



## Department of Planning & Community Development Community Outreach Policy for Planning Projects

### Overview

The City of Santa Cruz is committed to engaging in meaningful public participation. Input received early in the long-range policy planning and development review processes better enables the City and project applicants to incorporate suggestions and ideas from the community, ultimately resulting in improved outcomes. Early outreach helps to educate and encourage communication, providing more certainty to developers and our community.

The intent of this Policy is to ensure that the community has the opportunity to engage in policy and project development throughout the discretionary review processes, and to inform the community regarding how and when to participate in project review.

### Outreach Requirements and Project Definitions

The community touchpoints found in this policy, such as sign posting, mailings, social media outreach, and community meetings, are recommended based on project size. A synopsis of outreach requirements based on project size may be found in the matrix at the end of this document. Definitions of various project sizes are as follows:

- Small Development Project: A development proposal that would add 5-10 housing units or 2,500 to 10,000 new square feet of commercial development.
- Medium Development Project: A development proposal that would add 11-25 housing units or 10,000 to 25,000 new square feet of commercial development.
- Large Development Project: A development proposal that would add over 25 housing units or over 25,000 new square feet of commercial or industrial development.
- Significant Project: Any proposal, regardless of size or type, that has the potential for significant City-wide interest.

While projects that are under 10 housing units or less than 2,500 commercial square feet will not typically trigger additional outreach requirements, all projects will be reviewed by the Planning Department for their potential to garner community interest. These projects may be required to undertake additional outreach at the discretion of the Planning Project Manager, who is the Planning Department staff person assigned to the project.

The outreach strategy for policy changes (ordinance updates, area and general plan modifications, etc.) will be based on the scope of the project.

### Process

The community outreach process has been divided into three key stages: Initial Public Notification, Community Meeting(s), and Public Hearing(s). Requirements for project applicants to complete outreach in each of these phases is dependent on project size and scope. These requirements may be found in the outreach matrix located at the end of this document.

Means of outreach that may be required at each of these phases are outlined below.

### **Phase I: Initial Public Notification**

Initial public notification of a project is dependent on project size and scope.

- **On-site Posting(s):** The applicant is responsible for posting notification signs on the project site informing the community that a formal application has been submitted. The sign information will be approved by the Planning Project Manager in the template provided by the City, and the applicant shall post the notification sign within two weeks of the application submittal. The signage shall be a minimum 11" x 17" size. Larger and/or more signage may be required by the Planning Project Manager, particularly for large sites and significant projects. This initial on-site notification is in addition to any on-site public hearing notices required by the Municipal Code.
- **Standard Website Posting:** A monthly list of recently filed projects will be posted on the Planning Department's website.
- **Enhanced Website Posting:** For large and significant projects, enhanced online information may be required, such as project plans, renderings, subdivision map proposals, etc. The Planning Project Manager will coordinate with the project applicant to ensure that this information is provided online.

### **Phase II: Community Meeting(s)**

Community meeting requirements for various projects may be found in the attached outreach matrix. The Planning Project Manager may require a community meeting to be held for any project. Multiple community meetings may be required if the scope or significance of the project or community interest warrants additional meetings. The Planning Project Manager will work with the project applicant to determine whether a smaller project should be the subject of a community meeting and whether more than one meeting would be advantageous for other projects, taking into account community interest and feedback on the project.

All large and significant projects will include community meetings early in the process in addition to the required public hearings for approval. For these projects, at least one noticed community meeting should be held within 45 days of the filing of the application. For smaller projects that do not necessarily require a community meeting, applicants may be required to hold a community meeting prior to any public hearing for the project if significant community interest is expected or expressed in response to early notifications such as on-site posting or online information. Any project with more than 10 residential units or more than 10,000 square feet of new commercial that does not require a public hearing shall host at least one community meeting for public input.

Community meetings may also be required to be held during the pre-application phase of a project. Such meetings will be coordinated by the project applicant in partnership with the Planning Department. Community meetings held at the pre-application phase may substitute for a community meeting during the formal application stage, at the discretion of the Planning Project Manager, based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to the level of community interest and range of community comments at the initial community meeting(s).

Logistics for community meetings related to development applications shall be coordinated by the project applicant. Applicants shall coordinate with the Planning Project Manager to confirm that the type of community meeting, noticing, location, and proposed meeting agenda are acceptable.

## Types of Community Meetings

The format of the community meeting will be proposed by the project applicant and approved by the Planning Project Manager in collaboration with the project applicant. The Planning Project Manager or other Planning Department representative will be present at the meeting to provide information on General Plan and Zoning designations for the site, application procedures, and the opportunities for public input.

- **Applicant-Sponsored Community Meetings:** Typically, the project applicant will hold at least one community meeting for large and significant projects early in the process. The meeting may be postponed to later in the process if comments from the City are expected to result in significant changes to the project. A community meeting may be required for small and medium sized projects at the discretion of the Planning Project Manager based in part on the level of community interest. The applicant will present the project to the community and solicit input that is intended to improve the project so that the final outcome is more satisfying to both the applicant and the community.
- **Community Group Presentation:** Presentation before a special or regularly scheduled community group or organization may qualify as a community meeting, subject to approval of the Planning Project Manager.

## Community Meeting Noticing

All community meeting noticing should be sent and/or posted on-site and online a minimum of 14 days prior to the meeting and shall include the date, time, and location of the community meeting, as well as the location and description of the project. Means of notice are dependent on project size, and additional noticing requirements may be required by the Planning Department. Various noticing tools are outlined below:

- **Mailed Notices:** Notices will be sent to all property owners and tenants within the radius specified in the Community Outreach matrix. The City will provide a list of the owners and tenants to the project applicant. The applicant shall provide a copy of the notice that they intend to mail at least three working days before the applicant prints the notices, and the Planning Project Manager shall review and approve the notice contents prior to distribution.
- **On-Site Posting:** The applicant is responsible for posting notification signs on the project site and providing proof of posting to the Planning Project Manager. The signage shall be a minimum 11" x 17" size. Larger and/or more signage may be required by the Planning Project Manager, particularly for large sites and significant projects.
- **Website Posting:** Notice of community meetings shall be provided to the Planning Department for posting on the Planning Department's Community Meetings webpage, as well as the City's online calendar. The Planning Department will post the notice 14 days prior to the meeting.
- **Email Notices:** Emails will be sent to individuals who have identified themselves as interested parties for Planning-related community meetings on the City's news and notifications signup at <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/how-do-i/register-or-sign-up-for/news-and-notifications>. Email notices will also be sent to individuals who have signed up with the Planning Project Manager for notifications for the specific development application.

- **Social Media:** Announcements for significant projects will be posted on at least one of the City's social media accounts and may be posted for small, medium, or large projects.

### **Phase III: Public Hearing(s)**

Public Hearings will be held for specific projects in accordance with Chapters 24.04 and 24.08 of the City's Municipal Code.

#### Public Hearing Noticing

Per the above referenced code, newspaper publishing, mailings, and on-site postings are required methods of outreach for certain application types. Additionally, the City may require additional methods, including but not limited to website and social media posting, email noticing, etc. All public hearing noticing shall occur at least 14 calendar days prior to the public hearing. When public hearings are required, various methods of outreach are identified below:

- **Publishing:** As required by the specific entitlements needed, notice of the public hearing will be advertised in the Santa Cruz Sentinel.
- **Mailed Notices:** Notices of the public hearing shall be sent to all property owners and tenants within the radius specified in the Community Outreach matrix.
- **Sign Posting:** Notice of the public hearing shall be posted on the property in compliance with Section 24.04.100(3) of the City's Municipal Code.
- **Website Posting:** Notice of the public hearing will be posted on the hearing body's webpage in accordance with the City's agenda posting protocol.
- **Email Notices:** Emails will be sent to individuals who have signed up to receive notifications for the appropriate hearing body on the City's news and notifications signup page at <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/how-do-i/register-or-sign-up-for/news-and-notifications>. Email notices will also be sent to individuals who have signed up with the Planning Project Manager for notifications for the specific development application.
- **Social Media:** Announcements of public hearings should be posted on at least one of the City's social media accounts, such as Facebook or Twitter, for large and significant projects and may be posted for small and medium projects at the discretion of the Planning Project Manager.

## **Other Topics**

### **Long-Range Planning Projects**

Long-range planning projects, including but not limited to development of new specific/area plans, significant updates/amendments to existing specific/area plans, significant Zoning Ordinance Amendments, General Plan updates, etc. will generally be treated as Significant projects in accordance with the Community Outreach matrix in terms of requiring at least one community meeting. However, many types of long-range planning changes may have their own specific outreach strategies that vary from and typically expand beyond the standard outreach procedures outlined in this policy.

Where proposed long-range planning changes may have significant, citywide implications, the City may choose to publish community meeting dates in the Santa Cruz Sentinel. All those signed up for electronic notifications of Planning community meetings will also be notified via email.

**Preliminary Review Applications**

Preliminary Review applications are strongly encouraged and may be required for Large and Significant proposals. Applicants for Preliminary Reviews are encouraged to hold a community meeting during the preliminary review process, subject to the discretion of the Planning Project Manager and taking into consideration whether wholesale project changes are needed prior to project submittal. For Large and Significant projects, applicants who intend to submit a formal application after the preliminary review is complete will generally be strongly encouraged to hold a community meeting once preliminary comments have been received and prior to submitting the formal application.

**Community Outreach and State/City Law Consistency**

While it is the City's policy to require significant community outreach, a hearing body may act upon an application that does not meet all outreach and notification criteria contained in this policy as long as the project meets applicable State and City due process laws.

**Additional Outreach**

The Planning Project Manager will maintain a list of interested parties who will be notified by email when environmental documents are available for review and who will be notified at least 14 days in advance of community meetings and public hearings. The Planning Project Manager retains discretion to require mailed notices to a larger radius than that called for by this policy. Additional outreach methods and efforts may be required above and beyond what is called for in this policy.

# Potential Public Outreach Approach for Development Projects and Policy Efforts

		PROJECT SIZE & MAILING RADIUS			
		SMALL N/A to 300 feet	MEDIUM N/A to 500 feet	LARGE 800 feet	SIGNIFICANT 1,000 feet
OUTREACH EFFORT					
Pre-Application /Preliminary Review <sup>1</sup>		--	--	◇	◇
On-Site Sign Posting at Application Submittal <sup>2</sup>		◇	●	●	●
Standard Info on City Website		●	●	●	●
	<i>Expanded Info</i>	--	--	◇	●
Community Meeting		◇	◇	●	●
	<i>Email Notice</i>	●	●	●	●
	<i>Mailed Notice<sup>3</sup></i>	●	●	●	●
	<i>Posted on City Website/Calendar</i>	●	●	●	●
	<i>On-Site Sign Posting</i>	●	●	●	●
	<i>Social Media</i>	◇	◇	◇	●
Public Hearing(s)		❖	❖	❖	❖
	<i>Newspaper</i>	❖	❖	❖	❖
	<i>Mailed Notice<sup>4</sup></i>	❖	❖	❖	❖
	<i>On-Site Sign Posting</i>	❖	❖	❖	❖
	<i>Email Notice</i>	●	●	●	●
	<i>Social Media</i>	◇	◇	●	●

## TABLE LEGEND

- Always Required
- ❖ As Required per Ordinance
- ◇ At Discretion of Planning Project Manager
- Not Applicable

<sup>1</sup>Community meeting may be required after receipt of comments from City departments, prior to formal application submittal.

<sup>2</sup>Separate signs may be required if there are multiple street frontages or multiple meetings for a single project.

<sup>3</sup>Notices will be mailed for community meetings unless there are more than 1,000 recipients, in which case the meeting will be advertised in the Santa Cruz Sentinel

<sup>4</sup>Radius for public hearing noticing shall be consistent with Community Meeting noticing, as shown in column headings.

## **Planning Commissioner Community Meeting Decorum Guidelines**

Planning Commissioners are encouraged to attend community meetings, particularly for large or significant projects. The following guidelines apply to the Planning Commission decorum while attending community meetings.

### **Meeting Procedures**

1. At the start of the community meeting, the Planning Project Manager (PPM) will ensure that Planning Commissioners are provided name tags that identify them as Planning Commissioners. Planning Commissioners will wear these name tags for the duration of the meeting.
2. The PPM will then introduce the Planning Commissioners in attendance and explain that Commissioners are in attendance to:
  - a. Learn about the project;
  - b. Listen to public discussion; and
  - c. Report back to the Planning Commission.
3. The PPM will explain how Planning Commissioners' attendance is in adherence to the Brown Act. *Should more than three Planning Commissioners be in attendance at once, Commissioners shall follow the Brown Act by refraining from discussion amongst themselves.*

### **Meeting Decorum**

1. Planning Commissioners will listen to the comments and concerns of attendees and related responses from the applicant.
2. Planning Commissioners shall remain neutral regarding projects and shall refrain from voicing or otherwise demonstrating support for or opposition to projects.
3. Consistent with the Planning Commission By-Laws, Planning Commissioners shall refrain from privately discussing projects involving quasi-judicial decisions with applicants and members of the public.

### **Reporting**

At the next regular meeting of the Planning Commission following the community meeting, the members of the Planning Commissioners who attended the meeting shall provide a report to the Planning Commission regarding the community meeting. The report may be verbal or written, and will include a general description of the project, issues and concerns raised by the public, and any responses or assurances given by the applicant.