



DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Public Works Engineering and Transportation
Community Development

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Table of Contents

Development Process 3

Pre-application..... 3

Application for Entitlements 3

 1. Quasi-judicial..... 3

 2. Legislative..... 4

Application for Post-Entitlements 5

 1. Subdivisions 5

 2. Non-Subdivisions (apartments, duplex, fourplex, hotels, etc) 5

Construction..... 6

Definitions 7

Development Process

The purpose of this document is to describe the Development Process as it moves from Planning to Development Engineering then to Building at the City of Davis. This document is intended to be used as both a guide for staff and as informational for developers so that they understand the process. In addition to this document, the zoning ordinance (Chapter 40 or the Davis Municipal Code) also describes much of this. The zoning ordinance can be found here: <https://ecode360.com/45134446#45134446>.

Pre-application

- While some projects may be able to get their questions answered with a phone call to Planning staff, other developers may want to have a pre-application where they can provide a deposit, or pay directly per hour for meetings, which allows them to engage with staff and ask questions. The amounts for pre-application are shown on the fee schedule (e.g., FY24/25 amounts are \$3582 deposit or \$872/hour for a meeting). The full fee schedule for Planning can be found on this web page: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/finance/fee-schedules>. There is not a separate application but there is a check box on the main application. In order to request a pre-application, the developer must contact the planning department and request the Principal Planner.
- A member from each department will be included in the meetings at this stage. Planning will take a lead role and stick with the project throughout (though the actual Planning staff member may change throughout the project).
- Applicants will be encouraged to share as complete a project description and project components as possible to get the best feedback from staff.

Application for Entitlements

- There are several types of Development applications.
 1. Quasi-judicial
 - A. Type of Application
 - i. Subdivisions of 5 or more parcels will result in a **Final Map**
 - For Subdivisions within the City Limits – application should include everything on the checklist and the application form itself.
 - ii. Subdivisions of less than 5 parcels will result in a **Parcel Map**.
 - The current City process is that the parcel map is approved by the Subdivision Committee, which is defined here: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/commissions-and-committees/subdivision-committee>
 - The applicant submits their application to the Planning Department and the project is assigned to a Planner. Their application may be just to subdivide the land, or it could be to subdivide and then build on each lot.
 - Parcel Map – The parcel map process is outlined in Muni Code Section 36.06.090.
 - iii. Commercial and Multifamily development (could be for retail, manufacturing, apartments, hotels, etc.) on a single lot.
 - Design Review
 - Conditional Use Permit (CUP) (if needed to approve the use pursuant to Zoning or the PD)
 - Application could also include a lot merger to combine lots or a parcel map to split a larger lot
 - B. Completeness: Once application is submitted (for Quasi-judicial), the assigned planner will review the submittal and respond to the applicant within 30 days if the application is complete (required by law). Completeness is compared to the checklist for compliance by the planner assigned to the project. This checklist is found on pages 2-7 of the

application located here:

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/home/showpublisheddocument/12833/637798223628630000>

- C. CEQA Determination. The Principal Planner will work with the applicant and the City's EIR consultant to determine the level of CEQA required.
- D. Design Review/CUP/TM: If the application is complete, the planner will send out a request for comments form to the Development & Engineering Review Team (DERT) and identify the amount of time to provide comments on the submittal. There are different components that may be submitted at different times, so it's important that the planner make it clear in their email request what is being reviewed (tentative map, design review, etc.) and also what submittal number it is, and if the project is governed by the General Plan or the Downtown Specific Plan. The planner should be submitting the comments to the developer in Word or Excel format and asking that the developer respond to these in the same format as well as making adjustments to the plans for the second (third, fourth, etc.) submittal.
- E. Conditions of Approval: Once the planner feels that the comments have been adequately addressed, they will include mitigation measures in the draft conditions and send out a request for providing comments on the Conditions of Approval, including a template to start with that are the City's base conditions with the mitigation measures. There will be 10 days to provide conditions. The final conditions will be submitted with the Tentative Map to the Planning Commission if governed by the General Plan or approved by the Community Development Director if governed by the Downtown Specific Plan.
- F. Action Letter / Resolution: Once conditions are approved, the planner will write the Action Letter to the applicant and cc the PWET Director/City Engineer and the Principal Civil Engineer in charge of Development and include the resolution approved by the PC. This letter shall include the date the entitlements expire.
- G. Tracking Spreadsheet: Planner puts all COAs (which will include CEQA Mitigation items) on a spreadsheet for ease of tracking. Spreadsheet shall include which department is responsible for each condition. Also include any DA requirements/milestones.

2. Legislative

- A. General Plan and Zoning (Planned Development, Specific Plans)
 - i. For Subdivisions outside the City Limits (need to annex) and/or that include a conversion of land use (General Plan designation) require a public vote – application will be similar to other subdivisions except that it will have to be certified by City Council at the EIR stage to determine if it will be put on the election ballot. The Planning Commission will need to weigh in on Zoning and General Plan consistency before the project is taken to Council. Once approved by the public, the process will follow the same as above.
- B. A General Plan amendment is a decision by the City Council and they can reject without findings.

- The Online application document is 21 pages long, which is here:
<https://www.cityofdavis.org/home/showpublisheddocument/12833/637798223628630000>
(same link as provided under Completeness above). It is broken down as follows:
 - 1. Page 1 is the actual application signed by the property owner.
 - 2. Pages 2-3 include the Application Procedure and Filing requirements.
 - 3. Page 4 is a table that describes submittal requirements for different types of projects.
 - 4. Pages 5-7 included explanations of the submittal requirements
 - 5. Pages 8-9 is the explanation of the developer's obligation to pay fees.
 - 6. Page 10 is a signature page acknowledging the obligation.
 - 7. Pages 11-14 are the fee agreement.
 - 8. Pages 15–21 are the Environmental Information Form.

Application for Post-Entitlements

There are two types of applications for Post-Entitlements: Subdivisions and Non- Subdivisions.

1. Subdivisions

- A. Action Letter / Resolution Received: PWET Principal Civil Engineer (PCE) receives action letter with resolution attached from Planning stating that the project now has entitlements. This includes the final COAs.
- B. Kick-off Meeting with Developer: PWET reaches out to Developer and set up kick meeting for the post-entitlement process. This meeting to include the assigned planner, the Building Chief, the Direction of PWET, the Director of PWUO and the Community Development Director.
- C. Final Map or Parcel Map: Application for this needs to be completed and submitted with fees. When reviewing the map, engineering will check against the COAs and CEQA Mitigation requirements to ensure all relevant items have been included.
 - Parcel Maps are approved at the Subdivision Committee.
 - Final Maps are approved by City Council.
- D. Improvement Plans: Determine if we have a completed set of improvement plans yet. If not, let developer know we need those submitted. Check the COAs and make sure any that speak to improvements are included in improvement plans. Check with Construction Manager to see if staff will be inspecting or if we need to hire an on-call CM team. If we need to hire outside CM, this may need to go to City Council depending on dollar amount.
- E. Subdivision Improvement Agreement: This will be drafted by City of Davis Engineering staff and will include the cost estimate of public and private improvements and the bonds required. The cost estimate come from the developer's engineer. The SIA must be complete before going to City Council for approval of the Final Map and SIA.
- F. Grading Plans: These are usually included in the Improvement Plans but the permit can be issued ahead of the rest of the improvements if the developer wants to get started ahead of time. If the bonds for the entire project have not been received yet, we would need a deposit or separate bond just for the grading. Historically, the Building Department issued the grading permit. We are working on a new ordinance that will change the Flood Plain Manager from the Building Official to the City Engineer. The grading plans will be signed by the City Engineer after the Engineering Staff has received a deposit and the application fee. A separate permit does not need to be issued.
- G. City Council Approval: The Improvement Plans must be completed and signed by the City Engineer; the Final Map must be completed and signed by all developer parties and the City's survey review consultant, and the Subdivision Improvement Agreement must be complete and agreed to by Developer.
- H. Processing: After City Council approval,
 - the **Developer** must submit their bonds, pay all fees due at time of recordation of the FM, and sign the development agreement.
 - the **City** must route the FM for city signatures, sign the development agreement and develop Escrow instructions for the title company.
- I. Encroachment Permits: For all work in the right of way, the Developer shall apply for an encroachment permit. The encroachment permit application needs to include a PDF of the improvement plan sheets that show the work to be done, the traffic control plan, and the schedule showing how many days the work will take and the submittals for materials used.

2. Non-Subdivisions (apartments, duplex, fourplex, hotels, etc.)

- A. Action Letter / Resolution Received: PWET Principal Civil Engineer (PCE) receives action letter with the resolution from Planning that the project now has entitlements. This includes the final COAs.
- B. Kick-off Meeting with Developer: PWET reaches out to Developer and set up kick meeting for the post-entitlement process. This meeting to include the assigned planner, the Building Chief, the Direction of PWET, the Director of PWUO and the Community Development Director.

- C. Mapping: As long as there is no subdivision of land, or Lot Line Adjustment, this step can be skipped.
- D. Improvement Plans: Determine if we have a completed set of improvement plans yet. If not, let developer know we need those submitted. Check the COAs and CEQA mitigation measures and make sure any that speak to improvements are included in improvement plans. Check with Construction Manager to see if staff will be inspecting or if we need to hire an on-call CM team. If we need to hire outside CM, this may need to go to City Council depending on dollar amount.
- E. Improvement Agreement / Bonds: If this is not a subdivision, we will include an improvement agreement and will need bonding for public and private improvements.
- F. Grading Plans: These are usually included in the Improvement Plans but the permit can be issued ahead of the rest of the improvements if the developer wants to get started ahead of time. If the bonds for the entire project have not been received yet, we would need a deposit or separate bond just for the grading.
- G. City Council: for non-subdivisions, the only thing that must go to Davis City Council is the Bonding Agreement. After this occurs, the City will sign improvement plans.
- H. Processing: After City Council approval,
 - the **Developer** must submit their bonds, pay all fees due at time of recordation agreement and submit the signed development agreement if applicable.
 - the **City** must sign the agreement, and develop Escrow instructions for the title company.
- I. Encroachment Permits: For all work in the right of way, the Developer shall apply for an encroachment permit. The encroachment permit application needs to include a PDF of the improvement plan sheets that show the work to be done, the traffic control plan and the schedule showing how many days the work will take and the submittals for materials used.

Construction

The construction phase includes both Public Works, for all roads, utilities, and storm water quality and the Building division, for all onsite plumbing and everything to do with buildings.

1. Grading – part of the improvement plans. If developer needs to do grading ahead of time, the plans will be approved by the City Engineer per our municipal Code “No construction activity shall commence before the city engineer issues written approval of the erosion and sediment control plan.” For larger projects we should also have their SWPPP and WDID#.
2. Public Works –
 - A. approves and signs improvement plans once the Subdivision Agreement has been signed, bonds received, and necessary fees paid. Permits will be issued for specific items of work in the public right of way where the work is in existing streets/sidewalks.
 - B. All water meters must have a permit.
 - C. PW Inspectors will inspect everything in the right of way but also anything underground that is larger than one inch.
 - D. PW Inspectors will inspect storm water quality features.
3. Building –
 - A. Building permits issued for individual houses if a subdivision, and for all of the buildings on the lot if a non-subdivision.
 - B. Building Inspectors responsible for all work done above grade.
 - C. Temporary Certificate of Occupancy and final Certificate of Occupancy will not be granted until all required maintenance agreements are received by Public Works. e.g. Stormwater Post Construction (LID) stormwater agreements, everything is approved by the PW Inspector, the Building Inspector and the Fire Marshall.

Definitions

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act)

A state law that requires public agencies to analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of development projects. Under the Subdivision Map Act, CEQA compliance is mandatory before approving any Tentative Map. CEQA may require preparation of an Initial Study, Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), or Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Public Works uses CEQA documents to identify mitigation measures that must be incorporated into improvement plans and conditions of approval.

Conditional Use Permit (CUP)

A type of discretionary approval required for land uses that are allowed under zoning regulations only if certain conditions are met. While not part of the Subdivision Map Act itself, CUPs are often processed concurrently with Tentative Maps and may influence how infrastructure improvements (e.g., access, parking, drainage) are reviewed by Public Works.

Conditions of Approval (COAs)

Requirements attached to project approvals (like Tentative Maps or CUPs) that must be satisfied before the project can proceed. COAs are mostly related to infrastructure, grading, utility connections, frontage improvements and stormwater management. COAs may also include CEQA mitigation measures.

Development Agreement

A legally binding contract between a local agency and a developer that outlines the terms and conditions of a development project. It can "lock in" applicable rules and fees for a specified period, providing certainty for long-term or phased projects. Often used for large or complex developments.

EIR (Environmental Impact Report)

A detailed CEQA document prepared for projects that may cause significant environmental impacts. Public Works reviews EIRs to confirm that all public infrastructure impacts are addressed and that required mitigations are incorporated into improvement plans and COAs.

Entitlement

The legal right granted by a governing body (e.g., City Council or Planning Commission) to develop land for a specific use or intensity. This includes approvals such as rezones, conditional use permits, tentative maps, and development agreements.

Final Map

A precise engineering map that subdivides land into five or more parcels, based on an approved Tentative Map. It is submitted for technical review and, once approved and recorded, legally creates new lots. It must conform to the Subdivision Map Act and any conditions from the Tentative Map.

Grading

The excavation, movement, or placement of earth to shape land for development—typically done to create building pads, roads or drainage systems. Requires review for erosion control, stormwater compliance and conformance with city standards.

LID (Low Impact Development)

Design features that reduce stormwater runoff and promote infiltration (e.g., bioswales, permeable pavement). Required under post-construction stormwater regulations, LID elements must be shown in improvement plans and are reviewed and inspected by Public Works.

Mitigation Measures

Specific actions identified during CEQA review to avoid or reduce environmental impacts. Public Works ensures that mitigation measures related to public infrastructure (traffic, water, drainage, etc.) are included in construction plans, improvement agreements and conditions of approval.

Parcel Map

Similar to a Final Map but used for subdivisions creating four or fewer lots, per the Subdivision Map Act. It still requires technical review and public improvements (if applicable), but often follows a more streamlined approval process.

PD (Planned Development)

A zoning tool that allows a custom set of development standards for a particular site. PDs often accompany Tentative Maps and must still conform to infrastructure and subdivision requirements under the Subdivision Map Act, which Public Works helps to enforce.

Post Entitlement

The phase after discretionary entitlements are granted. It involves the preparation and review of improvement plans, grading plans, final/parcel maps, and issuance of building or encroachment permits. Public Works is chiefly responsible for this phase, though the Building division of Community Development issues the building permit.

PWET

The City of Davis Public Works Engineering and Transportation Department that performs administrative, technical and operational activities in support of the City's new development and redevelopment applicants, and the City's Capital Improvement Program, in addition to related services in the following areas: Transportation Planning, Traffic Engineering, Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs, Review of Planning, Building and Public Works Permits, Construction Inspection, Maintenance of Citywide Maps and Floodplain Ordinance Management, among other tasks.

PWUO

The City of Davis Public Works Utilities and Operations Department that performs administrative, technical, operational and maintenance activities in support of the City's infrastructure and related services in the following areas: Streets, Urban Forestry, Signals and Streetlights, Wastewater, Stormwater, Water Solid Waste, Fleet, Building Maintenance, Environmental Resources & Regulatory Compliance and Integrated Pest Management, among other tasks.

Quasi-judicial

Describes decision-making by a local agency where the body (e.g., Planning Commission or City Council) applies existing laws to individual cases, such as approving or denying a tentative map. It requires notice, a public hearing and findings of fact.

Subdivision Improvement Agreement (SIA)

A contract between the developer and the City that guarantees construction of public improvements (roads, utilities, sidewalks, etc.) identified in the Final Map and COAs. The SIA includes a cost estimate, bond requirements, and construction deadlines. Public Works prepares and manages the SIA process.

SWPPP (Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan)

A site-specific document required for construction projects one acre or larger. It outlines how the project will prevent sediment and pollutants from leaving the site during construction. Public Works ensures the SWPPP is in place and that the contractor has a valid WDID number from the State.

Tentative Map

An initial map submitted for review that shows how a property will be subdivided, including proposed lot lines, streets, and easements. It is reviewed for consistency with planning policies and technical requirements. Approval is discretionary and often comes with conditions that must be met before the Final or Parcel Map is approved.