



MASTER PLAN HANDOUT

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN AND WHEN IS IT REQUIRED?

A master plan is a set of documents that implements land use regulations (e.g., allowable uses) and establishes the intensity of development (e.g., floor area ratio, density etc.) for a defined area. A master plan consists of written and graphic materials (e.g., maps, architectural plans, landscaping plans etc.) and may be a standalone document or may be combined with a precise development plan. A precise development plan is a set of documents which establishes development standards (e.g., setbacks, height limits etc.) and operational characteristics for the entirety or a portion of an area where an approved master plan is in effect.

A master plan is required for the development or use of properties with a zoning classification of Planned District (PD) and adoption of a master plan constitutes as a rezoning of a parcel to PD.

PRE-APPLICATION INFORMATION

The Planning Division offers several opportunities for pre-application review. Pre-application review is encouraged to help identify and resolve any issues early in the review process. Please contact the Planning Division to discuss the various pre-application review options.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Discretionary applications (e.g., use permits, design review etc.) are subject to environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the City of Novato Environmental Review Guidelines. Planning Division staff will provide a determination on the level of CEQA review required for a particular project within 30 days of determining that an application is complete for processing.

Completion of an initial study will result in a determination as to what level of environmental review is required for a project (e.g., negative declaration or environmental impact report). Environmental review must be completed prior to the Design Review Commission public hearing for a project.

INITIAL APPLICATION REVIEW

Submittal requirements for a master plan application are listed on the following pages. A complete application package must include all listed items that are applicable to your request. Planning Division staff will perform an initial application review (i.e., application completeness review) of the submitted application materials within 30 days of the application submittal. As a part of this initial review process, Planning Division staff will route out all received application materials to outside reviewing agencies and departments (e.g., Novato Fire District, North Marin Water District, Novato Sanitary District etc.) as applicable. These agencies and departments may provide comments, corrections, or conditions of approval.

Planning Division staff will provide the applicant with a written determination on whether the submitted application is complete for processing or incomplete in accordance with Government Code Section 65943. This written determination will also include all project specific correspondence from outside agencies and departments received by the City to date.

Certain project types, as described by the Novato Municipal Code, may require the applicant to host a publicly noticed neighborhood meeting to garner community feedback. In these instances, completion of a neighborhood meeting is required before an application may be considered as complete. Planning Division staff will assist in the coordination of a neighborhood meeting as well as preparing and publicly notifying the neighborhood.

An application submittal must be deemed complete before it may continue forward in the overall review process. You may consult with the Planning Division if you have questions about application submittal requirements.

APPLICATION REVIEW AND DECISION

Once an application has been deemed complete, Planning Division staff will schedule a public workshop with the City's Design Review Commission to garner initial feedback from the Design Review Commission, City staff, and the public on the project's design. Following a public workshop, Planning Division staff will perform an analysis of the request based on criteria provided in the Novato Municipal Code. This analysis is documented in the staff report prepared by Planning Division staff and includes staff's recommendation to the review authority for the project.

Master plans applications must be reviewed by the Design Review Commission and Planning Commission before proceeding to the City Council for final action, as described below.

❖ Design Review Commission

The Design Review Commission will review site constraints and the project's design characteristics (i.e., site plan, architecture, landscape plan etc.). The Design Review Commission shall conduct a public hearing and provide a formal recommendation on the design elements of the project. The Design Review Commission's recommendations are advisory and are transmitted to the Planning Commission and City Council with staff's analysis of the project. In accordance with procedures provided in the Novato Municipal Code and Government Code section 65094, notification of the Design Review Commission's public hearing(s) will be provided by mail to the neighborhood surrounding the project area and relevant local agencies.

❖ Planning Commission

The Planning Commission will review the master plan's operational characteristics and land use regulations in addition to any additional requested entitlements (e.g., precise development plan, design review etc.). The Planning Commission shall conduct a public hearing and provide a formal recommendation on the requested entitlements. The Planning Commission's recommendations are advisory and are transmitted to the City Council with staff's analysis of the project. In accordance with procedures provided in the Novato Municipal Code and Government Code section 65094, notification of the Planning Commission's public hearing(s) will be provided by mail to the neighborhood surrounding the project area and relevant local agencies.

❖ City Council

The City Council is the final review authority and is tasked with rendering the final decision on the master plan and all other requested entitlements. The City Council's decision takes into consideration the recommendations provided by the Design Review Commission, Planning Commission, and Planning Division staff, as well as any public testimony. The City Council's decision is then set forth in a written report, along with the findings upon which its decision is based on. In accordance with procedures provided in the Novato Municipal Code and Government Code section 65094, notification of the City Council's public hearing(s) will be provided by mail to the neighborhood surrounding the project area and relevant local agencies.

As required by NMC Section 19.42.060 (Master Plans and Precise Development Plans) the review authority must make the following findings before acting to approve or conditionally approve a master plan request – *additional findings may be required depending on the application request*:

- a. The proposed Master Plan development is in conformance with the applicable goals and policies of the General Plan and any applicable specific plan;
- b. The proposed Master Plan development can be adequately, conveniently, and reasonably served by public conveniences, facilities, services, and utilities;
- c. The proposed Master Plan development concepts are reasonably suited to the specific characteristics of the site and the surrounding neighborhood; and
- d. The location, access, density/building intensity, size, and type of uses proposed in the Master Plan are compatible with the existing and future land uses in the surrounding neighborhood.

RESULT

The action of the review authority is final unless an appeal of the review authority's decision is filed in a timely manner, in accordance with the appeal procedures set forth by the Novato Municipal Code, including payment of the applicable appeal fee. Please contact the Planning Division to discuss filing an appeal.

Any construction activities associated with the approved master plan may be subject to the issuance of a building permit. Accordingly, please contact the Building Division to determine whether a building permit is required. Additionally, a business license must be secured before proceeding with the operation of a new business.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

All Planning applications must be submitted directly through [Novato Permits Portal](#), our online portal at [Application Forms | City of Novato, CA](#). A Novato Permits Portal account is required and can be created using the online portal prior to applying.

A. General Information:

- 1) Planning Application
- 2) Environmental Data Submission
- 3) Cost Recovery Agreement - for projects that require a deposit.
- 4) Application Fee(s) as listed in the [City of Novato Master Fee Schedule](#).
- 5) Completed Property Owner Authorization Form (as applicable)
- 6) Certification of compliance with Government Code Section 65962.5 – Submit a signed statement indicating whether the project (and any alternatives) are located on a site that is included on any of the lists compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5 and specify any list(s).
- 7) Statement of application required by Government Code Section 65943 – Application must include a statement that it is an application for a development permit.
- 8) Once an application is submitted through the [Novato Permits Portal](#), an invoice will be created within approximately one (1) week and will be viewable on your account. You will then be able to pay through the portal by credit card or e-check (fees apply for both). Alternatively, you can mail or drop off a check to the City's Administrative Offices at the following address:

**City of Novato
Attn: Planning Division
922 Machin Avenue
Novato, CA 94945**

****Please include your application number and/or project address on the check.**

B. Written Statement:

Written statement(s) describing the development concepts as they apply to the following subjects:

- 1) Type, intensity, form, and function of the project
- 2) Utilities (gas, electric, water, sanitary sewer, telephone)
- 3) Public services (police, fire, schools, mail)
- 4) Public conveniences (solid waste, TV, newspapers)
- 5) Public facilities (streets, library, public transportation, and parks, including a proposal for meeting Section 9-20 of the Novato Municipal Code)
- 6) Historic or archaeological resources
- 7) Noise sources
- 8) Traffic (auto, bike, pedestrian, equestrian)
- 9) Soils, flooding, geologic hazard, seismic hazard
- 10) Storm drainage
- 11) Shopping (local, regional) and service uses (medical, financial, administrative)
- 12) Wildlife and vegetation
- 13) Disposition or management of non-developed areas

C. Plan Set Information:

Project plan sets shall be prepared to meet the minimum requirements as described in the [Minimum Requirements for Prepared Plans](#) informational document found in the "Forms & Guides" section of the

Novato Building Division's webpage (novato.org/building).

- 1) General Coversheet Information:
 - a. Project name, address, assessor's parcel number (APN), and detailed scope of work
 - b. Designer information: name, address, phone number, and email address
 - c. Sheet index of drawings
 - d. Vicinity map showing relationship to adjacent streets and buildings.
 - e. Existing and proposed general plan land use designation(s)
 - f. Existing zoning classification(s)
 - g. Existing and proposed residential density in both gross and net figures and any affordability restrictions proposed for same, as applicable
 - h. Existing and proposed lot and building coverage
 - i. Total square footage of floor area for nonresidential uses
 - j. Existing and proposed floor area ratio (FAR)
- 2) Site Plan:
 - a. North arrow
 - b. Boundaries and area of the site
 - c. Areas of the site to be developed with each type of land use and the maximum allowable density or building intensity identified; areas designated for open space; and the basic street pattern
 - d. Existing tree coverage, types of trees, and areas of tree removal
 - e. All water areas (pods, lakes, streams, wetlands, and drainage ways)
 - f. Easement locations, dimensions and type
 - g. Site drainage information
 - h. Existing and proposed building footprints with overall dimensions and projections
 - i. Dimensioned locations of existing and proposed on-site driveways, parking areas, and service areas
- 3) Plan Sheet(s) – The following may be submitted as separate plan sheets.
 - a. Location and type of all trees within the project area and areas of tree removal
 - b. Topographical map showing existing and proposed contours at a minimum 10-foot interval
 - c. Slope analysis, calculated and classified in the following ranges: 0 to 15 percent, 15 to 30 percent, and greater than 30 percent.
 - d. Single-line section drawings of each proposed building, sufficiently detailed to show conceptual height, bulk and their relationship to the topography on slopes over 10 percent
 - e. Surrounding street pattern with design capacities and current traffic counts
 - f. Geologic hazards map
 - g. Contiguous parcels map with general plan land use designation, zoning classification, existing uses and structures, and parcel owner name(s)

D. Required Supplemental Information

Applicants must provide sufficient information, reports, or studies to permit the City to determine whether the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act or whether an environmental impact report, a negative declaration, or a mitigated negative declaration is needed as required by Section 21080.1 of the Public Resources Code.

Listed below are documents and supplemental information that are required by the Municipal Code for specific types of use permit projects. Please contact the Planning Division if you require assistance determining which items listed below are required for your project.

- 1) Constraints analysis prepared by qualified experts
- 2) Habitat Restoration and Management Plan
- 3) Stream Management Plan

An application containing each of the relevant criteria set forth herein shall be determined to be complete for processing.

For more information, please contact the Planning Division at: 415-899-8989 or planning@novato.gov