



VARIANCE SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

Planning intake appointments are required to submit all Planning entitlements. Appointments can be made by calling the Planning Division at (650) 329-2496 ext. 6, option 2 or by emailing planningintake@paloalto.gov.

Prior to making an intake appointment, upload all required documents as a Pre-application (Pre-app) through the City's [Online Permitting Services](https://bit.ly/paloaltoOPSGuidelines) portal. Directions on creating an account and submitting a Pre-app are available at bit.ly/paloaltoOPSGuidelines. Please note, the account used for the Pre-app will be the main contact and uploader for the entirety of the Planning project. Applications must contain a minimum of information to be accepted (18.77.020).

If not already completed for the proposed project, you are **strongly encouraged** to discuss the proposed plans with adjacent neighbors prior to application submittal.

1. ☐ PLANNING APPLICATION FORM

- a. [Application form](#) is available at bit.ly/PAplanningforms, ensure completion of items 1-5
- b. Application cannot be accepted without a property owner's signature
- c. Include all application documents as a single PDF
- d. Title the PDF document "C1[insert address]APPLY.pdf", per the [OPS Submittal Guidelines](#).

2. ☐ ELECTRONIC PLAN SET

- a. Follow formatting and bookmarking requirements outlined in [OPS Submittal Guidelines](#)
- b. Add bar scale and north arrow shown on all sheets
- c. Orient all sheets in the same direction
- d. Draw to fill the page at 1/4 inch or 1/8 inch scale
- e. Plans shall be in PDF format for posting on the City's website, shall be in one file, and optimized for printing to 11 inch by 17 inch paper. If the PDF file is over 30MB, the plans must be divided into two files or reduced. Revised and final electronic plan sets shall be provided as needed
- f. Plans should be bookmarked and flattened/compressed
- g. Title the PDF plan set "C1[insert address]PLAN.pdf", per the OPS Submittal Guidelines
- h. **For a detailed explanation of the required items in a plan set, see A-K on the pages below.**

3. ☐ APPLICATION FEES

- a. When the project is accepted by a Planning Technician for a formal application, you will be notified to pay fees online through the OPS portal. See fee schedule at bit.ly/PAFeeSchedule. Staff review does not start until fees are processed.

4. ☐ PROJECT REQUEST LETTER

Your project request letter should describe the Variance being sought and demonstrate that the following "findings" can be supported:

- a. The granting of the application will not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity, and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare, or convenience.
- b. The granting of the application is consistent with the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan and the purposes of Title 18 (Zoning).
- c. Because of special circumstances, including (but not limited to) size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, the strict application of the requirements and regulations prescribed in Title 18

substantially deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and in the same zoning district as the subject property. Special circumstances that are expressly excluded from consideration are:

- I. The personal circumstances of the property owner
- II. Any changes in the size or shape of the property made by the property owner or his predecessors in interest while the property was subject to the same zoning designation.
- d. The granting of the application shall not affect substantial compliance with the regulations or constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and in the same zoning district as the subject property.

* Additional findings are required for Variances for flag lots, refer to code section 18.76.303(d).

5. ☐ ON-SITE POSTING

- a. Directly after the intake meeting, the applicant will receive a PDF project sign from the City. The applicant shall add the streetscape image (minimum size of 4 inches by 17 inches) to the sign and then have it printed at a minimum size of 18 x 24 inches, on waterproof sign board material, with a metal 'H' stake. Within three (3) days of project submittal, the applicant must post the sign on the property and email a photograph of the sign to the Project Planner. The sign must be prominently displayed so it may be viewed from the sidewalk and/or public right-of-way. The sign shall remain in place until the Planning decision is effective.

6. ☐ RESUBMITTALS

- a. After the review Cycle 1 (initial submittal) comments have been addressed, applicant will upload resubmittals and/or additional materials through the [OPS portal](#), using the red "resubmit" button.

REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR SCHEMATIC PLAN SET*:

*These requirements may be modified by City staff to omit items or to include additional items (e.g. shadow studies, story poles, soils report, etc.) based on the scope of the project. Applicants are encouraged to provide additional information where helpful.

To improve processing times, Staff recommends the order of the sheets in the plan set be as directed below.

A. TITLE SHEET WITH PROJECT DATA

- Provide Project Address, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN), Zoning District, Vicinity Map
- Include Data Table with the following information:
 - Net Lot Area (excluding any area located within a street easement, watercourse easement, or within top of creek bank) as determined by the surveyor's report
 - Allowable FAR and Proposed FAR
 - Allowable and Proposed Lot Coverage
 - Required and provided parking spaces
 - Note if the project site is in a Special Flood Hazard Area and note base flood elevation (BFE)
 - If Yes, project must be discussed with Public Works Department (pwecips@cityofpaloalto.org) prior to application submittal
 - Note if the site has a historic designation

B. PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY

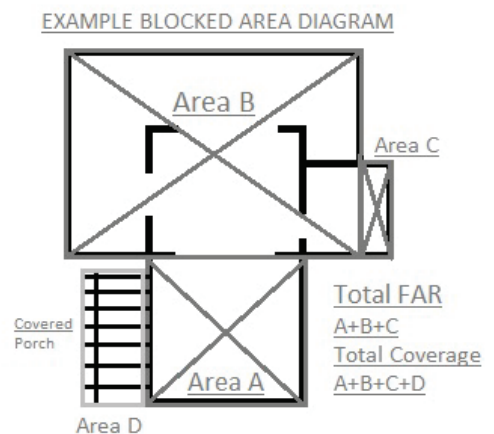
- Photographs showing the relationship of the proposed project to adjacent buildings and to the neighborhood.

C. SITE PLAN

- Dimension property lines consistent with surveyor's report
- Show footprints and overhangs of all existing and proposed buildings and accessory structures
- Dimension all required and proposed setbacks including any special setbacks and contextual front setback (if contextual setback is greater than standard setbacks)
- Note all existing and proposed fences/walls with their heights indicated
- Note surface parking area, driveways, paths, and sidewalks (note paving materials, driveway width, and dimension parking spaces)
- Indicate location of utility hookups, meters, boxes, and mains on and directly adjacent to the site, including any required back-flow preventors, double check detector, and reduced pressure principal assembly
- Show and label the type of all easements
- New trees are not allowed within public utility easements (PUE), shrubs may be acceptable
- Indicate improvements in the public right-of-way including streets, curbs, sidewalks, and street trees
- Label distance between street curb and property line
- Show all outdoor mechanical equipment (pool filters, air conditioners, etc.)
- Show topographic elevation of the first floor level and spot elevations of existing and finished grade around property
- Show the numbered location, species, size, and dripline of **all** trees on site over 4" in diameter, including neighboring trees that overhang onto the project site, with note of the tree's disposition (retained, removed, or proposed). Show tree locations on other sheets as necessary
- Label TPZ radius. The TPZ radius is ten (10) times the diameter of the tree, when measured 54 inches above natural grade as further detailed by [The Tree Technical Manual](#), Sections 2.00 & 6.35
- Show squared off tree protection fencing in the location it will be installed (as shown on T-1 sheet), note fence dimensions from trees, and label tree protection fencing type (Type I, II, III)
- Show creeks or waterway easements on or adjacent to the property. Indicate top of bank.

D. FLOOR PLANS

- Provide sufficient floor plans to indicate how the interior of the building affects the exterior design, particularly window and door placement, space usage, stairs, etc.
- Provide dimensioned floor plans for all buildings, new and proposed to remain
- Include diagram showing total floor area and coverage via blocked-out areas and calculations for each block to determine FAR and Lot coverage compliance (overlay this information on a separate floor plan). Use as few blocks as possible, see example.



E. ROOF PLANS

- Show roof pitches and dimension overhang depths
- Provide a detail for all eaves that are proposed beyond a required setback or daylight plane.

F. BUILDING ELEVATIONS

- Provide elevations of all sides of the building(s), including accessory structures and fences/walls
- Label height limits and daylight planes for the home and detached accessory structures
- Note the daylight plane grade reference point. The note shall state: "Grade for the purpose of establishing daylight plane shall be an average of the grade at the midpoint of the building and grade at the closet point on the adjacent lot." See page 27 of the [Zoning Technical Manual](#)
- Note grade elevation from where the maximum height is measured and finished floor elevation. (See definition of "Grade" in [Zoning Code Section 18.04](#))

- Show all windows, doors, eaves, chimneys, trim, porch columns, and other features
- Show window operation, label second floor sill height, and note any obscured glazing
- Note material and finish for roofing, siding, windows, entry and garage doors, trim, railing, etc.
- Dimension height of any privacy screen walls and fences
- Note existing conditions to remain and proposed changes

G. SECTIONS

- Provide two sections minimum
- Indicate roof pitch, floor to floor heights, topographic height of first floor, floor to grade heights, plate heights at upper levels, attic, stairs, cathedral ceilings, outlines of building eaves, etc.

H. GREEN BUILDING (GB) SHEET

- Verify the applicable level of green building requirements and download the appropriate CALGreen Checklist (GB-1) on [Green Building Compliance webpage](#)
- Include a preliminary CALGreen Checklist (GB-1) in the plan set
 - Signatures on this sheet will not be required until the building permit submittal.

I. TREE PROTECTION (T-1,T-2) SHEET(S)

- City's [Urban Forestry Section](#) will review the trees and tree protection fencing shown on the site plan
- Include a [T-1 sheet](#) filled out and **signed** by a ISA certified Arborist
- Include completed Tree Protection Report as Sheet T-2, T-3, etc. Tree Preservation Report (TPR) prepared by an ISA certified Arborist will be required for any development within the tree protection zone (TPZ) of a protected and/or designated tree, and may be required for others, including street trees as deemed necessary by the City Arborist per [Overview of Regulated Trees](#).
- If protected trees are proposed for removal, provide a diagram showing the TPZ of all trees, the buildable area, and the percentage of overlap between the TPZ and the buildable area.
- If protected trees are proposed for removal, provide a tree replacement table using replacement ratios from the [Tree Technical Manual Table 3-1 \(PDF page 44\)](#).

J. PARKING LAYOUT AND CIRCULATION (may not be required)

- Fully dimensioned parking plan with required number of vehicular, accessible vehicular, electric vehicular, and long term and/or short term bicycle parking spaces
- Required loading spaces, travel path and signage
- Permeant fixtures, including lighting, charging station, etc.
- Circulation path for pedestrian and bicycle
- Main points of entry and exit and traffic flow

K. TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (required for parking reduction request)

- Outline parking and/or traffic demand measures to be implemented to reduce parking need and trip generation, and/or other measures to encourage transit use or to reduce parking needs
- Include performance targets for parking and/or trip reduction and indicate the basis for such estimates, and shall designate a single entity (property owner, homeowners association, etc.) to implement the proposed measures
- Include monitoring reports two years after building occupancy and again five years after building occupancy, noting the effectiveness of the proposed measures as compared to the initial performance. Where the monitoring reports indicate that performance measures are not met, the project is required further program modifications

Useful Weblinks & Information

Palo Alto Municipal Code

- bit.ly/PAZoningCode

Planning Application and Fee Schedule (updated annually)

- bit.ly/PAPlanningforms

Request a Parcel Report

- bit.ly/PAParcelReports

IR Guidelines

- bit.ly/paloaltoIRguidelines

Zoning Ordinance Technical Manual for Single-Family Residential Zones

- bit.ly/PAtechnicalmanual

Palo Alto Online Permit Services

- <https://bit.ly/paloaltoOPS>

Palo Alto OPS Submittal Guidelines

- <https://bit.ly/paloaltoOPSGuidelines>

OPS Pre-Application Instructions

- <https://bit.ly/paloaltoOPSPreapp>

Accela Citizen Access Portal

- <https://bit.ly/PaloAltoACA>

Palo Alto Eichler Neighborhood Design Guidelines

- bit.ly/PAEichlerGuidelines

Professorville Historic District Design Guidelines

- bit.ly/ProfessorvilleHistoricGuidelines

Historic Preservation Incentives

- bit.ly/HistoricPreservationIncentives

Palo Alto Urban Forestry Page

- bit.ly/PAUrbanForestry

Tree Technical Manual

- bit.ly/PATreeTechManual

Tree Protection Sheet (T-1)

- bit.ly/PATreeProtectionSheetT1

Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWEL)

- bit.ly/ModelWaterEfficientLandscapeOrd

MWEL Submittal Requirements

- bit.ly/MWELSubmittalReq

Public Works Forms and Permits Page

- bit.ly/PublicWorksForms

Storm Water Pollution Prevention (Public Works)

- bit.ly/PASWPP

Dewatering Regulations

- bit.ly/PWDewateringReg

Public Works Flood Zone Information, including LOMA/LOMR information

- bit.ly/PAFloodZones

Green Building Compliance Page

- bit.ly/PAGreenBuilding