

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This information sheet is provided to quickly familiarize you with Novato's environmental review procedures, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). For further information, please refer to the City of Novato Environmental Review Guidelines.

PURPOSE

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires public agencies to consider the environmental consequences of projects which require governmental approval. The purpose of CEQA is to identify the environmental effects of projects and to protect the natural and cultural environment of California. It is recognized that, in certain instances, economic and social objectives may override environmental factors, but environmental effects must be weighed in the decision-making process.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCEDURE

1. **Review for Exemption.** When an application is submitted, staff will determine whether the project is exempt from environmental review. Specific exemptions are listed in the City of Novato Environmental Review Guidelines and the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. **Initial Study.** If a project is not exempt, the City must conduct an Initial Study to determine if the project may have a significant effect on the environment. The Initial Study is comprised of an Environmental Data Submission submitted by the applicant and an Environmental Checklist prepared by City staff.

The format for an Environmental Data Submission is included later in this information sheet.

3. **Determining Significant Effect.** On the basis of the Initial Study, the City's Environmental Coordinator determines if the project may have a significant effect on the environment. If the Environmental Coordinator determines that a project will not have a significant effect, a Draft Negative Declaration is prepared.
4. **Negative Declaration Process.** If a Draft Negative Declaration is prepared, a notice to that effect is included with the notice for the project hearing. At the public hearing, people have an opportunity to comment on whether they believe a Negative Declaration is appropriate as well as comment on the merits of the project. Prior to approving a project, the decision-making body must approve the Negative Declaration. The actions on the Negative Declaration and the project are appealable to the City Council within ten calendar days.
5. **Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Process.** If the Environmental Coordinator determines that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an EIR shall be prepared. If the applicant disagrees with this determination or wishes input from the Planning Commission on the scope of the EIR, he/she may request a public hearing before the Planning Commission. A decision by the Planning Commission to prepare an EIR is appealable to the City Council.

In the case of a private project, an EIR is prepared by an independent consultant selected by the City and paid for by the applicant. A Draft EIR is prepared for public review. After public review, a Final EIR is prepared which responds to comments on the Draft EIR. Prior to action on the project, the decision-making body must certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA and was considered prior to approving the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA SUBMISSION

Any applicant seeking approval from a decision-making body in the City for a project that is not ministerially or categorically exempt or of an emergency nature as defined herein must submit sufficient information to enable staff to complete an Initial Study to be used by the Environmental Coordinator to determine whether an EIR must be prepared or whether a negative declaration may be issued. Project applicants shall provide the following information in the format indicated in an accompanying text entitled "Environmental Data Submission" to be submitted at the time an application is filed. The Environmental Data Submission and project application materials have separate purposes and separate requirements. One document may not simply refer to material contained in the other; the Environmental Data Submission must give an adequate description of the project for environmental review purposes. Any ultimate anticipated development on the project site or adjacent property under the same ownership must be included in the discussion. If there are phases to the project, the submission may discuss them by phase so long as a cumulative impact is also provided by each phase analyzed.

This outline is intended to serve as a guide to preparers of an Environmental Data Submission. It does not guarantee that no additional information will be required. This outline will be used by the Department of Community Development staff to determine the completeness of an Environmental Data Submission. Some projects may require additional information in order to evaluate possible environmental impacts. Some types of projects may not require the level of information regarding environmental setting indicated. These include some text amendments and some minor projects. Questions should be directed to the Department of Community Development staff.

The Environmental Data Submission is divided into four distinct sections: (1) project information; (2) environmental setting; (3) impacts; and (4) mitigation measures and alternatives. It is important that these sections not be mixed. Where appropriate, information sources should be cited, as well as the source of any subjective options.

A. Project Information

1. Owner's Name:
Address:
Telephone:
2. Applicant's Name: (attach documentation of authority to submit, if other than owner)
Address:
Telephone:
3. Person preparing this submission: (attach documentation of authority to represent indicating title and qualifications, if other than owner)
Address:
Telephone:
4. Project Number(s):
5. Assessor's Parcel No(s):
6. Type of approval(s) sought:
7. Location of project (attach vicinity map):
8. Size of subject property:
9. Present and previous use of site or structures:
10. Existing zoning, General Plan designation and any applicable policies, master plans and/or specific plans for site and surrounding areas:

11. General description of project:
 - a. Intent of project (be as specific as possible; include goals for applicant and community, proposed uses, number and size of lots, etc.).
 - b. Map showing use(s) to which land will be put (may be a duplicate of a map exhibit submitted with project application).
 - c. Major activities contemplated and their sequence (construction-related and permanent).
 - d. Indicate: amount of area covered by structures, impermeable surfaces, landscaping and natural open space; number of floors, floor area, employees and shifts for commercial projects; and types and numbers of units for residential units.
12. Other agencies or City departments which permits or approvals will be required, specifying type and granting body.
13. A map showing the location of the project with relation to adjacent streets shall be included for site specific projects.

B. Environmental Setting

1. Topography: Identify and quantify (in sq. ft.) areas of slope in the range of 0-10%, 10-25%, and 25% and above for residentially zoned parcels; or 0-10%, 10-20%, and 20% and above for commercially zoned parcels, maximum slope, average slope of buildable envelope and significant topographic features.
2. Geology:
 - a. Geologic type.
 - b. Slope stability (landslides, size and extent; is repair of landslide proposed).
 - c. Seismic hazards (tsunami, liquefaction, ground shaking, subsidence, etc.)
Much of this information is available from "Geology for Planning, Novato Area," Salem Rice, 1975.
3. Air Quality: Exposure to or generation of air pollutants or odors.
4. Hydrology: Existing hydrologic features - streams, marsh, bay, lake, wetlands, including seasonal wetlands, etc.; drainage patterns; flood zones (see Flood Rate Insurance map available in Novato Department of Community Development) and any alterations proposed.
5. Water Quality: Percolation rate if known, depth of groundwater if known, any wells in the area, quality of any surface water and any sources of contamination (such as parking lot runoff) existing in the vicinity of or resulting from project.
6. Biology: Major plant types, known habitats of endangered flora or fauna, and identification of all trees by type, indicating the number of each type and circumference of each tree at two feet above the ground.
7. Noise: Any significant noise generators in area, existing noise levels (for sites along Highway 101 and Highway 37, information is available in the Novato Department of Community Development. For estimates of noise based on traffic, see the Novato General Plan). How do noise levels for the proposed use compare with Novato General Plan Health

and Safety Element Guidelines for the proposed use? If there is a potential concern indicated, an acoustic analysis should be included with the Environmental Data Submission.

8. Visual/Scenic Resources: Is the site a scenic resource, either by itself or as a part of a larger area resource? Describe visual characteristics including impacts to ridgelines and adjacent property views. Will the project create substantial sun shadow or glare problems?
9. Grading: If the project requires grading, how many cubic yards? Will it be balanced on-site and, if not, where will it be deposited or obtained? If there is grading, provide a cut/fill, map and, if it is unbalanced, a map delineating the borrow or deposit site, haul route, and estimated number of trips. Estimate the average and maximum amount of cut and fill, if any. State whether any explosives will be used.
10. Archaeologic/Cultural Resources: Is this an area of archaeological sensitivity? If so, or if there is a known archaeological site within 300 yards, an archaeological reconnaissance should be included in the Environmental Data Submission. Are there cultural/historic or prehistoric resources on or adjacent to the site?
11. Population and Housing Characteristics: Is the site adjacent to a populated area? What are the housing characteristics of the adjacent area?
12. Circulation: Circulation patterns, latest traffic counts available from Novato Department of Community Development, alterations in existing or proposed street improvements of the City, availability of public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle trails.
13. Public Service and Utilities: Distance and/or response time to sewer, water, gas, electricity, police, fire, parks, method of sewage disposal proposed.
14. Health and Safety:
 - a. Identify any flammable, reactive or explosive materials to be located on site (including pressurized tanks).
 - b. Indicate distance to nearest high fire hazard (i.e., brush, stored flammables, etc.).
 - c. Identify any proposed use storage or production of hazardous materials (as identified in the California Proposition 65 legislation) and procedures for disposal.
 - d. Identify disposal procedures for all waste products.
 - e. Indicate distance to nearest place where people live, work, or spend a significant amount of time if there is a potentially hazardous emissions source proposed or the distance to any hazardous emissions source within a quarter mile of the proposed project (as defined by subdivision (a) of Section 25532 and Sections 25114, 25117, 25316, and 44321 of the Health and Safety Code).

C. Impacts

Preliminary estimate of any action proposed that could cause adverse impact upon any of the features listed above when considered over the life of the project, including cumulative impacts. Discussion must document specific environmental features impacted, the nature of the impact and the relative measure of the severity of the impact.

D. Mitigation Measures and Alternatives

1. Mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the project design to lessen or eliminate (specify which) potential adverse environmental effects should be described. These should be distinguished from mitigation measures which could be part of the proposed project, but are not. The description should include a discussion of the implementation and monitoring procedures anticipated.
2. Discussion of alternatives to the project location or design. Brief discussion of significant impacts of alternatives, if different than project impacts.

E. Certification

1. Attach the following statement as part of the submission:

I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present the data and information required for this initial evaluation to the best of my ability, and that the facts, statements and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date:

(Signature)

For:

For further information, please contact the City of Novato, Department of Community Development Planning Division at:

- 922 Machin Avenue, Novato, CA 94945
- (415) 899-8989
- www.novato.org