

Attachment I-4

**General Plan Update
Rural Subdivision Design and
Processing Guidelines**

August 2011

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines were prepared for property owners, designers, engineers, developers and others that are involved with the subdivision of rural land in the unincorporated County of San Diego. They provide guidance on how to study, design, and process a subdivision that is in compliance with the County's policies and procedures.

1.1 Applicability

These guidelines apply to subdivisions on lands designated with a Semi-Rural Lands 10 (SR-10) designation or any Rural Lands designation (RL-20, 40, or 80).

1.2 How to Use this Document

This document provides applicants wishing to subdivide land within the unincorporated area of San Diego County guidance on the steps needed to properly design a subdivision, provides insight into several of the critical design and environmental constraints which could affect subdivision design, and provides an overview of the County's subdivision review process. This document should be read in its entirety before proceeding with the subdivision design and the subdivision process in that this document may prove a useful tool for applicants in what could be a complex and expensive process.

1.3 Purpose

The rural lands of the County of San Diego contain numerous resources that are critical to the character, health, safety, well-being, and viability of the San Diego region, including its environment and residents. The value of rural land is recognized by the County in the General Plan and Subdivision Ordinance, which aim to protect and preserve the resources on these lands. When land is subdivided, impacts occur directly to the lands and to the surrounding area. In rural lands, these impacts can have significant ramifications to the region's resources and, therefore, these lands must be planned carefully. Rural lands also tend to have the greatest risk of wildfires, and as such, human safety and defensibility should be a key focus of any subdivision.

To address these concerns, the County has a number of regulations that relate to subdivisions in rural lands. Additionally, there are numerous other local and State regulations that must be complied with for the subdivision of land to be approved. These guidelines are intended to assist applicants with complying with these regulations.

2.0 PLANNING PROCESS

This section describes a step-by-step planning process that is recommended for all rural subdivisions. An applicant may choose to follow a different process or a variation of the process below. However, with whatever process is undertaken, the County's submittal requirements and other regulations must be adhered to.

2.1 Step 1: Initial Feasibility Considerations

Designing, obtaining approval, and implementing a subdivision is a timely and costly venture, and is not without pitfalls. While the County makes every effort to assist landowners with the subdivision of their land, approval is not a certainty and rural lands often pose many challenges that may make a subdivision infeasible even when its density designations allow for it. Applicants should understand this risk and the potential costs associated with processing and implementing a subdivision prior to proceeding.

2.1.1 Initial Consultation

The County provides an inexpensive early consultation process where general requirements, constraints, and regulations can be discussed with County staff. The policies and ordinances outlined in Chapter 4.0 which limit lot yield or do not comply with the project's goals will be identified. In addition, a project processing timeline, cost estimate and research packet will be provided. Costs typically range from \$800-\$1500 per meeting. Projects which are impacted by multiple or complex constraints may exceed this estimated cost range. All projects are recommended to take advantage of this process and all parties involved with the subdivision are advised to attend. Additional information regarding the consultation process is detailed in Chapter 2.6. Applicants who wish to schedule an initial consultation may contact the County's project processing counter at 858-694-2262 or visit:

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/zoning/majorpreapplication.html>

2.1.2 Development Yield

The maximum number of dwelling units that can be permitted under the General Plan should be determined to ensure that subdivision is possible and to identify the potential yield. Lands with Semi-Rural designations require a slope analysis to determine density yield.

2.1.3 Costs

Typical costs with processing a subdivision on rural lands are provided below. It is not uncommon for costs to fall within the higher end of the range provided. Additional Information regarding costs may be found at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/cost-schedule-info.html>

Table 1: Typical Processing Costs

Task	Typical Cost Range
County Processing Costs	\$10,000 - \$50,000
Environmental Studies	\$5,000 - \$75,000
Design and Engineering Costs	\$5,000 - \$20,000 per lot

Costs are for tentative approval only. Numerous other costs are associated with satisfying conditions. Does not include the costs of exactions, road improvements, mitigation, grading permits, building permits, or other steps after tentative map/parcel map approval.

2.1.4 Fatal Flaws

At the outset, careful consideration should be given to issues that most commonly result in disapproval of a subdivision. The following is a list of those issues and suggestions for exploring them further:

- **Access rights and road improvements** – All subdivisions must demonstrate legal access to a public road. Roads must be able to meet the County’s road standards unless an exception is granted. Existing or proposed easements must be sufficient to accommodate road improvements that are necessary to meet County road standards. Full documentation of easements or other access rights should be obtained and reviewed early. Costs of improving access roads to meet standards should be estimated and considered with a consulting engineer.
- **Minimum road length requirements** – The County fire code contains minimum lengths for roads with dead ends. When a subdivision has only one legal access route, this is considered a dead end road and length minimums apply. Consult your local fire district or a fire planning professional early in the process to determine if this affects your land.
- **Biological constraints** – The County’s Multiple Species Conservation Program, Resource Protection Ordinance and Biological Mitigation Ordinance contain regulations regarding the protection of natural resources, such as wetlands, floodplains, and sensitive biological resources. Subdivisions must demonstrate compliance with these regulations including avoidance of said resources when applicable. It is recommended that a County-approved biological consultant be retained early in the process to assist in identifying applicable biological constraints. Additional information regarding County-approved consultants can be found in Chapter 4.9.
- **Water availability** – Whether the subdivision will depend on a private well or a water company or district, a reliable and clean water supply must be identified prior to approval of a project and well tests and analysis are not uncommon. Review applicable County regulations and consult with the local water district or a groundwater engineer as applicable.
- **Sewer** – A project must identify and have access to a viable sewer system prior to approval of a project. Sewer service may be provided by a district or private septic system. Review applicable County regulations, as some portions of the county cannot support septic systems due to poor percolation rates. In addition, some districts cannot accept new connections.
- **Community Plan** – Projects must be consistent with adopted community plan goals and policies. Each community plan contains unique or specific requirements which are applicable to its respective community and would otherwise not be found in other policy or regulatory documents. The community plan applicable to a proposed project should be reviewed to ensure that the project is consistent with the plan.

2.2 Step 2: Resource Inventory Mapping

The County requires submittal of a Resource Inventory Map with an application for a subdivision on rural lands to review for compliance with applicable requirements. It is advised that this map be prepared early in the planning process since the resources identified are fundamental to the location of building pads and design of the subdivision. The Resource Inventory Map identifies the project site's natural features and other physical characteristics and constraints. The purpose of the resource inventory is to ensure the subdivision design takes into account the site's significant resources and to evaluate the subdivision's impacts on those resources. The Resource Inventory Map is required to include the following and may consist of one single exhibit or a group of exhibits:

1. Topographic contours at 10-foot or more frequent intervals
2. Steep slopes (those slopes equal to or greater than 25% grade)
3. All existing buildings and structures on the land
4. Existing and historic agricultural uses
5. Paved areas and all encumbrances (easements, covenants, etc.)
6. Hydrologic characteristics (water courses, flow direction, storm drains, areas subject to inundation)
7. Biological Resources Map (prepared by a County qualified consultant pursuant to County guidelines) or land cover on site (grassland, scrub, etc.) Biological mapping requirements can be viewed at:
http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/Biological_Report_Format.pdf
8. Wetlands as defined by the Resource Protection Ordinance, and wetland buffers
9. Large boulders and rock outcroppings
10. Known cultural resources
11. Environmental resources overlay or exhibit identifying those lands that meet the environmental resources definition in the Subdivision Ordinance

Note: All maps and overlays should be scaled 1" to 100'.

An example of a Resource Inventory Map prepared following this guidance is provided as Figure 1.

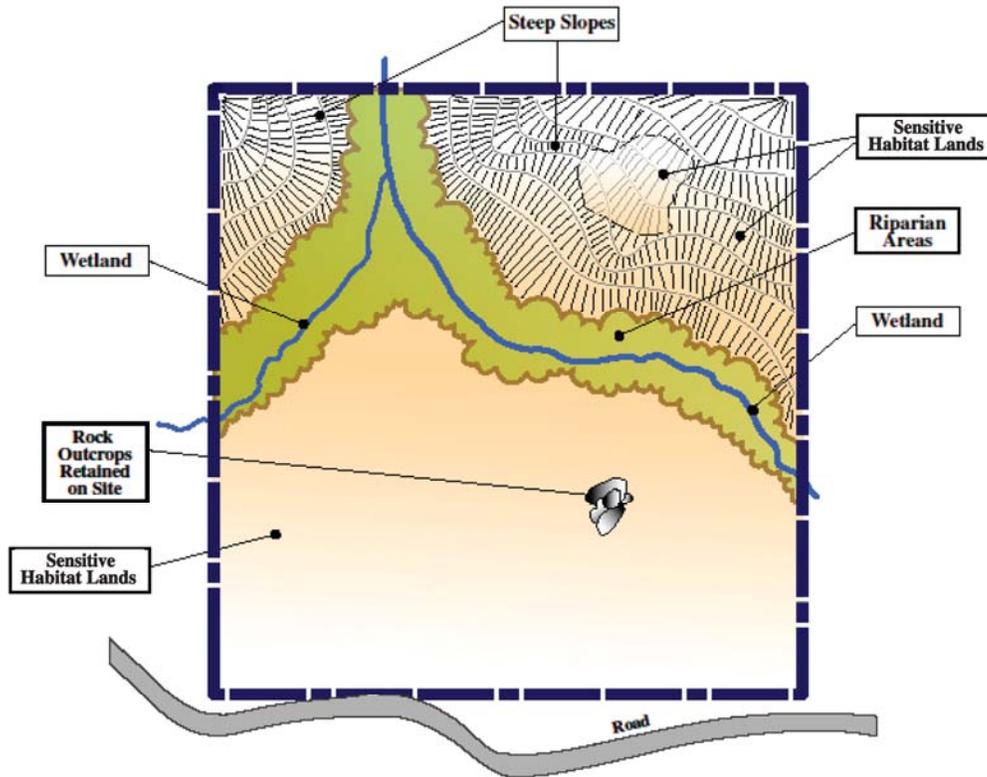


Figure 1: Sample inventory and mapping of existing resources (40 acre site)

2.3 Step 3: Preliminary Regulatory Review

A preliminary review of the County’s regulations and polices is needed to identify any development constraints on a project site. Identifying constraints in the early phase of a project will enable an applicant to understand a site’s true development potential and provide valuable information for the conceptual planning process. The subdivider should familiarize him/herself with the regulations outlined in Chapter 4.0 and analyze how the regulations impact the site’s development potential as a result of physical properties, resources, and neighboring environment.

2.4 Step 4: Conceptual Site Planning

After reviewing the resource inventory and considering the development constraints identified during the preliminary regulatory review, a conceptual site plan should be prepared. The conceptual site plan derives from interpreting the site’s potential and limitations as well as the subdivider’s needs and desires. These interests, sometimes in conflict, must be balanced through thoughtful design.

2.4.1 Identifying Areas for Avoidance (Open Space)

For rural lands, the Subdivision Ordinance contains avoidance minimums for environmental resources (see Table 2). Environmental resources are defined in the Subdivision Ordinance and should have been delineated on the Resource Inventory Map (Step 2).

Table 2: Avoidance of Environmental Resources

Designation	Minimum Percent Avoided Resources
SR-10	75
RL-20	80
RL-40	85
RL-80	90

With the understanding that the regulations require that a majority of the environmental resources be avoided, it is advised that the first step in the conceptual planning process consist of identifying the primary areas of the site that will be avoided. Avoided areas will be preserved by easements and will contribute to the region's network of open spaces. The Subdivision Ordinance contains specific requirements that relate to the design of the open space on the site. Those requirements are reiterated below in bold with additional guidance on how to achieve each requirement:

- 1. Conserve the largest blocks possible of unfragmented and interconnected open space.** The open space for a site should develop around the largest area or concentration of environmental resources on that site. An attempt should be made to maximize the amount of environmental resources contained within one single open space area.
- 2. Avoid creating slivers of open space or fingers of open space that extend in and around development; provide the lowest amount of interface between open space and development – referred to as maximizing the surface area to perimeter ratio.** Small strips or areas of environmental resources that lie within portions of the site that will be developed require careful consideration. These areas should be left out of the designated open space or the open space should be extended to include them and their surrounding area so that they have substantial connectivity to the open space. In determining the appropriate approach, consider the value of the environmental resources, any other regulations that may require their avoidance, and the gains for development if the resources are not avoided. Also note that environmental resources located outside of open space areas will be considered impacted.
- 3. Create the maximum amount of connectivity between on and off-site resource areas.** Linked open space areas are conducive to wildlife movement and support the development of native habitat. Whenever feasible open space areas should be linked to neighboring open space areas. Avoid creating isolated open space areas.

4. **Maintain patterns of diversity within the landscape such as multiple habitat types, varying topography, agriculture, etc.** Open space areas which are fragmented or isolated disrupt the natural development of habitat and should be avoided. To the maximum extent possible, the rural characteristic of the site should be maintained.
5. **Preserve particularly unique and/or sensitive resources in the core of open space areas or such that they are sufficiently buffered to achieve the same practical effect.** To the maximum extent possible, a site's most unique or sensitive resources should be located farthest from areas intended for development. In situations where this is not feasible, buffering should be provided to ensure the resources are not impacted. Sensitive resources located along a development's perimeter should be buffered from adjacent developments and public roads.
6. **Resources shall be avoided and placed in open space pursuant to the percentage indicated in Table 2 above.** The avoided lands shall be protected with an easement dedicated to the County of San Diego or a conservancy approved by the Director. Land used for mitigation for project impacts may be used to satisfy the requirements of Table 2. The required open space shall be maintained as open space in perpetuity, except in circumstances where a need to vacate is required for public health, safety or welfare.
7. **Certain uses may be allowed in the avoided area.** Allowable uses may include: passive recreation, trails for non-motorized uses, native landscaping, resource preservation, project mitigation and buffers, MSCP preservation/mitigation, agriculture, wells, water storage tanks, utilities, pump stations, water and sewer facilities, or infrastructure and access roads necessary for any of these uses. In addition to these uses, leach fields and brush clearing may be allowed in SR-10 and RL-20 designations only. All uses to be allowed in the avoided area shall be specified in the open space or conservation easement document.

Figure 2 provides an example approach to determining areas for avoidance based on the above criteria.

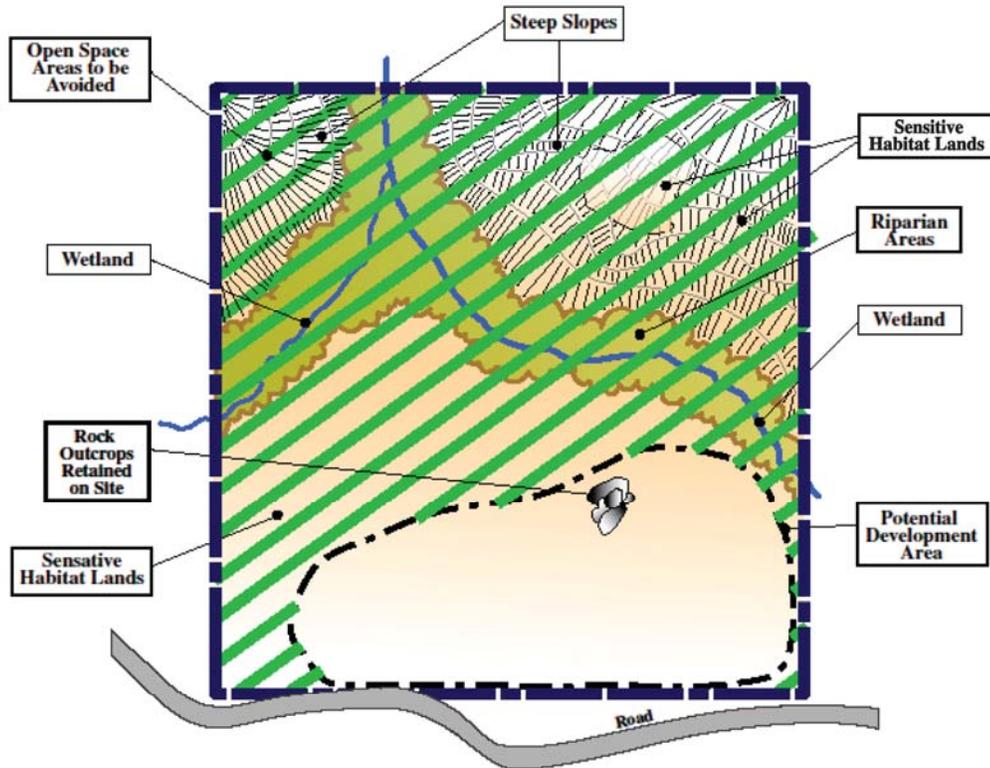


Figure 2: Potential Development Areas

2.4.2 Locating Housing Sites

The next suggested step in this conceptual planning process is to identify sites to build homes. The number of sites to be identified should be consistent with the development yield for the site and the intended use of the land. Subdividers that wish to accommodate accessory structures and uses to a primary residence should seek out large enough sites outside of avoided areas. Key requirements of the Subdivision Ordinance that relate to this step are described below:

1. **Locate the development in areas that minimize impacts to environmental resources so that every effort has been made to avoid impacts to environmental resources.** Compliance with this requirement will largely be achieved through the process of identifying areas for avoidance under the prior section. However, this requirement urges subdividers to go further. While minimum

avoidance percentages are specified, subdividers should achieve the maximum amount of avoidance possible when locating housing sites.

- 2. Locate and design the development in a manner that maximizes defensibility from wildland fires and accommodates all necessary fuel modification on-site.** Homes and other habitable structures require areas where the vegetation can be managed in a way to reduce the fire risk to the home. These areas are referred to as fuel modification zones. These areas typically extend 100 – 200 feet from the structure and are not allowed to extend into the designated open space areas. Defensibility is also improved by locating home sites closer together, eliminating open space/fuel loads between homes, setting back homes from slopes or other areas of increased fire intensity, and several other techniques. It is advised that subdividers consult a fire planning professional on this issue. Ultimately a fire protection plan must be prepared by such a professional and submitted to the County as part of the discretionary permit process. Additional information regarding County approved consultants can be found in Chapter 4.9.

Other factors that should be considered with locating housing sites are listed below:

- 1. Community compatibility** – The residents of San Diego County’s unincorporated communities and rural areas have chosen to reside in these areas largely due to its environmental setting of hillsides, valleys, deserts, agriculture, low density rural character, and lack of congestion. As development occurs, it must be managed to protect these assets. Consideration should be given to surrounding land uses when locating housing sites. Development on the perimeter of the site should give consideration to protection of the property from adverse surrounding influences, as well as protection of the surrounding areas from potential adverse influences within the development. For example, housing sites should not be located in close proximity to neighboring agriculture operations without proper buffering. In addition, housing sites should be located away from public roads and trails in order to preserve homeowner privacy.
- 2. General and Community Plan compliance** –The County’s General Plan and Community Plans are intended to guide development to reflect the character and vision of residents within the unincorporated portions of the County. Compliance with the General and community plans goals and policies ensures that new development is in keeping with a community’s vision. Particular focus should be given to the goals and policies of the land use element. The rural character of the area should be maintained to the greatest extent feasible.
- 3. Steep Slopes and Landform Modification**– Development within steep slopes may contribute to slope instability. Engineering measures may be required to mitigate risk. Applicants should be aware that in general, engineering solutions are more costly in terms of design and construction. To the maximum extent possible home sites should not encroach into steep slopes. However, in accordance with the requirements of the Slope Encroachment Regulations contained within the Resource

Protection Ordinance, a project may encroach into steep slopes in order to avoid impacts to environmental resources that cannot be avoided by other means.

In addition, consideration should be given to the grading quantities associated with housing site location. Large or excessive cut and fill slopes are discouraged; balanced cut and fill grading practices are recommended. Furthermore, contour grading should be utilized to assist with blending the man-made slope to the existing natural landform. See the Resource Protection Ordinance discussion at Section 4.3 for further information on this ordinance.

4. **Aesthetics** – Preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important and unique features, is among the County’s goals to protect visual resources. Siting and design can minimize visual impacts. Housing sites should not be located on ridgelines, hilltops, along peripheral public roads or visually prominent areas. The housing sites should relate harmoniously to the topography of the site and make suitable provisions for the preservation of views. Excessive grading of slopes should be avoided, see #3 above. Clustering of development to preserve open space vistas and natural features is encouraged.
5. **Hydrology and Water Courses** – Housing sites should be located to avoid impacting natural drainage patterns on the site. This includes grading or other land disturbance which may alter, redirect or intensify the flow of water on and off site. Additionally, housing sites must be located out of floodways and although discouraged, may be located within a floodplain if the pad sites are engineered properly. The County Resource Protection Ordinance also requires that lot configuration be designed in such a manner as to minimize encroachment into a floodplain and requires proposed development be set back from the floodway boundary a distance equal to 15 percent of the floodway width. See the Resource Protection Ordinance discussion at Section 4.3 for further information on this ordinance.
6. **Infrastructure** – Housing sites should be located within proximity of on-site infrastructure. This design consideration will avoid the need to incorporate excessively lengthy water or sewer lines or additional paved driveway areas to access the home site resulting in a more compact and sustainable subdivision design. Also, homes should be central to common use areas and provide for equal access opportunities for all home sites within a subdivision.

Figure 3 provides an example approach to selecting and siting housing sites.

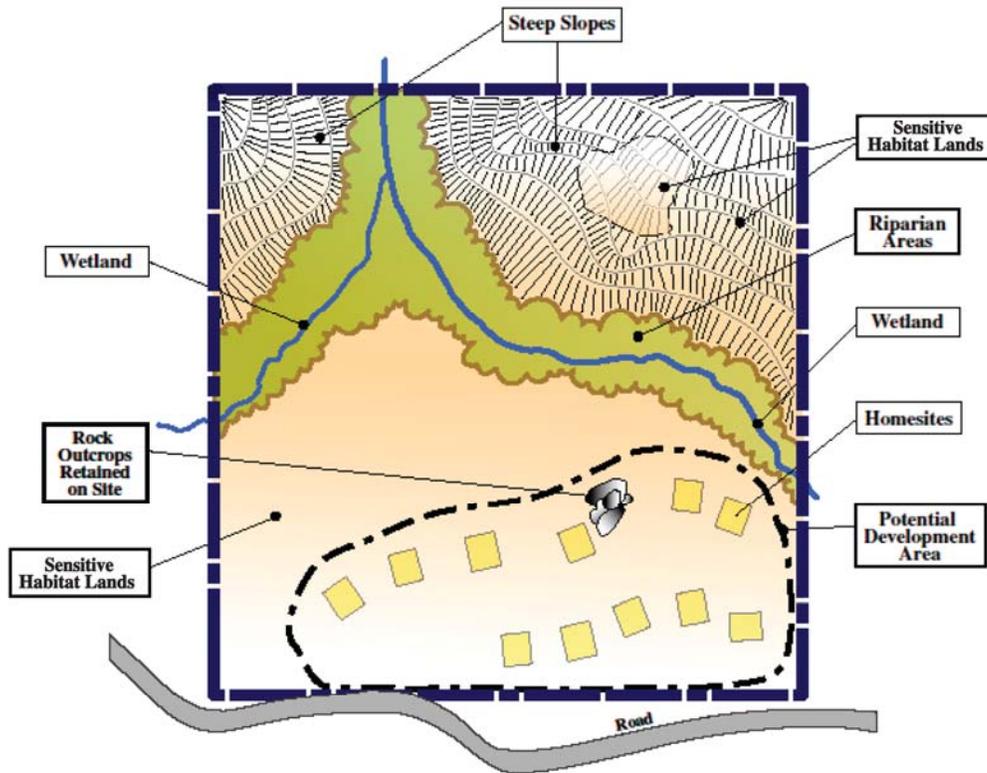


Figure 3: Housing Sites

2.4.3 Aligning the Streets

A logical alignment of local streets to access the pad sites should be laid out. Design streets to minimize impacts to environmental resources through design standards such as aligning streets to reduce impacts from grading, clustering of development to reduce length of roads and associated grading, and use of alternative permeable paving materials and methods. Paved road widths and curve radii must remain consistent with applicable public safety standards. The following criteria should be factored into the alignment:

1. **Secondary Access.** Secondary access is necessary to ensure adequate emergency service if dead end roads exceed County standards. Access to Mobility Element roads is limited; however, this does not override requirements to provide secondary access. In addition to identifying a secondary access route, access rights must be obtained to the secondary access route if a private easement road is utilized. Gated entries must also meet certain criteria. Subdividers should refer to

the County Fire Safety Guidelines to determine the applicable access requirements. Additional Information regarding secondary access is detailed in Chapter 4.5

2. **Connectivity.** A continuous network where roads have enhanced connectivity facilitates multiple routes of travel. This enables vehicles to avoid areas when roads are congested or closed. In addition, a network with enhanced connectivity provides multiple evacuation routes during emergencies such as wildfires. Streets should be linked to abutting networks. In situations where future development is likely to occur on a neighboring site, provisions should be made to enable future connectivity. Public street networks are preferred over private networks.
3. **Streets should be configured to minimize the length required to serve the subdivision.** Long cul-de-sacs should be avoided. Clustering of development to reduce street lengths is encouraged. Standards exist which identify the maximum length of a dead-end street (including cul-de-sacs). Subdividers should refer to the County Fire Safety Guidelines to determine the applicable street length. See Section 4.5, Infrastructure and Services discussion for further information on fire safety requirements.
4. **Access points to public streets should be limited.** It is intended that Mobility Element roads provide public mobility with minimum interference from local traffic as it accesses a Mobility Element road. Therefore, Mobility Element roads require access control to minimize traffic conflicts. Depending on the road classification and traffic signals, turn lanes and other traffic safety devices may need to be incorporated into a project's design. Sight distance and intersection offset requirements may apply.
5. **Streets should be aligned to conform to existing land contours and minimize grading.** Grades above 15% may require mitigation measures from the local fire district. In no case should the street grades exceed 20%. Additionally, finished slopes associated with street construction should be minimized to avoid visual and aesthetic impacts.
6. **Public and Private streets shall conform to County Standards.** The County has adopted street standards for both public and private roads. A subdivider should familiarize him/herself with the applicable standards to ensure the street alignment and dimensions conform to County standards. Please note that certain specific community right-of-way standards exist which are unique to the particular community proposed for development.
7. **Street standards modification process.** In certain instances where County standards may be impractical or present an undue hardship, a modification may be considered. The Director of Public Works may make modifications to these standards where the application of the standards to a specific situation will result in an unusual and unreasonable hardship provided, however, that the Director of Public Works determines that such modification is in conformity with the spirit and intent of applicable ordinances and the approving authority.

Figure 4 provides an example approach to aligning streets.

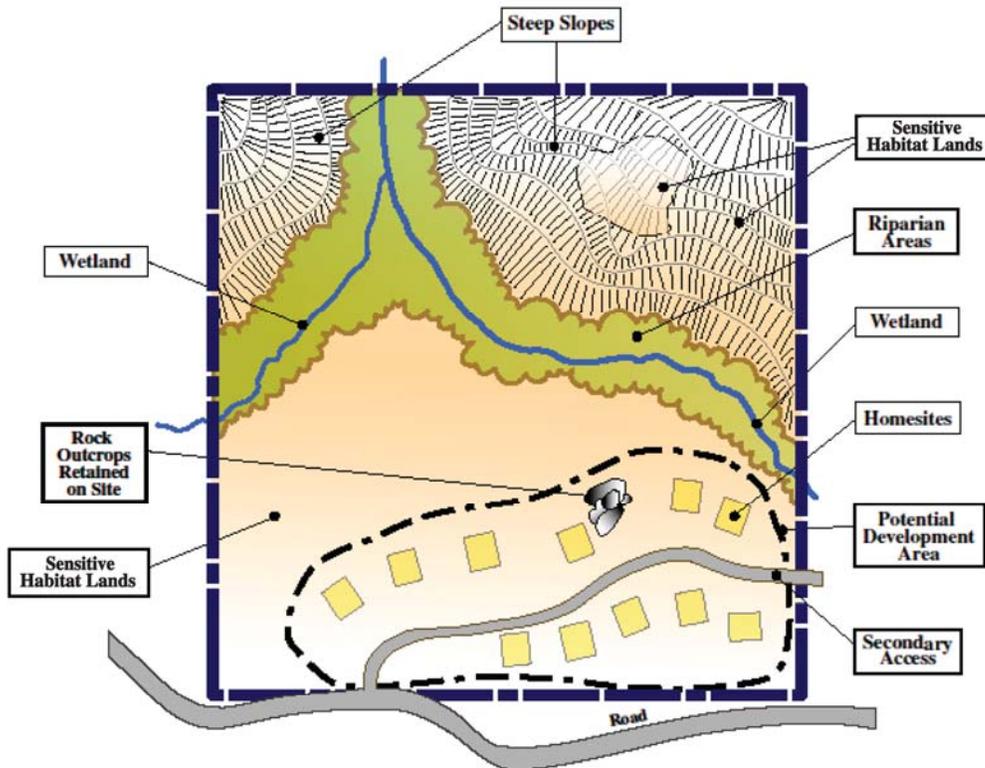


Figure 4: Aligning streets and trails

2.4.4 Lot Design

The final step is creating lot lines. Lot lines should be plotted out to correspond to each housing site. In practice, lot lines are generally drawn midway between house locations and may include panhandle shaped lots provided the lots conform to the County's Subdivision Ordinance. Every lot shall contain the minimum lot area specified in the Zoning Ordinance for the zone in which it is located. In cases where a minimum lot area is not specified, the minimum lot size shall be 6,000 square feet. The following items should be considered before lot lines are created:

1. **Applicable Setbacks** - Consideration should be given to the applicable setbacks for the subdivision since the lot dimensions need to incorporate the housing site in addition to the setback requirements to provide adequate development area. Consideration should be given to surrounding development patterns.
2. **Responsibility/Maintenance of Open Space** – Before lot lines are plotted, project design should take into account how open space located on the site will be maintained or managed, with additional consideration regarding who will be in

charge of its stewardship. Lots should be designed to allow for access to the open space for on-going maintenance as well as assuring the identified parties responsible for said maintenance have access.

3. **Private Usable Open Space** – Lot lines should be designed to assure that adequate areas for usable private open space on the lot have been identified such that they can be used and are easily accessible.
4. **Lot Line Design** – Generally, lot lines should be located in conformance with the applicable design standards of Section 81.401 of the Subdivision Ordinance. Lot lines should maintain a linear configuration without unnecessary jogs and turns to the maximum extent possible. This assists in orderly subdivision design and avoids confusion for future property owners when trying to determine the legal lot limits of their properties.

Figure 5 provides an example of approach to lot design.

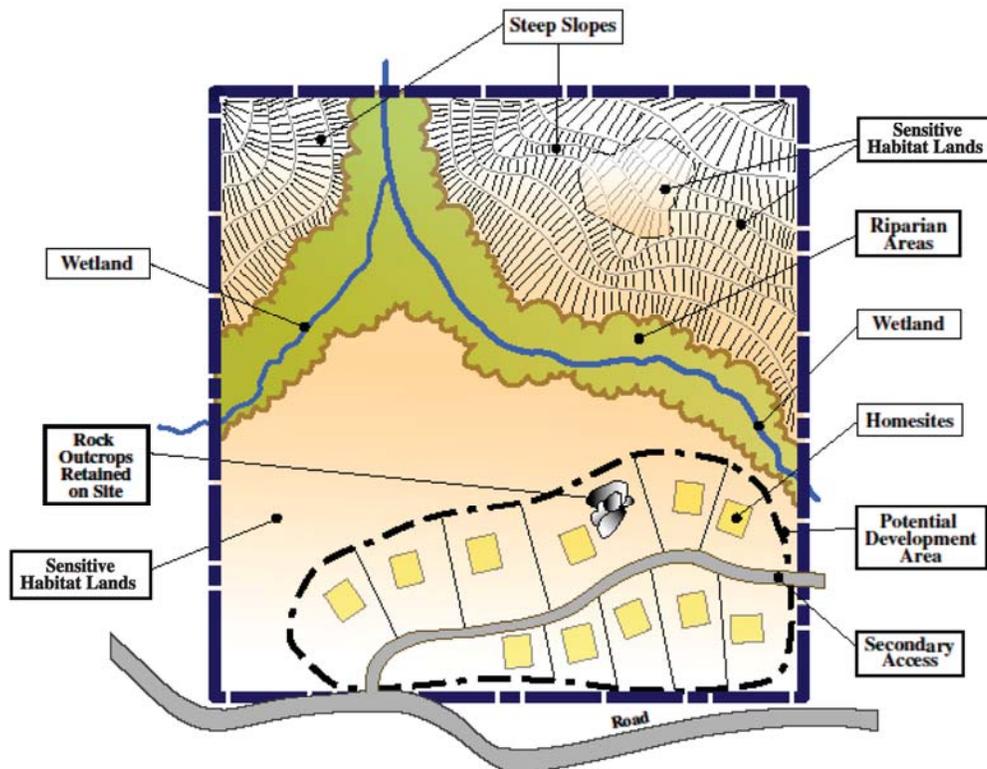


Figure 5: Lot Design

The County acknowledges that its regulations on lot size and shape create challenges when trying to comply with other County regulations and achievement of the development yield available to a site. The following provisions are available to developers who wish to seek relief from the County standards:

- **Subdivision Ordinance Waiver** may be considered in certain instances where Subdivision Ordinance standards may be impractical or present an undue hardship. Any waiver or modification must be in conformity with the spirit and purpose of the Subdivision Map Act and County Subdivision Ordinance, and may be subject to conditions.
- **Lot Area Averaging** is available upon approval of an Administrative Permit; it allows lots in a subdivision to be smaller than would be allowed by the applicable lot designator. The administrative permit is subject to findings and conditions. The overall density of the subdivision may not be increased.
- **Planned Residential Developments** are available upon approval of a Major Use Permit. Applicants may propose alternative development standards, including reduced lot sizes and setbacks, subject to findings and conditions. This approach provides greater flexibility in the overall project design when compared to that of lot averaging. The overall density of the subdivision may not be increased.

Note: Lot Area Averaging and/or Planned Residential Development applications must be filed concurrently with a subdivision application when reduced lot sizes are proposed.

- **Rezone** is available through a zoning ordinance amendment. This procedure may be used to change a property from one zone to another or to remove or modify a specific regulation imposed on a property. This process requires approval by the Board of Supervisors. Rezones must be consistent with the General Plan
- **Specific Plan** may be applied to a specific set of properties or geographic boundary. The plan may propose a set of development regulations that supersedes the underlying zoning for a specific area. Specific plans require approval by the Board of Supervisors and must be consistent with the General Plan.

2.5 Step 5: Regulatory Review and Refinement

At this stage, the concept plan is essentially laid out. Preliminary details regarding the proposed method and location of water supply, stormwater management and septic should be provided. The concept plan should be reviewed carefully to ensure it complies with the design constraints identified through the review of the regulations outlined in Chapter 4.0. This process may need to be repeated as revisions and refinements are made.

2.6 Step 6: Submittal to the County

Once Steps 1 through 5 have been completed and the conceptual plan is final, the applicant should prepare the project for formal submittal and contact the Department of Planning and Land Use to schedule a pre-application meeting.

2.6.1 Pre-application Process

Applicants are strongly encouraged to schedule a pre-application meeting with planning staff at this stage of the design process. County staff can review the concept plan to ensure that all the site's constraints have been identified and addressed through proper design. The applicant will also have an opportunity to discuss the formal application requirements and gain an understanding of the project's processing procedures.

2.6.2 Initial Consultation Application

Applicants can choose to first conduct a less formal voluntary initial consultation application meeting to review basic site issues, site layout and discuss the County approval process. Initial Consultation meetings are optional; however, they can be beneficial in further refining the final conceptual plan prior to submittal of a mandatory Major Pre-Application (in the case of Tentative Maps) or prior to formal submittal of a Tentative Parcel Map for discretionary review.

2.6.3 Major Pre-Application

Major Pre-Application meetings are mandatory for all proposed Tentative Map submittals. Major Pre-Apps consist of a more detailed review involving all County staff that will be engaged in the review of the Tentative Map. Major Pre-apps are intended to resolve major design and environmental issues that may affect project design and processing. A Pre-Application Meeting Request application may be submitted at the Zoning Counter similar to other project application submittals (with the required deposit). An application packet will provide applicants the needed paperwork to submit the application. An applicant may submit additional materials (maps, plans, and technical reports) as necessary, to assist in the Major Pre-Application Meeting process. Following the pre-application meeting, applicants will receive a "pre-scoping" letter from the County which identifies unresolved issues as well as provides direction for applicants on how to address certain issues. In order to assist in expediting a project through the approval process, identified issues from the Pre-Application Meeting should be addressed within the discretionary application submittal.

2.6.4 Community Planning Groups

It is also strongly encouraged that applicants seek input from the local community planning group prior to attending a pre-application meeting and/or prior to submittal of a discretionary application to the County. Community groups are involved in providing recommendations on projects to planning staff and County decision makers during the

County approval process. The community planning groups provide valuable input on project design and site planning since they may be aware of unique circumstances and situations that may affect their communities. A conceptual plan can be placed on a community planning group agenda for discussion by contacting the applicable community planning group contact person at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/plngchairs.pdf

2.6.5 Project Submittal and Intake

All projects are submitted at the Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU) zoning counter. All submittal documents to file a subdivision map can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/zoning/Zoning_Permits.html. Applicants must contact the DPLU zoning counter at (858) 565-5981 to set up an appointment for submission of an application packet to DPLU. Submittal requirements include but are not limited to: proposed tentative map, preliminary grading plans, stormwater management plans, service availability forms and public notice documents. In addition to the required submittal items, applicants will need to submit a copy of the pre-scoping letter provided as part of the Major Pre-application process.

Once a project is accepted over the zoning counter, the project is assigned to a DPLU Project Manager. Additionally, project submittal information is distributed to other County Departments (Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Environmental Health, etc...) as well as other external reviewers (community planning groups, service districts and other applicable or affected agencies). Conditions, recommendations and comments for internal and external reviewers would be forwarded to applicants as part of the scoping process discussed below.

3.0 COUNTY APPROVAL PROCESS

The following section provides an overview of the County approval process for reviewing and approving subdivision maps once the submittal is complete.

3.1 Scoping

Within the first 30 days following project intake, the proposed project will be scoped by the assigned DPLU Project Manager. The following steps occur during the scoping process:

3.1.1 Review of Project Completeness

The Project Manager will review the project to ensure that all required project processing requirements have been submitted. This includes but is not limited to such items as: complete and accurate project application, accuracy of project description, and evidence of legal lot status.

3.1.2 Project Analysis

During the scoping process, the DPLU Project Manager will review the project to ensure compliance with: County General Plan and community plans, Board Policies, applicable codes and ordinances, and any other relevant policies or findings which must be satisfied. Major issues associated with the project should have been identified during the pre-application process for Tentative Maps or the initial consultation for Tentative Parcel Maps.

3.1.3 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review

Also during the scoping process, the project will be reviewed for compliance with CEQA. The Project Manager will complete a CEQA Initial Study questionnaire from the information provided with the project submittal including the project description. The Initial Study identifies environmental resource areas which may be impacted as a result of the project. Although many, if not all, of these issues should have been identified during the pre-application or initial consultation process, additional needed information will be identified in the scoping letter. Further, an appropriate CEQA processing track will be identified (Notice of Exemption, Negative Declaration or Environmental Impact Report).

3.1.4 Scoping Letter

Once the project analysis and CEQA review have been completed, a scoping letter will be drafted which will identify unresolved major project issues as well as other project issues needed to bring the project into compliance with applicable codes and ordinances. The scoping letter will also request, if needed, additional information and/or extended studies to address potential impacts identified in the Initial Study questionnaire. Any comments, conditions and recommendations received from internal and external reviewers, including community planning groups, would also be incorporated into the scoping letter. The scoping letter will specify a date when the applicant would need to resubmit the requested information. Lastly, the scoping letter will include an estimated project schedule and cost estimate as well as request additional fees to complete the project.

3.2 Iteration Review

Upon project resubmittal, County staff will review the submitted information and provide additional comments and input as necessary. The assigned County project manager will also contact the applicant, as necessary, to discuss the content of the letter. The project resubmittal may be redistributed to the applicable community planning group depending on the scope of the proposed project revisions. See Section 2.6.4 for further explanation of the community planning group's role in the planning process. This iterative process may be repeated until project issues have been rectified and the CEQA documentation has been deemed complete. The pre-application or initial consultation process initiated prior to formal project submittal should ultimately lead to less iteration reviews.

3.3 Public Review

Pursuant to CEQA, environmental documents prepared for projects may be required to be circulated for public review for a period of 45 days depending on the type of CEQA document prepared. At the end of public review, public comments are reviewed and addressed. Public comments may necessitate design changes or lead to recirculation of the environmental document depending on the nature of the comments received. Projects determined to qualify for a Notice of Exemption or which rely on a previously approved environmental document do not need to be circulated for public review.

3.4 Decision

After completion of project and environmental review, a subdivision project may be approved or disapproved by the appropriate decision maker. Tentative Parcel Maps are approved by the Director of Planning and Land Use and can be appealed to the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Tentative Maps are approved by the Planning Commission and can be appealed to the Board of Supervisors. If a subdivision map is linked to a legislative action (Rezone, Specific Plan Amendment), the Board of Supervisors has final jurisdiction over the subdivision map.

Subdivision maps are approved by decisions. The decision will contain a number of conditions which need to be satisfied prior to the map being recorded. Such conditions may include requirements for on and off-site improvements and environmental mitigation. Furthermore, the decision will contain appropriate findings needed to support approval of the map as well as information on the maps expiration date if the map is not recorded in a timely manner.

3.5 Post Approval

3.5.1 Recordation Process

Following discretionary approval, the recordation process for subdivision maps is managed by the Department of Public Works. The Department of Planning and Land use will continue to work with applicants to ensure that DPLU-imposed conditions of approval are signed off and coordinated through the Department Public Works. Final Maps are approved at the Board of Supervisors, although this process rarely initiates discussion at the Board.

3.5.2 Building Permits

Building permits for individual homes may be issued once all applicable conditions are satisfied, improvement/grading plans are accepted and bonded and the subdivision map has been recorded.

4.0 REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

The following sections describe the primary County regulations and standards that affect subdivision design and approval.

4.1 General & Community Plans

General Plan Conformance

The County of San Diego's General Plan sets forth goals and policies that may affect density, lot size, and or design of a project. The plan is broken in to elements including Open Space, Circulation, and Noise. The General Plan should be reviewed and the applicable element identified to ensure they are consistent with the proposed project.

Community Plan Conformance

Community plans set forth goals and policies specific to each community. Similar to the General Plan, each community plan will be separated into specific chapters or "elements" such as mobility or land use which address specific issues unique to each community. The community plan applicable to a proposed project should be reviewed to ensure that the project is consistent with the plan.

Specific Plans

Several communities in the County have adopted Specific Plans. The Plans are applicable within specific geographic boundaries. The Plans set forth a community's vision for the future. Specific Plans should be reviewed to ensure a project complies with applicable design standards.

Design Review Guidelines

Several communities in the County have adopted Design Review Guidelines. The guidelines are applicable within specific geographic boundaries. The guidelines encourage development that contributes to a community's character and identify through quality site planning, architecture and landscape design. Design Review Guidelines should be reviewed to ensure a project complies with applicable design standards. Further information can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/DesignReview.html

4.2 Applicable Processing Regulations

Zoning Ordinance

The County's Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed at the onset of a site analysis. The ordinance lays out use regulations, development regulations and general regulations that shape development in the unincorporated areas of the County. Applicants should review the use regulations to ensure the proposed project is compatible with the uses permitted in the project site's zone. The development regulations contain standards, such as density, setbacks, height, etc. The general regulation covers topics such as accessory uses, landscaping and parking. Procedures and standards applicable to Lot Area Averaging and Planned Residential Developments are also found within the Zoning Ordinance. Project applicants should review the Zoning Ordinance and determine which regulations are applicable to their projects and in turn be factored into the project's design. Further information can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/444.pdf

Subdivision Ordinance

The County's Subdivision Ordinance establishes the requirements and procedures for subdividing land within the unincorporated area of San Diego County. In addition, the

ordinance sets forth lot design criteria, roadway and trail requirements as well as other design consideration. The Subdivision Ordinance also contains provisions for modifying and or waiving requirements of the ordinance. Project applicants should review the ordinance to ensure the project complies with the applicable requirements.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The CEQA review process requires development projects submit documentation of their potential environmental impact. During the scoping stage of processing a subdivision map, the County Project Manager as part of completing the required CEQA Initial Study questionnaire, will determine whether additional studies are needed to obtain information on whether a project will have an adverse impact to the resources identified in the initial study. These include but are not limited to such resource areas as: biology, archeology, aesthetics, hydrology and water quality, noise, and traffic. The studies will identify whether no impact occurs or whether an impact will occur, as well as whether the identified adverse effect can be mitigated. CEQA recognizes both direct impacts resulting from a project and cumulative impacts – impacts to the environment from the subject project along with other past, present or reasonably foreseeable future projects in the development area. The sections below identify some of the more common resources area that are potentially affected when processing a subdivision map and which consequently may affect overall project design.

4.3 Biology

Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP)

The overall goal of the MSCP is to provide large, connected preserve areas that address a number of species at the habitat level rather than species by species, and area-by-area. This creates a more efficient and effective preserve system as well as better protection for the rare, threatened and endangered species in the region. The existing boundaries of the MSCP apply to land that is served by the City of San Diego Metro Wastewater Sewer System (South County Subarea Plan). These boundaries extend from the southern portion of Ramona and the San Dieguito River; east to Poway, Lakeside and Alpine and south to the border with Mexico. The County is currently working on a plan for the northern part of the unincorporated area (North County MSCP Plan) that extends from the area around the incorporated cities of Oceanside, Encinitas, San Marcos, Vista, and Escondido east to the Cleveland National Forest and north to the County line. The third phase will involve all of the unincorporated land not included within the first two phases. This East County MSCP Plan will cover the land from Alpine east to the County boundary.

The existing South County MSCP Subarea Plan is divided into “segments“. Two of the segments contain mostly “hardline“ areas in which the landowners have negotiated with the Wildlife Agencies and County for areas that will be set aside as preserve lands in perpetuity. In return, there are also areas approved for development. The third segment of the South County Subarea Plan does not have “hardline“ MSCP designations, but does include land that has been identified for its biological importance. In this area, an ordinance for addressing biological mitigation provides incentives to develop within the less important habitat areas and preserve lands identified as biologically important (Biological Mitigation Ordinance). There are also specific provisions that address the

need to protect important populations of rare and endangered species. Certain areas within the MSCP have been defined as Pre-Approved Mitigation Areas (PAMA). Subdivision projects within PAMA will need to conform to preset criteria and guidelines in order to conform to the MSCP. Further information can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/mscp/index.html

Biological Mitigation Ordinance (BMO)

The BMO sets forth the criteria for avoiding impacts to biological resource core areas and to plant and animal populations within those areas, and it sets forth the mitigation requirements for all projects requiring a discretionary permit within MSCP boundaries. It is the County's policy to promote the preservation of biological resources by directing preservation toward land which can be combined into contiguous areas of habitat or linkages. It is further the policy of the County to give greater value to preservation of large contiguous biological resource core areas or to linkages when formulating avoidance and mitigation requirements. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/mscp/bmo.html>

Habitat Loss Permit (HLP)

Project sites which contain Coastal Sage Scrub on any portion of the subject property must be reviewed by a staff biologist to determine if the project requires a Habitat Loss Permit. A HLP is subject to specific findings and federal and state resource agencies must concur with the County's findings prior to permit issuance and prior grading and clearing on a project site.

4.4 Critical Resources

Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO)

Project sites which contain wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, sensitive biological resources and pre-historic and historic sites are subject to the RPO. These additional regulations are due to these resources being identified as fragile, irreplaceable resources that are vital to the general welfare of all residents. The ordinance sets forth the criteria to protect the five resource areas indicated above and prevent their degradation and loss by requiring a Resource Protection Study for certain discretionary projects. The RPO also preserves the ability of affected property owners to make reasonable use of their land subject to the conditions established by Ordinance. Further information can be obtained at: http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/res_prot_ord.pdf.

4.5 Water Quality

Stormwater

The County's Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management and Discharge Control Ordinance consists of several requirements which may impact a project's design, including the following: prohibit polluted non-stormwater discharges to the stormwater conveyance system and receiving waters; establish requirements for development project site design to reduce stormwater pollution and erosion; establish requirements for the management of stormwater flows from development projects to prevent erosion and to protect and enhance existing water dependent habitats: and, establish standards for the use of off-site facilities for stormwater management to supplement on-site

practices at new development sites. Project applicants should review the ordinance during the site analysis to ensure the project's design is consistent with the County's requirements. Further Information can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/watersheds/ordinance.html

Hydrology

Drainage plans are typically required to be submitted as part of review of subdivision maps. As indicated above, the development of a site must not adversely affect the on-site and off-site conveyance of water. The County Department of Public Works Hydrology Manual and Drainage Design Manual can be obtained at the DPW Flood Control website at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/flood.html>

Additionally, the County's Guidelines for Determining Significance-Hydrology details a number of flood and erosion considerations a project applicant must consider including; existing drainage patterns, creating or contributing to run-off water, placing housing in a flood plain and soil erosion. The guide also outlines standard mitigation measures that may be required. Potential impacts to hydrology as a result of a subdivision which would require submission of a hydrology study could include: whether the project will substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of a site or area. Further information can be viewed at: http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/Hydrology_Guidelines.pdf

Low Impact Design (LID)

The Goal of the County of San Diego's LID Program is to protect water quality by preserving and mimicking nature through the use of stormwater planning and management techniques on a project site. The Purpose of the LID Handbook is to provide a comprehensive list of LID planning and stormwater management techniques for developers, builders, contractors, planners, landscape architects, engineers, and government employees to reference as guidance prior to developing a project site. Further Information can be obtained at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/LID-Handbook.pdf>

4.6 Infrastructure and Services

Fire Safety

County fire safety requirements play a critical role during project design. Several factors must be analyzed to determine their impact on a projects overall design including: is the project in an Urban-Wildland Interface area or Hazardous Fire area, is the project area known to have a substandard fire response travel time, and is secondary access to the site required? Submission of a Fire Protection Plan completed by a County approved consultant (see below) is a typical requirement of most subdivision map applications. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/Fire-Guidelines.pdf>

Water, Sewer, Fire, and School Service Availability

It is advisable to coordinate with service providers during the site analysis phase of a project. Obtaining "will serve" letters from service providers such as sewer districts, water districts, fire districts and school districts will ensure service providers have the capacity to absorb a project and flush out potential design constraints. The requirement

to obtain will serve letters is part of a County Board Policy. The requirements of the Board Policy prohibit the DPLU from approving any project in which an affirmative will service letter has not been obtained from the service provider. Further information can be obtained at <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/cob/docs/policy/l-84.pdf>

Septic

Projects which intend to utilize on-site septic treatment facilities must consider a number of factors during site analysis including: soil permeability, peak daily flow and net usable land areas. Each of these factors can impact a septic system design and in turn impact the overall design of a project. Verification of septic system approval is required from the Department of Environmental Health as part of submission of a tentative map application to DPLU. Project applicants which intend to utilize a septic system should consult with DEH during the site analysis to ensure septic regulations including size and location are incorporated into the project's overall design. Further information can be obtained at: http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/docs/lu_osws_design.pdf

Groundwater

San Diego County overlies a complex groundwater resource that varies greatly throughout the entire County. This resource provides the only source of water for approximately 35,000 residents. Development has occurred and will continue to occur within this area, impacting the safe utilization of this valuable, finite and yet renewable resource. The County's Groundwater Ordinance was established for the protection, preservation, and maintenance of this resource. The purpose of the ordinance is to ensure that development will not occur in groundwater-dependent areas of the County unless adequate groundwater supplies are available to serve both the existing uses within the affected groundwater basin and the proposed uses. Groundwater Ordinance regulations may impact the minimum lot size and or density of a project and should be reviewed carefully during the site analysis phase. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/dplu/docs/GROUNDWATER-ORD.pdf>

Private Wells

The Department of Environmental Health, Land and Water Quality Division (DEH) regulate the design, construction, modification, and destruction of water wells throughout San Diego County. Water Wells are commonly used as the only potable water supply in the rural areas of San Diego County. Projects which intend to utilize private wells should consult with DEH during the site analysis to ensure well regulations are incorporated into the project's overall design. Further information can be obtained at: http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu_water_wells.html

Water Systems

In addition to private wells, DEH regulates Small Water Systems and Community Water Systems. A Small Water System is a public water system that has 5 to 14 service connections, and does not regularly serve potable water to more than 25 individuals for more than 60 days out of the year. An example would be a small residential community with 10 homes served by a single water supply. A Community Water System is a public water system that has 15 to 199 service connections used by year-long residents, or regularly serves at least 25 year-long residents. Water systems that have 200 or more service connections used by year-long residents are regulated by the State of California

Department of Public Health. An example would be a community with residential homes served by a single water system. Project applicants intending to utilize a water system to provide potable water should consult with DEH during the design phase to ensure the water system regulations are incorporated into the projects overall design. Further information can be obtained at:

http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu_sws.html

4.7 Transportation

Circulation

Circulation issues may impact a project's overall design and must be considered during a site analysis. Issues such as sight distance, secondary access, public vs. private, street lights and road classifications must all be factored into a project's design. Potential impacts to circulation as a result of a subdivision which would require submission of a traffic study could include an analysis of whether a project is directly or cumulatively impacting roadway intersections and/or segments proposed for use by future residents of the subdivision. Mitigation of such impacts may result in physical off-site road improvements, installation of street lights and parking restrictions. Project applicants should review the County's Mobility Element, Street Standards, significance Guidelines for Traffic, and Fire Safety Guidelines carefully and if necessary, consult with the Department of Public Works during the site analysis to ensure the project's circulation system complies with County standards. Further information can be obtained at:

- a. Public street standards can be viewed at:
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/docs/pbrdstds.pdf>
- b. Private street standards can be viewed at:
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/docs/PRRDST.pdf>
- c. Traffic guidelines can be viewed at:
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/docs/trficguide.pdf>

Trails

The County's Department of Parks and Recreation maintains and administers the County Trails Program (CTP). The CTP involves both trail development and management on public, semi-public, and private lands. The Community Trails Master Plan is the implementing document for the trails program and contains adopted individual community trails and pathways plans. Project applicants should review the Community Trails Master Plan to determine if it is applicable and incorporated correctly into a project's design. Further information can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/parks/trails.html

4.8 Other Considerations

Moratoria

Several areas of the County are subject to development moratoria. The County Code of Regulatory Ordinances prohibits acceptance of applications for projects located in moratorium areas. Call Zoning/Subdivision Information at (858) 565-5981 to determine if a project site is subject to a moratorium.

Board Policies

The County Board of Supervisors has adopted several policies regarding planning and land use. Policies address a number of topics ranging from infrastructure to natural resources. The Board policies should be reviewed to determine which policies may be applicable to a project and in turn potentially affect the project's design. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/cob/policy/>

Noise

It is the County's policy to regulate noise at both the source and receiver site. Projects which may be exposed to noise levels in excess of 60dBA CNEL should consult the noise element and noise contour maps as they may be subject to regulations that impact a project's overall design. Potential impacts to a subdivision as a result of off-site noise would require submission of a noise study. This could result if a proposed subdivision located adjacent to or within close proximity to a County Mobility Element Road or a freeway.

Hazardous Materials

The County's Guidelines for Determining Significance-Hazardous Materials and Existing Contamination details Federal, State and Local regulations related to hazardous material and contaminated sites. A proposed subdivision could be subject to completing a hazards study if information obtained during review of the project initial study indicates that the project site is contaminated or if the project site is within proximity of a site which was known to use hazardous materials or which has stored hazardous materials and is known to be contaminated. The guidelines also outline standard mitigation measures that may be required. Further information can be viewed at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/Hazardous_Guidelines.pdf

Agriculture

Project sites with agricultural resources on-site or within one-mile of the project site may be subject to design criteria which limit development of important agricultural soils. Agricultural resources include active agricultural operations or sites with a history of agricultural land use based on aerial photography or other data sources. Project applicants should consult with an agricultural resource specialist to ensure compliance with agricultural regulations. Potential impacts to agriculture as a result of a subdivision which would require submission of an agricultural study could include: whether the project would impair the ongoing viability of a site for agricultural use. Further information can be obtained at: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/ag-screening-flow-chart.pdf

Cultural and Historical Resources

Cultural Resources are found throughout the County of San Diego and are reminders of the County's 10,000 year old historical record. Although cultural resources are typically located in protected areas near water sources and multiple ecoregions, the potential exists to site proposed subdivisions in areas that may have significant cultural and historic resources. Subdivisions should be designed to avoid identified cultural or historical areas and preserve such significant areas when on site. A cultural study may be required in conjunction with a subdivision application if cultural or historical resources

are identified on a site or when a project site is within close proximity of a known cultural resource. Further information can be obtained at:

http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/docs/Cultural_Guidelines.pdf

Airports

Projects located within close proximity to an airport may be subject to design criteria to ensure compatibility. Project applicants should review the adopted Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans to determine if a proposed subdivision would be located within an airport's Airport Influence Area (AIA). Projects located within an AIA may be subject to density limitations or noise restrictions which may be more restrictive than those required pursuant to the County's General Plan, Zoning and Noise Ordinances. Additionally, projects located within AIA are subject to aviation easements and disclosure requirements which notify future potential buyers of their proximity to an airport. Further information can be obtained at: www.san.org/airport_authority/landuse_compatibility/alucp_documents.asp

4.9 CEQA Consultant List

A proposed subdivision application may trigger the need for extended studies, based on the above factors, and others, to determine whether an environmental impact exists as a result of the project. Pursuant to the County CEQA Guidelines, the Department of Planning of Land Use selects lists of individuals (not firms) that are approved to prepare CEQA documents for the County for privately initiated projects through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and selection process. Consultant lists are reestablished periodically. Applicants are responsible for selecting and directly contracting with specific consultants from the County's list to prepare CEQA documents for private projects. Prior to the first submittal of a CEQA document prepared by a listed consultant for a private project, the applicant, consultant, consultant's firm (if applicable) and County shall execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar agreement that addresses payment, communications, confidentiality of information, and report preparation and handling. Consultants that prepare CEQA documents for County initiated projects will continue to be selected through the standard County procurement process. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/luegdocs/DPLU%20PROCEDURES/REGULATORY%20PLANNING/REFERENCE%20DOCUMENTS/CEQA%20CONSULTANT%20LIST.pdf>

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