

Article 6: Development Permits

Division 5: Site Development Permit Procedures

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§126.0501 Purpose of the Site Development Permit Procedures

The purpose of the Site Development Permit procedures is to establish a review process for proposed *development* that, because of its site, location, size, or some other characteristic, may have significant impacts on resources or on the surrounding area, even if developed in conformance with all regulations. The intent of these procedures is to apply site-specific conditions as necessary to assure that the *development* does not adversely affect the applicable *land use plan* and to help ensure that all regulations are met.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§126.0502 When a Site Development Permit is Required

- (a) A Site Development Permit decided in accordance with Process Three is required where *environmentally sensitive lands* are present for the following types of *development*, except that if the *development* is affordable housing, an in-fill project, and/or a sustainable building, as described in Section 143.0915, it shall be processed in accordance with Section 126.0503 and Section 143.0110, Table 143-01A:

- (1) *Single dwelling unit development* that involves any of the following:
 - (A) *Development* on a *premises* containing *sensitive coastal bluffs* or *coastal beaches*, as described in Section 143.0110;
 - (B) *Development* on *lots* greater than 15,000 square feet containing *sensitive biological resources* or *steep hillsides*- as described in Section 143.0110; or
 - (C) *Development* on *lots* less than or equal to 15,000 square feet that are joined in ownership to a contiguous *lot* so that the total area of contiguous ownership exceeds 15,000 square feet where *sensitive biological resources* or *steep hillsides* are present, as described in Section 143.0110.
- (2) Multiple unit residential *development* on a *premises* containing *environmentally sensitive lands*, as described in Section 143.0110.

- (3) Commercial *development* on a *premises* containing *environmentally sensitive lands*, as described in Section 143.0110.
 - (4) Industrial *development* on a *premises* containing *environmentally sensitive lands*, as described in Section 143.0110.
- (b) A Site Development Permit decided in accordance with Process Three is required for residential *development* that involves any of the following:
 - (1) *Development* of *mobilehome parks* within the RS or RX zones, as described in Section 143.0302.
 - (2) Within the Mobilehome Park Overlay Zone, discontinuance of a *mobilehome park*, as described in Section 143.0630.
 - (3) Multiple unit residential *development* that varies from minimum parking requirements, as described in Section 142.0525(a).
 - (4) *Development* of a small *lot subdivision* in accordance with Section 143.0365.
- (c) A Site Development Permit decided in accordance with Process Three is required for the following types of *development*.
 - (1) In the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone, as described in Section 132.1402, *development* in the area designated “Type B” or *development* in the area designated “Type A” that does not comply with the *development* standards in the applicable community plan, except that if the *development* is affordable housing, an in-fill project, and/or a sustainable building, as described in Section 143.0915, it shall be processed in accordance with Section 126.0503 and Section 132.1402, Table 132-14B.
 - (2) *Development* in the Mission Trails Design District, as described in Section 132.1202.
 - (3) *Development* in the Urban Village Overlay Zone, as described in Section 132.1102.
 - (4) *Public improvements* required in association with private *development* that involve *development* of more than 3,000 feet of property frontage, as described in Section 142.0612.

- (5) *Public improvements* required in association with private *development* for which adopted City standards do not apply, as described in Section 142.0612.
 - (6) *Development* of manufactured slopes at a gradient steeper than 25 percent (4 horizontal feet to 1 vertical foot) and a height of 25 feet or more as described in Section 142.0103, except that if the *grading* is for underground parking, then a Site Development Permit is not required.
 - (7) Nonresidential *development* that varies from the minimum parking requirements by proposing a Transportation Demand Management Plan, as described in Section 142.0540(c).
 - (8) *Development* within the Airport Land Use Compatibility Overlay Zone as required for safety compatibility in accordance with Section 132.1515.
- (d) A Site Development Permit decided in accordance with Process Four is required for the following types of *development*.
- (1) Within *historical districts* or when *designated historical resources* are present, unless exempt under Section 143.0220:
 - (A) *Subdivisions*;
 - (B) Single or multiple unit residential *development*;
 - (C) Commercial or industrial *development*;
 - (D) Public works projects; and
 - (E) *Development* that deviates from the *historical resources* regulations, as described in Section 143.0210.
 - (2) Where *historical resources* other than *historical districts* or *designated historical resources* are present, unless exempt under Section 143.0220:
 - (A) *Subdivisions*;
 - (B) *Multiple dwelling unit* residential *development*;

- (C) Commercial or industrial *development*;
 - (D) Public works construction projects; and
 - (E) *Development* that deviates from the *historical resources* regulations, as described in Section 143.0210.
 - (3) *Subdivision* of a *premises* that contains *environmentally sensitive lands*, as described in Section 143.0110.
 - (4) *Development* that deviates from any portion of the *environmentally sensitive lands* regulations, as described in Section 143.0110.
 - (5) *Development* for which the *applicant* seeks a deviation from the development regulations in Section 144.0507 for *condominium conversions*.
 - (6) Any *encroachment* or object which is erected, placed, constructed, established or maintained in the *public right-of-way* when the *applicant* is not the *record owner* of the property on which the proposed *encroachment* will be located in accordance with Section 129.0710(b).
 - (7) *Development* of a *large retail establishment* of 100,000 or more square feet *gross floor area* in all commercial, industrial, and mixed-use zones, and in all planned districts.
- (e) A Site Development Permit decided in accordance with Process Five is required for the following types of *development*.
- (1) In the Clairemont Mesa Height Limit Overlay Zone, *development* for which an exception to the height limit is requested, as described in Section 132.1306.
 - (2) *Development* within the Airport Land Use Compatibility Overlay Zone proposing deviations from the overlay zone requirements.
 - (3) Development in accordance with section 129.0710(c) that includes major underground or overhead *structures* which extend into the *public right-of-way* beyond the ultimate curb line or other *encroachments* which, in the opinion of the City Manager, are of sufficient public interest to warrant City Council approval.

- (f) A Site *Development* permit in accordance with Process CIP/Public Project-Two is required for the following types of *development*.
- (1) *Capital improvement program projects* or *public projects* on a *premises* containing *environmentally sensitive lands* or that deviate from the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Regulations pursuant to Section 143.0110, Table 142-01A.
 - (2) *Capital improvement program projects* or *public projects* on a *premises* containing *historical resources* where the *development* complies with the Historical Resources Regulations without deviation, unless exempt under Section 143.0220.
- (g) A Site Development Permit in accordance with Process CIP/Public Project-Five is required for *capital improvement program projects* or *public projects* on a *premises* containing *historical resources* that deviate from the Historical Resources Regulations, unless exempt under Section 143.0220.
- (Amended 4-22-2002 by O-19051 N.S.; effective 10-8-2002.)
(Amended 2-9-2006 by O-19461 N.S.; effective 3-9-2006.)
(Amended 6-15-2007 by O-19624 N.S.; effective 7-15-2007.)
(Amended 11-13-08 by O-19803 N.S.; effective 12-13-2008.)
(Amended 8-4-2011 by O-20081 N.S.; effective 10-6-2011.)
(Amended 10-25-2011 by O-20047 N.S.; effective 1-1-2012.)
(Amended 1-23-2013 by O-20235 N.S.; effective 2-22-2013.)
(Amended 10-22-2013 by O-20309 N.S.; effective 12-12-2013.)
(Amended 5-5-2015 by O-20481 and O-20483 N.S.; effective 6-4-2015.)
(Amended 9-15-2017 by O-20856 N.S.; effective 10-20-2017.)
(Amended 3-22-2018 by O-20916 N.S.; effective 4-21-2018.)
(Amended 3-22-2018 by O-20917 N.S.; effective 4-21-2018.)
(Amended 9-12-2019 by O-21118 N.S.; effective 10-12-2019.)
(Amended 1-8-2020 by O-21164 N.S.; effective 2-9-2020.)
(Amended 10-30-2020 by O-21254 N.S.; effective 11-29-2020.)
(Amended 3-7-2023 by O-21618 N.S.; effective 5-6-2023.)
(Amended 7-22-2024 by O-21836 N.S.; effective 10-5-2024.)

[Editors Note: Amendments as adopted by O-21836 N.S. will not apply within the Coastal Overlay Zone until the California Coastal Commission certifies it as a Local Coastal Program Amendment.

Click the link to view the Strikeout Ordinance highlighting changes to prior language
http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode_strikeout_ord/O-21836-SO.pdf

§126.0503 Reduced Permit and Processing for Affordable Housing, In-Fill Projects, and Sustainable Buildings

Development of affordable housing, in-fill projects, and/or sustainable buildings described in Section 143.0915 that requires a Site Development Permit in accordance with Section 126.0502(a) or 126.0502(c)(1) may be permitted in accordance with a Neighborhood Development Permit decided in accordance with Process Two, provided the *findings* in Section 126.0404(a) are made. *Development* of affordable housing, in-fill projects, and/or sustainable buildings impacting *environmentally sensitive lands* may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker also makes the supplemental *findings* in Section 126.0404(b). In the event that a deviation is requested, the *development* may not be approved or conditionally approved unless the applicable supplemental *findings* in Section 126.0404(c) and 126.0404(f) are also made.

(“Exemption from a Site Development Permit” added 9-15-2017 by O-20856 N.S.; effective 10-20-2017. Former Section 126.0503 “Decision Processes for Site Development Permits” renumbered to Section 126.0504.)

(Amended 8-9-2019 by O-21114 N.S.; effective 9-8-2019.)

(Retitled from “Exemption from a Site Development Permit” to “Reduced Permit and Processing for Affordable Housing, In-Fill Projects, and Sustainable Buildings” and amended 10-30-2020 by O-21254 N.S.; effective 11-29-2020.)

§126.0504 Decision Processes for Site Development Permits

(a) Process Three

A decision on an application for a Site Development Permit for the types of *development* listed in Section 126.0502(a), (b) and (c) shall be made in accordance with Process Three. The decision may be appealed to the Planning Commission in accordance with Section 112.0506.

(b) Process Four

(1) A decision on an application for a Site Development Permit for the types of *development* listed in Section 126.0502(d) shall be made in accordance with Process Four.

- (2) A recommendation of the Historical Resources Board is required prior to the Planning Commission decision on a Site Development Permit when a *historical district* or *designated historical resource* is present.

(c) Process Five

A decision on an application for a Site Development Permit for the types of *development* listed in 126.0502(e) shall be made in accordance with Process Five.

(d) Process CIP/Public Project-Two

A decision on an application for a Site Development Permit for the types of *development* listed in Section 126.0502(f) shall be made in accordance with Process CIP/Public Project-Two.

(e) Process CIP/Public Project-Five

A decision on an application for a Site Development Permit for the types of *development* listed in Section 126.0502(g) shall be made in accordance with Process CIP/Public Project-Five.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; amended 10-18-1999 by O-18691 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 10-22-2013 by O-20309 N.S.; effective 12-12-2013.)

(Renumbered from Section 126.0503 on 9-15-2017 by O-20856 N.S.; effective 10-20-2017. Former Section 126.0504 "Findings for Site Development Permit Approval" renumbered to Section 126.0505.)

(Amended 1-8-2020 by O-21164 N.S.; effective 2-9-2020.)

§126.0505 Findings for Site Development Permit Approval

A Site Development Permit may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes all of the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a) and the supplemental *findings* in Section 126.0505(b) through (m) that are applicable to the proposed *development* as specified in this section.

(a) Findings for all Site Development Permits

- (1) The proposed *development* will not adversely affect the applicable *land use plan*;

- (2) The proposed *development* will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare; and
 - (3) The proposed *development* will comply with the regulations of the Land Development Code including any allowable deviations pursuant to the Land Development Code.
- (b) Supplemental Findings--Environmentally Sensitive Lands

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0110 because of potential impacts to *environmentally sensitive lands* may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) The site is physically suitable for the design and siting of the proposed *development* and the *development* will result in minimum disturbance to *environmentally sensitive lands*;
- (2) The proposed *development* will minimize the alteration of natural land forms and will not result in undue risk from geologic and erosional forces, *flood* hazards, or fire hazards;
- (3) The proposed *development* will be sited and designed to prevent adverse impacts on any adjacent *environmentally sensitive lands*;
- (4) The proposed *development* will be consistent with the City of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea Plan and Vernal Pool Habitat Conservation Plan (*VPHCP*);
- (5) The proposed *development* will not contribute to the erosion of public beaches or adversely impact local shoreline sand supply; and
- (6) The nature and extent of mitigation required as a condition of the permit is reasonably related to, and calculated to alleviate, negative impacts created by the proposed *development*.

(c) Supplemental Findings--Environmentally Sensitive Lands Deviations

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0110 because of potential impacts to *environmentally sensitive lands* where a deviation is requested in accordance with Section 143.0150 may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a) and the supplemental *findings* in Section 126.0505(b):

- (1) There are no feasible measures that can further minimize the potential adverse effects on *environmentally sensitive lands*; and
- (2) The proposed deviation is the minimum necessary to afford relief from special circumstances or conditions of the land, not of the applicant's making.

(d) Supplemental *Findings*--Environmentally Sensitive Lands Deviation from Federal Emergency Management Agency Regulations

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0110 because of potential impacts to *environmentally sensitive lands* where a deviation is requested from the *Special Flood Hazard Area* regulations as specified in Section 143.0150(b) may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a) and the supplemental *findings* in Sections 126.0505(b) and 126.0505(c):

- (1) The City Engineer has determined that the proposed *development* within a designated *floodway* will not result in an increase in *flood* levels during the base *flood* discharge except as allowed under Code of Federal Regulations Title 44, Chapter 1, Part 60.3(c)(13);
- (2) The City Engineer has determined that the deviation would not result in additional threats to public safety, extraordinary public expense, or create a *public nuisance*.

(e) Supplemental Findings--Steep Hillsides Development Area Regulations Alternative Compliance

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0110 because of potential impacts to *steep hillsides* where alternative compliance is requested in accordance with Section 143.0151 may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the findings in Section 126.0505(a) and the supplemental *findings* in Section 126.0505(b):

- (1) The proposed *development* is in conformance with the Steep Hillside Guidelines;
- (2) The proposed *development* conforms to the applicable *land use plan*; and
- (3) Strict application of the steep hillside development area regulations would result in conflicts with other City regulations, policies, or plans.

(f) Supplemental Findings--Important Archaeological Sites and Traditional Cultural Properties

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0210 because of potential impacts to an *important archaeological site* or *traditional cultural property* may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) The site is physically suitable for the design and siting of the proposed *development*, the *development* will result in minimum disturbance to *historical resources*, and measures to fully mitigate for any disturbance have been provided by the *applicant*; and
- (2) All feasible measures to protect and preserve the special character or the special historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural value of the resource have been provided by the *applicant*.

(g) Supplemental Findings--Historical Resources Deviation for Important Archaeological Sites and Traditional Cultural Properties

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0210 because of potential impacts to an *important archaeological site* or *traditional cultural property* where a deviation is requested in accordance with Section 143.0260 may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) There are no feasible measures, including a less environmentally damaging location or alternative, that can further minimize the potential adverse effects on *historical resources*;
- (2) The proposed deviation is the minimum necessary to afford relief and accommodate the *development* and all feasible measures to mitigate for the loss of any portion of the resource have been provided by the *applicant*; and
- (3) There are special circumstances or conditions apart from the existence of *historical resources*, applying to the land that are peculiar to the land and are not of the applicant's making, whereby the strict application of the provisions of the *historical resources* regulations would deprive the property owner of reasonable use of the land.

(h) Supplemental Findings--Historical Resources Deviation for Relocation of a Designated Historical Resource

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 143.0210 because of potential impacts to *historical resources* where a deviation is requested in accordance with Section 143.0260 for relocation of a *designated historical resource* may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) There are no feasible measures, including maintaining the resource on site, that can further minimize the potential adverse effects on *historical resources*;
 - (2) The proposed relocation will not destroy the historical, cultural, or architectural values of the *historical resource*, and the relocation is part of a definitive series of actions that will assure the preservation of the *designated historical resource*.
 - (3) There are special circumstances or conditions apart from the existence of *historical resources*, applying to the land that are peculiar to the land and are not of the applicant's making, whereby the strict application of the provisions of the *historical resources* regulations would deprive the property owner of reasonable use of the land.
- (i) Supplemental Findings--Historical Resources Deviation for Substantial Alteration of a Designated Historical Resource or Within a Historical District

A Site Development *Permit* required in accordance with Section 143.0210 because of potential impacts to *designated historical resources* where a deviation is requested in accordance with Section 143.0260 for substantial alteration of a *designated historical resource* or within a *historical district* or new construction of a *structure* located within a *historical district* may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) There are no feasible measures, including a less environmentally damaging alternative, that can further minimize the potential adverse effects on the *designated historical resource* or *historical district*;
- (2) The deviation is the minimum necessary to afford relief and accommodate the *development* and all feasible measures to mitigate for the loss of any portion of the *historical resource* have been provided by the *applicant*; and
- (3) The denial of the proposed *development* would result in economic hardship to the owner. For purposes of this finding, “economic hardship” means there is no reasonable beneficial use of a property and it is not feasible to derive a reasonable economic return from the property.

(j) Supplemental Findings--Clairemont Mesa Height Limit

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 132.1306 because an exception from the Clairemont Mesa height limit is requested may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) The granting of an exception will not significantly interfere with public views from western Clairemont Mesa to Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean within the surrounding area; and
- (2) The granting of an exception is appropriate because there are existing *structures* over 30 feet in height and the proposed *development* will be compatible with surrounding one, two, or three-story *structures*; or the granting of an exception is appropriate because there are topographic constraints peculiar to the land; or the granting of the exception is needed to permit roofline and facade variations, accents, tower elements, and other similar elements and the elements will not increase the *floor* area of the *structure*.

(k) Supplemental Findings--Mobilehome Park Discontinuance

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 132.0702 because a discontinuance of a *mobilehome park* is proposed may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) The discontinuance of use of the land for a *mobilehome park* or *mobilehome* spaces will not deprive the community of a needed facility;
- (2) The discontinuance of use of the land for a *mobilehome park* or *mobilehome* spaces, because of the associated relocation plan and conditions that have been applied to the discontinuance, will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare of persons living in the *mobilehome park*; and
- (3) The use to which the *applicant* proposes to put the property will provide a greater public benefit than continued use of the property as a *mobilehome park* or *mobilehome* spaces.

(l) Supplemental Findings--*Condominium Conversions*

A Site Development Permit required in accordance with Section 144.0509, because of potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhood, may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes either of the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0405(a):

- (1) The decision maker has considered the project-specific constraints and has determined that the *condominium conversion* as proposed would, to the maximum extent feasible, address the requirements of Section 144.0507, and has been developed to provide specific community benefits; or
- (2) Strict adherence to the requirements of Section 144.0507 would result in the demolition of *structures* or loss of the architectural character of *structures* that contribute to the community character.

(m) Supplemental Findings--*Public Right-of-Way* Encroachments.

A Site Development Permit in accordance with Section 126.0502(d)(6) for any *encroachment* or object which is erected, placed, constructed, established or maintained in the *public right-of-way* when the *applicant* is not the *record owner* of the property on which the proposed *encroachment* will be located may be approved or conditionally approved only if the decision maker makes the following supplemental *findings* in addition to the *findings* in Section 126.0505(a):

- (1) The proposed *encroachment* is reasonably related to public travel, or benefits a public purpose, or all *record owners* have given the applicant written permission to maintain the *encroachment* on their property;
- (2) The proposed *encroachment* does not interfere with the free and unobstructed use of the *public right-of-way* for public travel;
- (3) The proposed *encroachment* will not adversely affect the aesthetic character of the community; and
- (4) The proposed *encroachment* does not violate any other Municipal Code provisions or other local, state, or federal law; and
- (5) For *coastal development* in the *coastal overlay zone*, the *encroachment* is consistent with Section 132.0403 (Supplemental Use Regulations of the Coastal Overlay Zone).

(Amended 6-3-2003 by O-19188 N.S.)

(Amended 11-28-2005 by O-19444 N.S.; effective 2-09-2006)

(Amended 2-9-2006 by O-19461 N.S.; effective 3-9-2006.)

(Amended 3-1-2006 by O-19466 N.S.; effective 4-1-2006)

(Amended 7-5-2006 by O-19505 N.S.; effective 8-5-2006.)

(Amended 8-4-2011 by O-20081 N.S.; effective 10-6-2011.)

(Amended 6-18-2013 by O-20261 N.S.; effective 7-19-2013.)

(Renumbered from Section 126.0504 and amended 9-15-2017 by O-20856 N.S.; effective 10-20-2017. Former Section 126.0505 "Violations of a Site Development Permit" renumbered to Section 126.0506.)

(Amended 2-9-2018 by O-20899 N.S.; effective 3-11-2018.)

(Amended 3-22-2018 by O-20916 N.S.; effective 4-21-2018.)

§126.0506 Violations of a Site Development Permit

It is unlawful for any person to maintain, use, or develop any *premises* without a Site Development Permit if such a permit is required for the use or *development*, or to maintain, use, or develop any *premises* contrary to the requirements or conditions of an existing Site Development Permit, except as provided in Sections 126.0112 or 126.0113. Violation of any provision of this Division shall be subject to the enforcement provisions contained in Chapter 12, Article 1. Violations of this Division shall be treated as strict liability offenses regardless of intent.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

*(Renumbered from Section 126.0505 on 9-15-2017 by O-20856 N.S.; effective 10-20-2017.)*126.055

(Amended 1-8-2020 by O-21161 N.S.; effective 2-9-2020.)