planner is required prior to submittal of an application. Engineering Department staff will participate in the site analysis meeting when there are changes to grading or drainage, driveway modifications, road or pathway dedications or other engineering matters related to the project.
- Second, a checklist will be completed by the planner at the site analysis meeting listing the submittal requirements, including applicable fees and deposits. Once all items on the checklist are ready for submittal then plans may be submitted to the Planning Department for review.

If my plans are going to be reviewed by the Planning Commission, Fast Track or at a Site Development hearing, do I need to attend the meeting?

- Yes-it is very important that you or a representative attend the meeting. The Planning Commission, Fast Track or Site Development meeting staff may have questions of you, or may request changes to your plans. Neighbors may also be present, and it would be important for you to hear their comments, and respond, if needed.
- It is recommended that you share your plans and discuss your project with your neighbors before filing for site development approval. Very often, a concern of a neighbor can be resolved in the early stages of design.

How are my plans judged?

When reviewing your design plans, the approving authority considers the following:

- How well the structure and other improvements fit the site and how the project fits into the neighborhood (height, elevations, and placement on the site).
- Is the project obtrusive to neighbors (avoid unreasonable interference with views or privacy).
- Visibility of the site and the need for screening or other mitigation.
- Have the proposed structures been designed to follow the natural contours with minimal grading, minimal impervious coverage and maximum preservation of natural topography and existing vegetation? On sloped building sites, stepped foundations are encouraged (and may be required).
- Geotechnical, slope, creeks, swales or other topographic constraints on the site.
- Conformance to Town Zoning and Site Development Ordinances.

How do I know if there is a proposed or existing pathway on my property?

- Refer to the 2005 Master Pathway Plan (available at Town Hall) and/or contact the Planning Department.

How long does the site development review take?

The amount of time taken for project review will vary with the level of review your project requires (see attached Site Development Review Process). The following list provides a general time frame for the review process:

- **STAFF LEVEL:** Projects at this level are generally reviewed within two weeks of submittal of your application. Please keep in mind that this is for the initial review, generally there are items that will need to be addressed and revisions submitted.
- **STAFF WITH NOTICE:** This level of review requires a Site Development hearing in which applications are usually reviewed by staff (with notice to neighbors within 500 feet) three to four weeks following submittal of your application.

Projects approved at the Site Development meeting are placed on the next Planning Commission agenda. If any member of the Commission or the community files an appeal, a public hearing date will be set by the Planning Commission.

- **PLANNING COMMISSION:** Planning Commission applications take longer as plans are reviewed by, when appropriate, the Fire Department, Town Geologist, the Santa Clara County Water District, Pathways and Environmental Design Committees, and Planning and Engineering Departments. Also, projects reviewed by the Commission are typically more complex than those reviewed administratively or by staff (with notices to neighbors within 500 feet). Many projects are reviewed by the Planning Commission six to eight weeks following submittal of an application. However, projects will not be scheduled for a public meeting until clearance is received from ALL applicable reviewing agencies. If the Planning Commission wishes to view modified plans, additional time will be required.

Projects approved by the Planning Commission will be placed on the City Council consent calendar three weeks following the Planning Commission meeting. In the event that there is not a Council meeting on that date, there is a deadline by which an appeal must be filed by (22 days following the Planning Commission meeting). If any member of the Council or the community wishes to appeal the Commission's decision, the Council will set a public hearing date, usually two to four weeks following the appeal.

- **FAST-TRACK:** Applications that meet the criteria for Planning Commission Review may qualify for "fast-track" review. "Fast-track" applications will generally be reviewed by the same departments as a Planning Commission application and noticing to neighbors will also be required. However, "fast-track" applications will be reviewed at a Site Development Hearing conducted by the Planning Director, once the project receives Planning and Engineering Department clearance. A project may qualify for "fast-track" review if the Planning Director determines the following:
 - a) The project conforms to the General Plan, Town Codes and policies, and/or the conditions of a subdivision, as applicable;
 - b) The project does not require a variance or conditional development permit;
 - c) The project does not have substantive neighborhood opposition;
 - d) The applicant accepts all of the conditions of approval in writing.

*Please note that the Planning Director's decision to "fast-track" or to refer a project to the Planning Commission may not be appealed.

What types of conditions of approval would be placed on my project?

The Town has standard conditions of approval that generally apply to all new residences and major additions within the Town. The following list is a sample of standard conditions of approval:

1. Subsequent to final framing a landscape screening and erosion control plan must be reviewed at a Site Development Hearing. Landscaping required for screening purposes must be installed prior to final inspection.
2. A landscape maintenance deposit, equal to the cost of materials and installation for all landscaping required for screening purposes, must be posted prior to final inspection.
3. Specifications for outdoor lighting must be submitted for Planning Department approval prior to acceptance of plans for building plan check. Lighting fixtures shall generally be shielded downlights.
4. Standard swimming pool conditions require that lighting be kept to a minimum and that the pool equipment be enclosed on all four sides for noise mitigation and screening.
5. Skylights, if utilized, must be designed to reduce emitted light and no lighting shall be placed in skylight wells.
6. An open space easement may be required over portions of the property with steep slopes generally in excess of 30% and the presence of heritage oak trees and/or creek corridors
7. Dedication of a pathway easement and/or construction of a pathway if consistent with the Pathway Master Plan, and the Pathways Element, and if recommended by the Pathways Committee.
8. Any applicable geotechnical conditions recommended by the Town Geologist.
9. The height and location of the new development must be certified by a civil engineer or licensed land surveyor prior to final project inspection.
10. A final drainage plan must be submitted for review and approval by the City Engineer prior to acceptance of plans for building plan check.
11. An erosion control plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the Engineering Department prior to acceptance of plans for building plan check.
12. A grading and construction operation plan must be submitted to address truck traffic issues regarding dust, noise, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic safety on and surrounding roadways; storage of construction materials; clean-up area; placement of sanitary facilities; parking for construction vehicles; and parking for construction personnel.
13. The property owner must repair any damage caused by construction of the project to pathways, private driveways, and public and private roadways.
14. Approved numbers or addresses shall be placed on all new and existing buildings to be plainly visible and legible from the street or road fronting the property.
15. The access roadway to the property shall have the vertical clearance and the width maintained for vehicular access for fire vehicles.
16. Fire sprinklers and/or a fire hydrant may be required if determined necessary by the Fire Department.
17. Class A roofing is required for the new construction.

Please note that additional conditions may be added to address unique features of the property. Some of the conditions are likely to apply to minor additions or other smaller projects, as applicable.