



ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Environmental Review Process is regulated by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA was established to develop and maintain a high quality environment now and in the future. To do so, this State law requires that the City perform an environmental assessment of any discretionary action executed by the City (i.e. rezoning, subdivision, project review, etc.). The following is a summary of the environmental review process, depending on the nature and complexity of the project, the review process may vary. The complete CEQA statute and guidelines are available at the following website: <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/>.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if my project will require environmental review?

All projects reviewed by the City usually fall under one of the following four classifications:

1. Your project requires only administrative action and no further review for environmental impacts is needed. For example, a building permit: *no environmental review needed*.
2. Your project belongs to a category of projects that the State qualifies as 'exempt' from the requirements of CEQA. For example, a single-family home on a non-sloping site: *no environmental review needed*.
3. Your project has some features (For example, your project is located in close proximity to a sensitive wetland) that requires that a 'negative declaration' be prepared. *Please see following section*.
4. Your project may have a significant adverse effect on the environment and requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be prepared. *Please see following section*.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS

If after a preliminary review of your project it is determined that your project will require environmental review (classifications 3 and 4 above), the following will likely occur:

1. Submittal of the 'INITIAL STUDY' questionnaire.

The Initial Study questionnaire should be completed and submitted along with the project application. The information in this questionnaire will be used by planning staff to complete a CEQA document known as the **INITIAL STUDY**. It is important that this questionnaire be filled out with great attention and be as complete and thorough as possible. At this time, you will also be asked to pay a **\$5,000** deposit, with the final charge based on staff time and additional studies as required (i.e. traffic study).

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2. Preparation of the Initial Study

The Initial Study outlines all the anticipated environmental impacts of the proposed project. The Initial Study considers all phases of project planning, implementation and operation. Based on the Initial Study, planning staff will make one of the following findings:

1. The project will have 'No significant Impacts' on the environment, and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared;
2. Modifications to the project description, or mitigation measures, have reduced environmental impacts to a point of insignificance, and a **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared;
3. The proposed project will have, or may have, significant impact(s) and **an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR)** will be required.

3. Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration

If it is determined that a (Mitigated) Negative Declaration is to be prepared for your project, your project will be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Prior to the Planning Commission public hearing, there will be a public review period of a minimum of 30 days. During this time all information related to the project will be available at City Hall and the Main Library. Furthermore, all property owners located within 300 feet of the subject property will be notified in writing of the Planning Commission public hearing.

Estimated Time:

- From receipt of complete application to completion of Initial Study: 30 days
- Preparation, posting and public review period for (Mitigated) Negative Declaration: 3-6 months

4. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Because of the potential adverse environmental impact(s), the preparation of an EIR is a much more complicated and lengthy process than that of a Negative Declaration. NOTE: The City will hire a consulting firm to prepare all environmental review documents. A fee will be charged to cover the actual cost of preparing the report plus administrative costs. Once the **DRAFT EIR** is completed, a minimum 45-day public review period will begin. The Draft EIR will be available at City Hall and the Main Library and a notice will be mailed out to all property owners located within 300 feet of the project. After the public review period has expired, the **FINAL EIR** will be prepared based on comments received during the review period.

The Planning Commission must certify the Final EIR prior to or at the time the project is considered for approval. Certification of the Final EIR does not constitute project approval. Other approvals will have to occur. If the project is accepted, conditions will likely be imposed to mitigate any adverse environmental impacts.

Estimated Time:

- Preparation of Draft and Final EIR (Initial Study, selecting a consultant, Draft EIR, circulation/public review, response to comments, Final EIR): 6 – 8 months