



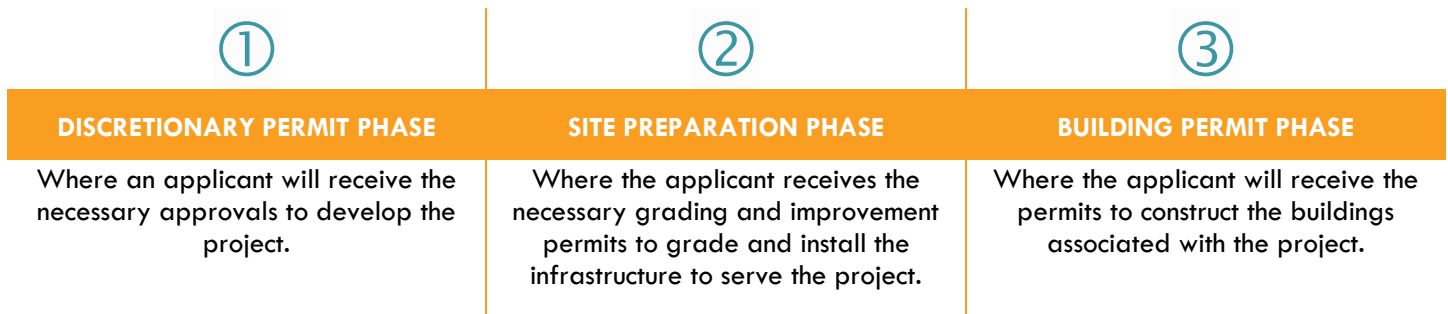
# Permit Application User Guide

County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services | July 2021

## PLANNING PROCESS

As part of the land development process, Planning & Development Services (PDS), the Departments of Public Works (DPW), Parks and Recreation (DPR), Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ), and the San Diego County Fire Protection District work together to balance community, economic, and environmental interests to enhance the quality of life in the unincorporated area of San Diego County. The review of privately initiated land development and building permit applications ensures the safe design and construction of structures and infrastructure to protect the public.

## THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS GENERALLY CONSISTS OF THREE PERMIT PHASES, INCLUDING:



Not all projects have to go through all three permit phases. It is helpful to start the land development process with research by utilizing the County's online research tools including [property research](#), [permit research](#), and [Zoning Ordinance Summary](#). Research can also involve contacting the appropriate [Departments](#) to ask questions or visiting the public counters. The public counter planners are available to answer basic zoning questions as well as help applicants identify which entitlements are needed for a proposed project.

There are two types of land development permits that PDS processes, discretionary permits and ministerial permits, as described below.

## DISCRETIONARY PERMITS

Discretionary permits require review and approval by a decision maker to allow a specific type of land use and/or to allow for the construction, modification, or use of a building. Examples of projects that may require discretionary review include wireless facilities, residential subdivisions, religious assembly structures and commercial shopping centers. As part of the discretionary process, the project will be reviewed for conformance with the applicable ordinances and regulations including the [County General Plan](#), [Zoning Ordinance](#), and [Community Plans and Design Guidelines](#). In addition, the project will be reviewed for compliance with the [California Environmental Quality Act \(CEQA\)](#) which may require preparation of an environmental document and a public review period. A public hearing may also be required prior to issuing a discretionary permit. Examples of some commonly requested discretionary permits in the County of San Diego include: **Use Permits, Rezones, Subdivisions, Site Plans and Administrative Permits.**

\*For large or controversial projects, staff recommends considering a [Voluntary Community Benefits Agreement](#).



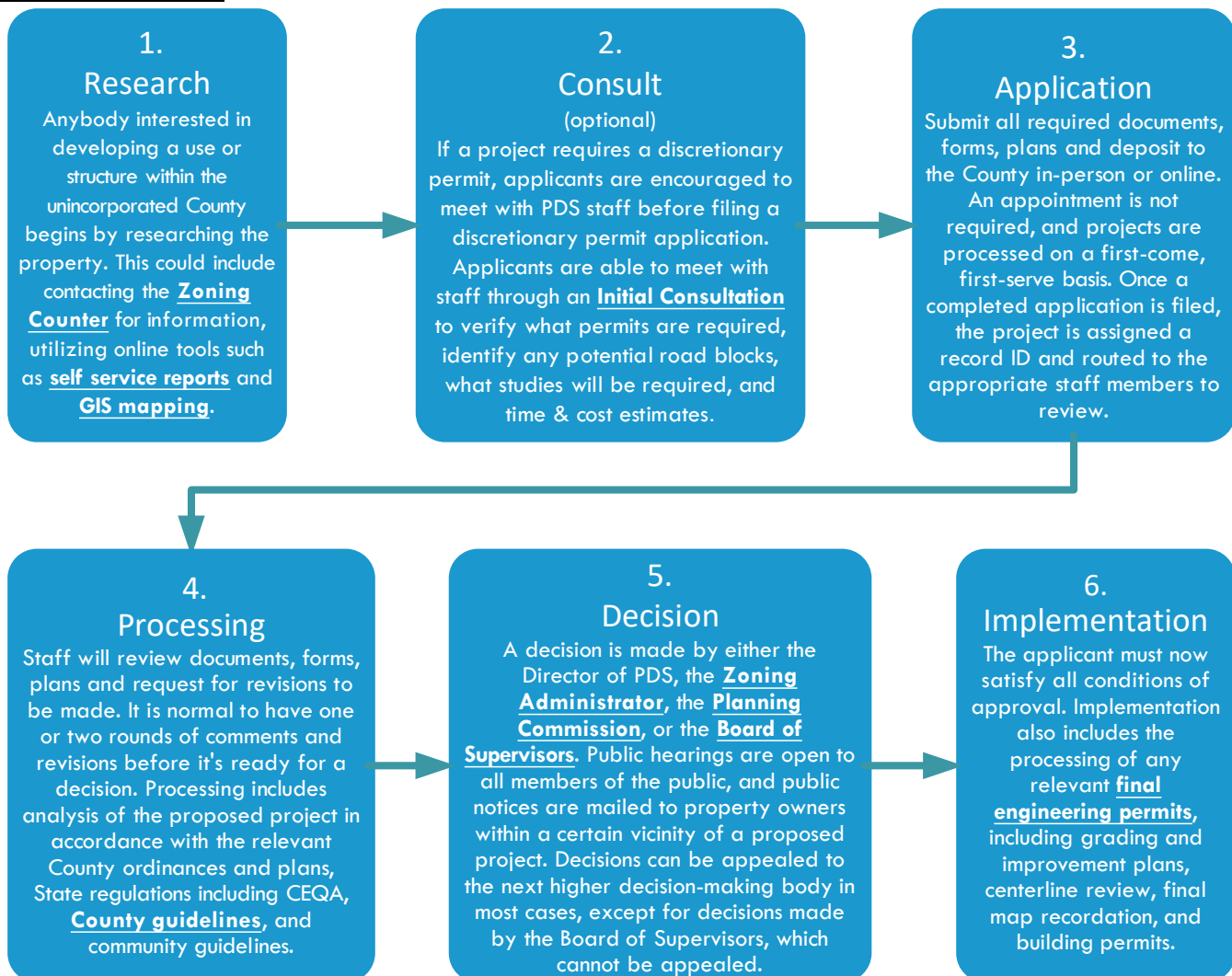
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## MINISTERIAL/BY-RIGHT PERMITS

Ministerial permits, often referred to as by-right permits, are sometimes required for uses or structures that automatically meet County requirements. These permits do not require discretionary review and are approved by staff if the project complies with all applicable regulations and ordinances. In this case, the customer can proceed directly to the [Building Division](#) to apply for any necessary building permits. A building permit may require sign-off from other departments at the public counter, even if the project does not require planning review or approval.

## LAND USE PROCESS



CLICK HERE FOR [INITIAL CONSULTATION INFORMATION](#)

CLICK HERE FOR [CEQA TRAINING VIDEO](#)



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## APPROVAL & APPELLANT BODY

	Approval Body				Appellant Body
	Director	Zoning Administrator	Planning Commission	Board of Supervisors	
Administrative Permit	✓				Planning Commission
Agricultural Preserves				✓	-
Alcohol Beverage Licenses	✓				Planning Commission
Boundary Adjustment/ Certificate of Compliance	✓				-
CEQA 15183		✓			Board of Supervisors
General Plan Amendment				✓	-
Habitat Loss Permit	✓				-
Major Use Permit			✓		Board of Supervisors
Minor Deviations	✓				-
Minor Use Permit		✓			Planning Commission
Open Space Encroachment	✓				Planning Commission
Open Space Vacation				✓	-
Reclamation Plan			✓		-
Rezone				✓	-
Site Plan	✓				Planning Commission
Specific Plan				✓	-
Tentative Map			✓		Board of Supervisors
Tentative Parcel Map	✓				Planning Commission
Variance	✓				Planning Commission



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## PUBLIC INPUT



**Community Groups:** Some discretionary permits are referred to the applicable [Community Planning or Sponsor Group or Design Review Board](#) as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of community group review is to evaluate site planning, architecture, landscape design, signage, and lighting to ensure that new development is compatible with existing community character and goals. The regulations within each Community Plan provide for the maintenance and enhancement of a community's individual character and identity. Applicants are encouraged to coordinate with the local Community Planning or Sponsor Group early on in the process to obtain input.



**Public Notice:** Applications for certain permits require a [public notice package](#) with the application for the purpose of notifying nearby property owners. This notice provides the nearby property owners with an opportunity to determine the impact of the application upon their property and to express their concerns, or support, to the County.



**Public Hearing:** The County of San Diego Planning & Development Services holds regular public hearings and commission meetings, offering opportunities for public engagement on a variety of policy and project considerations at the county level. [Board of Supervisors](#), [Planning Commission](#), and [Zoning Administrator](#) agendas are posted online.

## PROJECT ISSUE RESOLUTION

The County is committed to helping customers navigate the land use permit process and ensuring customer satisfaction. The County recognizes land development can be complex and each project is unique. The goal of the Project Issue Resolution process is to help facilitate completion of each permit application in an efficient and timely manner by elevating technical project issues and policy interpretations to our executive management team or other County staff. PDS has adopted two Issue Resolution processes: 1. Second Opinion and 2. Project Issue Resolution (PIR) Conference.

A [Project Issue Resolution](#) (PIR) Conference is a meeting that includes an applicant, our PDS management team, and county project staff to discuss issues and identify solutions that were not able to be resolved with a county project manager due to interpretations of a code or other unique circumstances related to a project. The goal of the PIR process is to help facilitate processing of each permit application in an efficient and timely manner by elevating technical project issues to our executive management team.