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HOW TO APPLY FOR A REZONE, USE PERMIT OR LAND DIVISION

Contra Costa Environmental Health reviews rezone, use permit, and land division applications for public health considerations. Of primary concern is the long-term sanitary disposal of wastewater and provision for a safe and reliable water supply. A field visit by a County Environmental Health Specialist is usually required as part of the initial application process.

In order to properly evaluate an application, detailed and comprehensive information is required. This will allow Contra Costa Environmental Health staff to prepare an adequate staff report on your proposal for the planning commission and Board of Supervisors (unincorporated areas) or city councils (incorporated areas).

The first step in determining the feasibility of a proposal is to contact our office and arrange a meeting with the Environmental Health Specialist responsible for processing your project.

If you have any questions about any stage of the application process please contact this office.

Wastewater Disposal

Contra Costa Environmental Health recommends public sewer be utilized whenever possible. Public sewer is operated, maintained, and monitored by professionals whose job is proper wastewater disposal. The lack of available public sewer may result in a recommendation for denial of a project.

Problems associated with individual septic systems are as follows:

1. Zoning may allow occupancies that generate and use hazardous materials. These substances may enter the groundwater via septic systems.
2. Septic system design is difficult for some zoning classifications such as commercial and industrial because:
 - a. The County has limited control over the number of employees and the amount and nature of sewage flows. Change of occupancy can drastically alter sewage characteristics.
 - b. Some types of development typically involve a high degree of lot coverage, such as structures, parking lots, and traffic areas. This limits the area available for current and future sewage disposal needs. Vegetated areas not subject to vehicular traffic are required for optimum septic system function, maintenance, and replacement.
3. Septic system use, especially under high density conditions, can lead to surface and groundwater degradation. Coliform bacteria, nitrates, and organic chemical contamination from septic systems are commonly reported nationwide.

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4. Septic system failures, which inevitably occur, are often difficult and expensive to repair. Retrofitting sewers to replace septic systems is very difficult because of cost and community reluctance.
5. Restrictions are placed on lot development because of sewage constraints.

Water Supply

Use of existing public water supplies is always encouraged. There is no substitute for public water since these supplies are operated, maintained, and monitored by professionals whose job is providing a safe and reliable water supply. The lack of available public water may result in a recommendation for denial of a project.

Problems associated with private water supply wells are as follows:

1. Multiplicity of wells provides additional avenues for pollutants to possibly enter groundwater. This is especially true under high density situations.
2. The creation of new small public water systems to serve each development leads to increased regulatory costs for the County. In addition, small water systems generally lack the financial resources and experience required to provide a safe and reliable source of water.
3. Any development serving water to the public or employing more than 25 employees is by definition a public water system. Change of occupancies can result in more stringent water supply requirements. The proliferation of small public water systems is discouraged except in low density rural settings.
4. Most individual on-site wells are not monitored for water quality determination. Homeowners generally use water of unknown quality.

Map Details

Maps accompanying such applications must show the following items, whether existing or proposed:

- A. Scale used (example: 1" = 100')
- B. Name, address, and phone number of property owner, contact person, and person preparing map
- C. North arrow
- D. Property lines
- E. Paved areas

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- F. Unpaved areas subject to vehicular traffic
- G. Wells, abandoned wells, springs
- H. Sewage Disposal Areas
- I. Structures, dwellings, outbuildings
- J. Septic systems (including 100% expansion areas), abandoned septic tanks, works treating or storing wastewater, sewer lines, storm sewers
- K. Location of soil profile test holes and percolation tests
- L. Location of test wells for groundwater quality determination
- M. Location of groundwater observation wells
- N. Water lines (public and private)
- O. Trees within 10 feet of sewage disposal areas
- P. Streams, ditches, canals, culverts, ponds, lakes, any body of water (intermittent or perennial)
- Q. Areas subject to flooding, inundation stormwater overflow, 10-year flood plain
- R. Fuel tanks, hazardous material storage
- S. Man-made cuts, cutbanks
- T. Easements
- U. Neighboring wells, abandoned wells, springs streams, ditches, canals, culverts, ponds, lakes, any body of water (intermittent or perennial), septic systems (including 100% expansion areas), 10-year flood plains, within 100 feet of project property lines
- V. Slope of property (on slopes show contour lines). Indicate any proposed grading in sewage disposal areas.

NOTE: Soil evaluation information (location of soil profile test holes or percolation test) may not be available at the initial application stage.

Based on findings, Contra Costa Environmental Health will forward a report to the appropriate planning agency. Please contact this office if you have any questions.