

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE PLAN REVIEW

What Is Architectural and Site Plan Review?

Architectural and site plan review of specified structures is established in Chapter 18.64 of the Municipal Code. The Code establishes a five member Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC) to review plans in order to, among other purposes stated in the Code, promote the preservation of the visual character of the Town and the stability of land values.

When Is Architectural and Site Plan Review Required?

Architectural and site plan review is required for building permits for all commercial buildings, all new single-family dwellings, additions and accessory buildings over 400 square feet, upstairs additions, all structures on parcels fronting on arterial roads or freeways as shown on the Town General Plan and for all conditional use permit requests requiring exterior improvements. This review is also required for those matters the Planning Commission may choose to refer to the ASCC.

How Do I Apply and How Much Does It Cost?

Application forms and filing information are available at Town Hall, 765 Portola Road, at the Building Counter. An application requires a filing fee and a deposit for professional services. Please refer to the separate schedule of fees and deposits.

How and When Does The ASCC Review The Application?

The ASCC holds regular evening meetings at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month in Council Chambers at the Town Center. Planning staff advises the ASCC. This advice includes a brief report to the Commission on the request which identifies key review issues. The Commission considers the application with the applicant and typically reaches a decision at the meeting. Sometimes, a Commission field trip is held at the project site. Minutes of the ASCC provide the record of the Commission's action.

How Long Does It Take?

It usually takes between 4 and 8 weeks from the time an application is filed to the time the ASCC completes its review and action. Some applications may take longer. For example, plans for new residences or commercial buildings usually have a preliminary and final ASCC review requiring two or more ASCC meetings.

Appeals

Any person dissatisfied with the decision of the ASCC may appeal to the Planning Commission, which sits as the Board of Adjustment when considering any appeal. The appeal must be filed within 15 days of the ASCC decision by completing appropriate forms and paying a required filing fee and deposit. The deposit will be used by the Town to prepare a report to the Commission on the appeal.

Are There Any Special Concerns I Should Be Aware Of?

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Yes. Town policy stresses that all new structures and improvements be designed to maintain the character of the natural environment to the maximum extent possible. You should consult the Town's "Design Guidelines" before undertaking any house design. If you are considering a design that requires extensive grading or vegetation removal, or a structure that is particularly large and visually prominent, you may face denial of your request. It is highly recommended that you carefully review this matter with Planning staff prior to filing an application. If appropriate, a preliminary meeting with the ASCC will be recommended.

Also, the Town has very special and important geologic hazard mapping and application review policies and procedures. These affect all applications to varying degrees. Therefore, you may have to file more than one application in support of your request. Please check with the Planning Department at Town Hall regarding these matters PRIOR to preparing any development plans.

Homeowner's Associations

There are a number of active Homeowner's Associations (HOA) in the Town that require review of any proposed exterior work (from planting and painting to building a new residence) on properties within the HOA prior to commencement of that work. For projects subject to architectural review by the ASCC (as well as any other projects), you should make contact with your HOA as early on in your design/conceptual phase as possible to allow the board adequate time to review your proposal. The HOA board will likely provide input on design strategies and/or propose some conditions for their approval. It is ideal for you to secure your HOA's approval prior to submitting an application for ASCC or building permit with the Town.

Further Information

For further information contact the Planning Department at (650) 851-1700 ex. 211 Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. or between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.