



# Land Use Process

Applications for any project always start at the same place: the Public Counter. Whether it is for a renovation or new construction, the Public Counter is the physical location where planning and development come together. The City Planning Department operates out of three locations citywide: [Downtown \(Metro\)](#), [Valley \(Van Nuys\)](#) and [West Los Angeles](#). Applicants can submit a project application and file for clearances at any of these locations.

## By-Right

Normally, most development projects conform to the existing zoning. These types of projects are known as “by-right” development and have a relatively straightforward city review process.

## Discretionary

Occasionally, a developer may envision something different from the City’s original plans or zoning. These projects are “discretionary” in nature. The Department has a more detailed approval process for considering and rendering a decision for a “discretionary” project.

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process infographic





# Services

The City Planning Department is at the forefront of virtually every land use decision – and, when it comes to project review, the **Public Counter** staff at the Development Services Centers are at the frontlines. They offer specialized support and guidance at every step of the application process.

	Metro (Downtown)	Valley (Van Nuys)	West LA
Zoning Information	✓	✓	✓
Building Permit Clearances	✓	✓	✓
Case Filing	✓	✓	✓
Case Condition Clearances	✓	✓	✓
Filings of Appeals	✓	✓	✓
Submittal of Coastal Exemptions	✓	✓	✓
Deep Counter Functions (Wireless, Housing,Telecommunications & Maps)	✓		



View Locations  
and Hours



Schedule  
an Appointment

## Public Counter

### Zoning Information

Prior to applying for any necessary land use permits (or entitlements), applicants may consult with City Planning staff at the Public Counter to verify the zoning regulations on a property. These services are provided to inform applicants on the approvals or entitlements necessary prior to submitting an application for consideration.

### Case Filing

A project must file an application at the Public Counter in order to even be considered for approval. To assist applicants navigate this process, City Planning staff is available at the Public Counters to answer questions, take in cases and process applications.

### Case Condition Clearance

Projects may require clearances from the City Planning Department prior to applying for a building permit with the Department of Building & Safety. There are staff at the Public Counter equipped with the proper training to review and clear these types of cases.

### Building Permit Clearances

The Department of Building & Safety is responsible for issuing building permits. Certain projects may however require sign-off from the City Planning Department prior to issuance in order to ensure that projects are in conformance with local land use regulations.

### Filing of Appeals

Applicants have the ability to challenge certain land use decisions. Those applications are submitted at the Public Counter for follow-up action.

### Coastal Exemptions

Coastal exemptions are approvals for improvements or development in the Coastal Zone that has been pre-determined to not have an impact on coastal resources. Those improvements could include basic repair and maintenance in the coastal zone or maintenance dredging for navigation. As a general rule, exemptions don't increase activity or change of use in the coastal zone.

## Deep Counter

### Housing Services

Housing Services Unit manages case processing for a specialized subset of affordable housing projects, clearing conditions of approval in order to advance an equitable mix of housing opportunities citywide through a more streamlined and predictable process.

### Wireless and Telecommunications

Wireless and Telecommunications Unit offers a one-stop, full-service center for the telecommunications industry, reviewing condition clearances and zoning requirements for the placement of wireless telecommunications facilities on public or private property that are not located on a public-right-of-way.

### Map Processing

Map Processing Unit facilitates private street dedications and lot line adjustments, offering general consultation and case filing instructions for applicants seeking guidance on project applications not subject to the State Subdivision Map Act standard guidelines for review.

### Beverage & Entertainment Streamlined (BEST)

Beverage & Entertainment Streamlined (BEST) Program administers stand-alone entitlements for alcohol sales (CUB) and entertainment (CUX) uses for bars, restaurants, night clubs and performance venues – providing greater consistency in how the operations of the restaurant and hospitality industry are administered citywide.

### Monitoring, Verification & Inspection Program (MViP)

Monitoring, Verification & Inspection Program (MViP) verifies condition compliance of stand-alone entitlements for alcohol and entertainment uses, working alongside the Department of Building & Safety to monitor the enforcement of CUB and CUX entitlements.

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# Environmental Review

## California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determines how government agencies assess the environmental impacts for proposed projects and policies. CEQA outlines the type of analysis needed and the impacts that must be available for public review. It leaves it up to the local governing body the responsibility for considering a project’s environmental impacts.

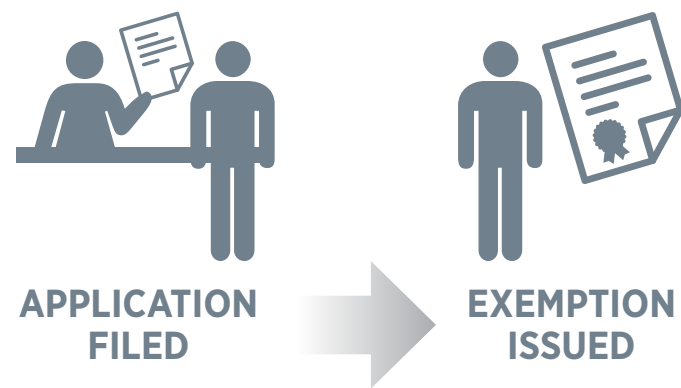
The CEQA process is guided by the following statutes and guidelines:

- State of California CEQA Guidelines
- City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines
- City of Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide
- CEQA Categorical and Statutory Exemptions
- CEQA Streamlining

The City Planning Department implements regulations pertaining to CEQA to ensure that the City is in compliance with state law. The vast majority of projects in the City of Los Angeles do not fall under the jurisdiction of CEQA. This is because the City’s **Community Plans** included an environmental review process. Typically, CEQA comes into play for projects seeking certain changes to the existing zoning.

### Categorical Exemption

The first step in the CEQA process is determining if a project qualifies for review. Based on the entitlements, a project may require only a Categorical Exemption (CE) – meaning that state law automatically exempts a project because it meets a number of clearly defined conditions. Otherwise, a project must undergo an “initial study” – or additional analysis – without a CE.



process infographic

### Negative Declaration

Through an initial study, the Department will determine whether a project meets any of the specified qualifications under state guidelines. An initial study may find no evidence of potential negative impacts, in which case the Department will issue a Negative Declaration, showing that no further environmental review is needed.

### Mitigated Negative Declaration

Alternatively, the Department may issue a Mitigated Negative Declaration, which will show that no significant environmental effects will occur because revisions to the project have been made to reduce potentially significant impacts.

process infographic

### Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Projects that appear to have potentially large impacts proceed to a full environmental review, called an **Environmental Impact Report (EIR)**. Ultimately, the City Council must certify an EIR for a project to proceed.

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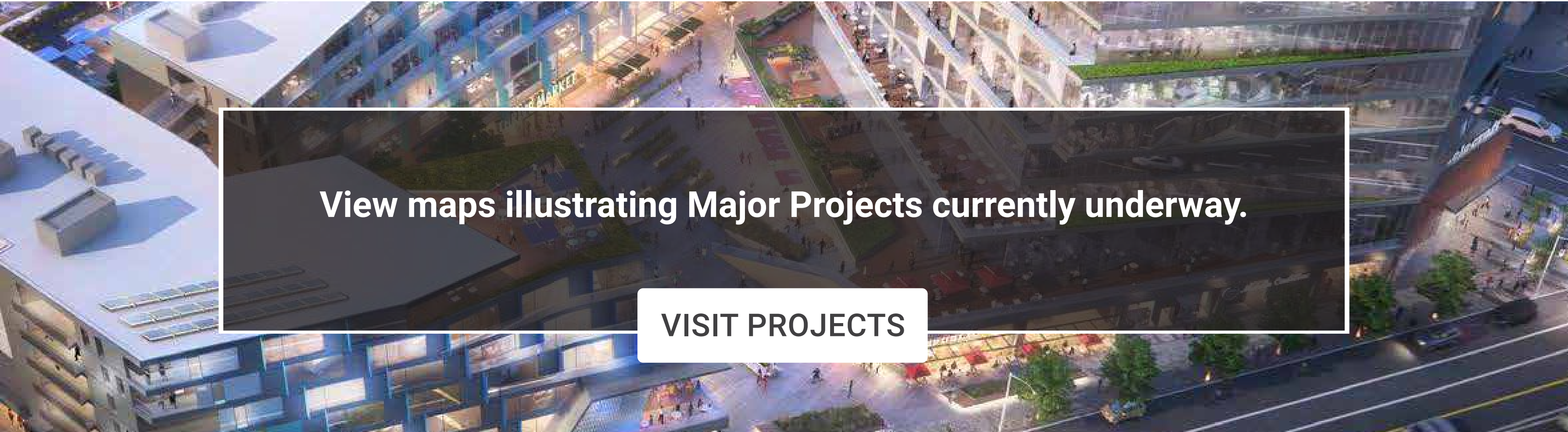
# Environmental Impact Reports

To a developer constructing an apartment building – or a homeowner putting the finishing touches on a carport, every project feels like a major project. At City Planning, however, the Department has a specific threshold for what qualifies as a “major project.”

## Major Project

The Department’s Major Project Unit oversees most projects that require an EIR. These are generally larger projects that need to be carefully reviewed to ensure that they align with the goals and vision of the city’s [General Plan](#) and relevant [Community Plans](#).

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View maps illustrating Major Projects currently underway.

VISIT PROJECTS

## Project-specific CEQA Documents

The CEQA documents published here are intended to enhance public awareness and participation in the entitlement process. Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration Notices are listed by the date they were published in the [Los Angeles Times](#). For Environmental Impact Reports (EIR), three documents are prepared at various stages of the process, including: Notice of Preparation, Draft EIR and Final EIR.

- Negative Declaration Public Notices
- Notice of Preparation & Public Scoping Meetings
- Environmental Impact Reports (EIR)

## Sunshine Canyon Landfill Technical Advisory Committee

Since 1958, the Sunshine Canyon has offered waste disposal services businesses for businesses and residents throughout Los Angeles County and the City. In order to demonstrate compliance with local land use regulations, the landfill prepares regular reports to the City to review.