

A. INTRODUCTION

This manual provides an overview of the planning Framework in the City of Lone. It provides an outline of all major planning processes, and is a resource to City staff, the general public, and the development community. Explanations are provided that identify the parameters of and procedures for planning action, while describing clearly the actions that must be completed to accomplish project approval and construction. The chapters in this manual are summarized below.

B. SUMMARY OF TOPICS

B.1. CITY POLICY, STANDARDS, AND OTHER REGULATIONS

The City's planning process is driven by several primary items. The General Plan provides the policy framework for all development, and establishes a vision for future City growth. The Zoning Code is the City's primary implementation tool that establishes districts of allowed uses and regulations for every parcel within the City. Improvement standards are regulations established by the City that provide minimum standards for public facilities provided by private developers that will be accepted and maintained by the City. Improvement standards apply to public facilities such as streets, highways, drainage, sewage, street lighting, water supply facilities, and related public improvements. Subdivision standards apply to the subdivision of parcels into smaller parcels. Through subdivision standards, the City can ensure that all new parcels are adequately served by public facilities and in compliance with City standards.

B.2. ENTITLEMENT REVIEW

An entitlement is a permit granted by the Planning Department to do something. Entitlements are only needed for those projects that are not allowed by right per the Zoning Code, and are issued at the discretion of the City. This chapter provides an overview of what all the entitlements offered by the Planning Department are and when they are needed, covering the following entitlements: variance, conditional use permit, site plan review, historic architectural review, Planned Development, Specific Plans, rezones, General Plan amendments, boundary line adjustment, and tentative maps.

Each entitlement has different application procedures, deposits, and processes for approval. Once an application for an entitlement is submitted, it is processed by City Planning staff. The application is reviewed for completeness and routed to reviewing agencies for comments. If the application is subject to CEQA, an initial study must be completed for the project. After all reviewing agencies provide comments, the Planner must analyze the project and prepare any related environmental review, development agreements, or conditions of approval. Next, a staff report is prepared and presented to the Planning Commission and City Council at a properly noticed public hearing. If these bodies approve the entitlement, then the applicant can proceed to obtain a building permit for the project.

B.3. CEQA GUIDELINES

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is multi-purpose law in the State of California that is intended to inform decision makers and the public of the environmental consequences of projects, involve the public in decision-making related to environmental effects, and to prevent needless environmental damage. CEQA applies to any project undertaken by a public agency or approved by a public agency through discretionary judgment. The City has several functions

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to fulfill in the CEQA process; these include the ability to require modifications to projects for approval, disapprove projects, or approve projects despite their environmental consequences. The City can also charge fees or comment on projects.

Once the City has determined that a project does not qualify for any CEQA exemptions, it must first conduct an Initial Study to assess and document whether the project will have significant environmental effects. If the project does not have any potentially significant environmental effects, it is not subject to CEQA and the City can file a Negative Declaration. If the project does have significant effects that can be mitigated through changes to the project that the applicant agrees to implement, the City can file a Mitigated Negative Declaration. For those projects that have significant effects that cannot be mitigated, the City must file a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that documents all possible significant effects on the environment. Once an EIR has been prepared, the City must circulate it for public review and comment. All comments must be addressed in the Final EIR. After the EIR process is complete, the City can proceed with consideration of the project. If a project is approved despite significant environmental effects, the City must issue a Statement of Overriding Considerations that explains the City's justification for approval.

To assist in the determination of environmental effects, the City has established requirements for several types of impact analyses that will be used to more fully determine the impact of projects. A Biological Review Study by a certified professional is required for projects that occur in an area with endangered, rare, or threatened species, or as required by the City. A Transportation Impact Study must be completed by a traffic engineer or other certified professional for projects that: would generate 200 or more daily trips, are inconsistent with the General Plan land use or Zoning designations, or would generate greater levels of traffic than assumed by the 2025 Amador County Traffic Model. A Noise Study by a certified professional must be completed when deemed necessary by the City. The City provides content guidelines for each of these studies. The studies will be used to help the City determine the significance of effects as it conducts the CEQA review process.

To further facilitate the assessment of environmental effects, the City has adopted policies that provide thresholds for determining environmental significance. These thresholds of significance provide clear guidelines and benchmarks to support reasoned decision-making. Thresholds of significance established by the City to use in the consideration of environmental effects include guidelines for transportation impacts, minimization of flood risks, impacts of intensive land use operations, fire hazards, unstable slopes, noise, and biological resources.

B.4. SUBDIVISIONS

The City regulates the subdivision of land into smaller parcel to ensure that new parcels comply with City standards and are adequate in design. There are two types of subdivisions with two separate processes: subdivision of land into five or more parcels requires a Tentative Map for Final Map, and subdivision of land into four or less parcels requires a Tentative Map for Parcel Map. The Planning Commission is the approving authority of the subdivision process, but decisions can be appealed to the City Council. Once a Tentative Map has been approved or conditionally approved by the City, the map is deemed a Vesting Map, which provides the right to proceed with development in substantial compliance with the ordinances, policies, and standards in place at the time the application was deemed complete.

After approval of either a Tentative Map, the applicant must proceed to complete a Final Map or Parcel Map. Tentative Maps for Final Map (5+ parcels) require completion of a Final Map. The applicant must complete all required conditions of approval prior to the recording of the

Final Map. The Final Map must be in substantial compliance with the approved Tentative Map, and is based on a survey of the property. All departments responsible for monitoring compliance with conditions of approval must sign off on the project before it can be considered by City Council for approval. The Final Map provides all details and final technical specifications of the subdivision. Tentative Maps for Parcel Map (4 or fewer parcels) require completion of a Parcel Map. City Council action is required on Parcel Maps if offers of dedication are made. Planning Commission conditions of approval must be completed to the satisfaction of the City and the Parcel Map must be in substantial compliance with the Tentative Map prior to approval.

Boundary Line Adjustments (BLAs) are similar to the subdivision process, but simply involve the reorganization of property lines. As with Tentative Maps, the Planning Commission is the approval authority for BLAs. When a BLA does not affect existing easements or creation of new easements, it can be accomplished through a grant/quitclaim deed. When a BLA would change easements or utilities, a record of survey or a Parcel Map is required. If easements or offers of dedication are being made, the City Council must take final action on the required Parcel Map.

The City has established design standards for the subdivision of land. These standards are provided in Title 16 of the Municipal Code, the General Plan, and the minimum lot size standards and density requirements in the Zoning Code. Design standards regulate many aspects of the subdivision process, including the design of lots, sidewalks, blocks, drainage, access, and utilities.

B.5. GRADING AND IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Grading of a site usually takes place whenever a property is developed for the first time. All grading work requires a permit, except as exempted by the California Building Code. Grading permits are usually issued in conjunction with improvement plan permits, but can also be applied for and issued separately based on the nature of the project. The Public Works department processes and reviews all grading permits using the standards provided in the California Building Code; the City has not adopted any unique standards or requirements for the grading of property. Applications for grading permits must include two sets of drawings for review.

Improvements to property include the installation of infrastructure such as streets, sewage, and drainage. All improvements must comply with City's adopted improvement standards, whether improvements are intended to be dedicated to the City or otherwise. However, the City's improvement standards serve as minimum guidelines; the City may approve additional requirements or conditions of approval for any project. Improvements are normally completed before recording of a Final Map/Parcel Map. The City may allow the applicant to enter into an Improvement Agreement and provide security for any un-completed improvements if the applicant wishes to proceed with subdivision prior to issuance of improvement permits or before City acceptance of improvements that will be dedicated to the City. The City Engineer must accept all improvements prior to presenting the project to City Council for approval. Furthermore, the City Engineer must inspect improvements during each construction phase to ensure that all improvements are conducted in compliance with City standards and conditions of approval. The applicant must furnish a deposit and other fees required by the City to cover the costs of inspection and all other costs of plan review.

B.6. BUILDING PERMITS

Many projects that an applicant may propose are in compliance with existing regulations and Zoning Code standards. These projects are allowed by right, and may involve construction a

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new building, additions to existing buildings, or re-roofing. These projects require issuance of a building permit. Generally, small-scale activities do not require a building permit, including activities such as interior remodeling that does not affect structural or electrical elements; repair of a fence less than six feet tall; or painting. The City has adopted standards that it uses to assess all building permits with. All building permits are reviewed by the Building Official, who distributes the permit to all relevant agencies for assessment and communicates with the applicant if project modifications are required. If all departments approve the permit, the Building Official will calculate fees for the project. Once the applicant has paid all fees, the building permit will be issued.

B.7. OTHER PERMITS AND ALLOWANCES

The City also issues several other permits that do not fall under the categories previously discussed. An Encroachment Permit is an administrative permit that allows one to conduct work in a public right of way or to locate a temporary or permanent structure in the public right of way. Applicants must submit an encroachment permit application with a site plan showing the work to be completed. A Tree Removal Permit is administered by the City Manager to authorize the removal of Heritage Trees. Business licenses are required to conduct business within the City, and are obtained by completion of a Business License application and payment of fees determined by the City. Business licenses are administered by the City Finance Director, and may be renewed yearly provided that all fees are paid and the applicant can furnish sufficient information on business conducted in the previous year to the City Finance Director.

C. CITY GOVERNING FRAMEWORK

In order to make effective decisions, the City is organized into a multi-layered structure and a series of departments. As the different chapters of this document describe, each department is responsible for a certain area of review. For instance, the Planning Department is responsible for all land use matters, whereas Engineering and Public Works are responsible for physical improvements to land, such as streets and sewer. Engineering is also responsible for reviewing all subdivisions of land. The Building Department is responsible for ensuring compliance of new construction with the adopted building codes. At their core, all departments, and the City in general, are responsible for furthering the health, safety, and general welfare of lone residents and the public at large.

All departments report to the City Manager who is the head administrator for the City. The City Manager has ultimate authority over the decisions and actions of the individual departments. The City Manager reports to and serves at the pleasure of the City Council.

The Planning Commission, as identified in State law, is the land use and planning agency of the City. They have the responsibility of approving use permits, subdivisions of land, review of site plans for new construction, and other duties as identified by City code. On a number of matters, such as rezoning of properties and amendment to the General Plan, the Planning Commission makes recommendations to the City Council. Members of the Planning Commission are appointed by the Mayor and ratified by the City Council.

The City Council is the legislative body of the City. Members are elected by the residents of the City. The Council is the final hearing body on matters recommended by the Planning Commission. They are also the final body for appeals of Planning Commission matters or of staff decisions as identified by City code.

The organizational structure of the City is described in Figure I.C-1 (Organizational Structure of the City of Ione) below.

FIGURE I.C-1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CITY OF IONE

