

VARIANCE

October 1999

Introduction

This handout summarizes Petaluma's requirements for a Variance. The Variance requirements are from Chapter 14 (the Zoning Ordinance) of the Petaluma Municipal Code. The Zoning Ordinance establishes standards and procedures to ensure that development is consistent with Petaluma's General Plan. To help locate the specific regulations in the Zoning Ordinance, ordinance section numbers are included.

What is a Variance?

A Variance is permission to depart from the literal requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Variances provide the discretion and flexibility necessary to resolve practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships resulting from a zoning requirement.

When is a Variance needed?

When the strict interpretation of a zoning regulation, such as maintaining the required yard area, cannot be met because of an unusual situation, a Variance may be needed.

For example, a property owner of a hillside lot finds that the required front yard building setback prohibits him from building a garage on the only flat part of his yard. All of the neighboring houses are built on flat lots and have garages. A Variance may be able to provide the relief needed from the strict adherence to the zoning standard so that the garage can be built.

How can I get a Variance? (\$26.300)

Applications for a Variance are submitted to the Planning Department. See the last page for the required development plans.

Applications are reviewed and decided by the Zoning Administrator (Z.A.). A Public Hearing is held by the Z.A. to provide an opportunity for neighbors to comment on the merits of the application. In order to approve an application for a Variance, certain decisions, or findings, must be made (see next page). The decision of the Z.A. may be appealed to the Planning Commission.

Variances which are approved have Conditions of Approval designed to ensure compatibility. A variance can be revoked if any of the Conditions of Approval are violated.

For More Information

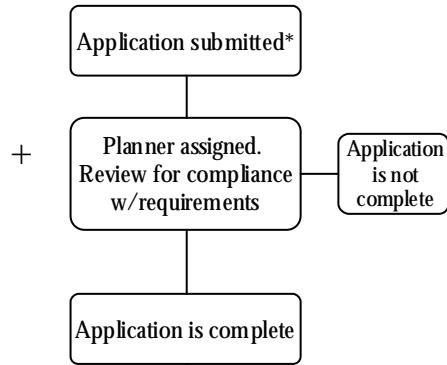
Planning Department: (707)778-4301 or in person at City Hall, 11 English Street (between 8:00am and 5:00pm). Zoning requirements and permit applications.

Public Works Department: (707)778-4302
Housing and Building Code and Building, Electrical and Plumbing permits.

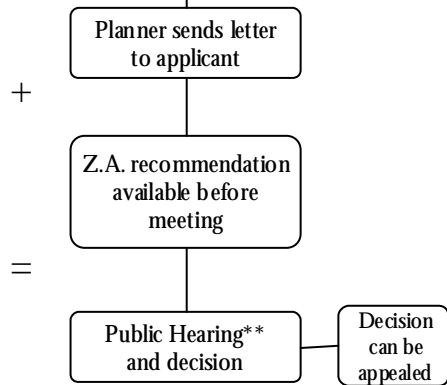
The Zoning Ordinance is available for review at the Planning Department, the City Clerk's Office, at City Hall and the Petaluma Public Library. The ordinance can also be purchased at the Planning Department.

How long will it take?

3 to 4 weeks



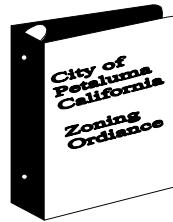
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6 to 12 weeks

* Neighbors within 300' and your neighborhood/homeowner association will be notified of your application. You are encouraged to contact them about your plans. The Planning Department can give you the name and address of your association.

** You may wish to attend a Zoning Administrator meeting beforehand to see what it is like.



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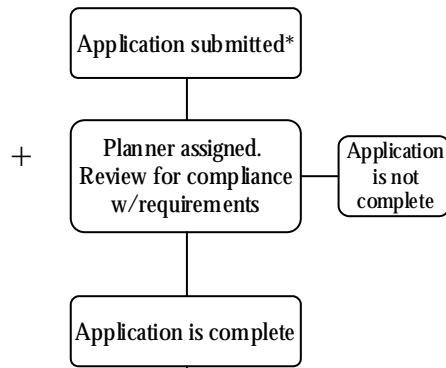
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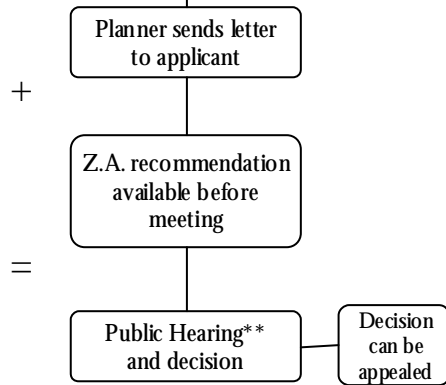
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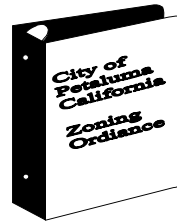
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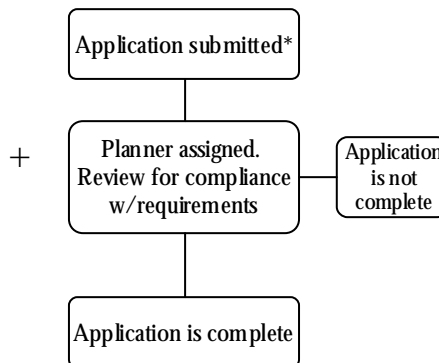
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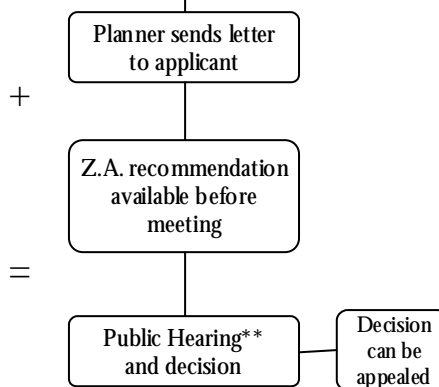
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