

SACRAMENTO COUNTY DESIGN GUIDELINES

APPLICANT GUIDE AND CHECKLIST

FOR PROJECTS REQUIRING DISCRETIONARY DESIGN REVIEW

Which Projects Require Discretionary Design Review?

Please reference Section 6.3.2.A of the Sacramento County Zoning Code to determine if your project requires Design Review. Design Review and the Countywide Design Guidelines apply to commercial, office, institutional, industrial, multi-family, and select single-family projects requiring discretionary entitlements or approvals.

Discretionary Design Review Process:

The Design Review Administrator (DRA) and Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) review projects for Design Review conformance. It is recommended that project applicants meet with the DRA prior to application submittal. Entitlement applications are submitted to the Office of Planning and Environmental Review. DRAC review occurs during the project review process. The DRA and DRAC will prepare conformance recommendations included in the project Staff Report to the reviewing authority. The reviewing authority may use the DRAC recommendations of conformance to apply conditions of approval to the project.

Discretionary projects are those which require one or more entitlements or approvals, such as a conditional use permit, special development permit, rezone, or public works project approval.

Purpose and Objectives of the Design Guidelines:

- Encourage better design in the County;
- Provide concurrent application processing
- Minimize uncertainty;
- Provide early feedback to project applicants
- Provide early community input where applicable;
- Encourage pre-application communication.

More information about the Design Review Program, including the Countywide Design Guidelines can be found on the Office of Planning and Environmental Review website at:

<https://planning.saccounty.gov/applicants/Pages/DesignReviewProgram.aspx>



Discretionary Project Design Review Fees are as follows¹:

Please refer to [Section 6.3.2.A and Section 6.3.2.B](#) to determine what level of design review your project requires. The levels of design review are described below followed by a table including associated fees.

a. Tentative Parcel/ Subdivision Maps (*when only entitlement*)

- i. **Incidental: residential tentative parcel map** (site only)
- ii. **Minor: subdivision maps** (site only)
- iii. **Major:** maps which require or request review of site, buildings, and landscape according to Table 6.1 and all tentative parcel maps not within a residential zoning district.

b. All other entitlements and discretionary approvals including a Conditional Use Permit, Variance, Development Plan Review, Special Development Permit, County facility or public works project not already subject to the Pedestrian Master Plan, or a Tentative Parcel/ Subdivision Map requiring additional entitlements.

- i. **Incidental:** awnings decks, sheds, freestanding signs
- ii. **Minor:** façade improvements, minor additions to existing buildings, one (1) single family home, and parking lots
- iii. **Major:** new construction of commercial, industrial, institutional, mixed-use, single-family homes two (2) units or more and multi-family residential development OR projects involving more than one improvement outlined under 'minor' above.
- iv. For cases where no physical site improvements are proposed, see Section 6.3.2.C.1 for design review waiver requests.

Discretionary Project Type	Definition	Processing Fee
Major (DRS-major)	New Construction of commercial, industrial, institutional, mixed-use, single-family homes two (2) units or more, and multi-family residential development.	Major: \$3,010 + 6.5% IT Recovery Fee = \$3,205.65
Minor (DRS-minor)	Façade improvements, minor additions to existing buildings, one (1) single-family home, and parking lots.	Minor: \$1,090 + 6.5% IT Recovery Fee = \$1,160.85
Incidental (DRS-inc)	Awnings, decks, sheds, freestanding signs.	Incidental: \$430 + 6.5% IT Recovery Fee = \$457.95

¹ Current fees as of July 1, 2025, inclusive of IT Recovery Fee. The IT Recovery Fee is added to all projects and has a maximum of \$850.

Required Design Review Submittal Materials for ALL Projects²

The following information is required in order to evaluate the design of the proposals. Your application will be deemed **incomplete** if the following information is not included as part of your project application submittal:

GENERAL

- ☐ **Completed General Application Form**
- ☐ **Completed and comprehensive Design Review Narrative**
- ☐ **Computer Aided Drawings (CAD), on a standard sheet size**
- ☐ **Submit each exhibit type listed below as a separate PDF document³**

BUILDING(S)

- ☐ **One (1) Site Plan.** Drawn to scale showing all existing and proposed improvements. Aerial photo site plans are not acceptable. Refer to Site Plan requirements provided in the General Application Form.
- ☐ **One (1) Colored Preliminary Landscape Plan.** Full size and drawn to scale. Refer to Preliminary Landscape Plan requirements provided in the General Application Form.
- ☐ **One (1) Building Floor Plan(s).** Full size and drawn to scale. Refer to Floor Plan requirements provided in the General Application Form.
- ☐ **One (1) Set of Colored Building Elevations.** Full size and must show all sides of building and including walls and fences.
- ☐ **One (1) 3-D Colored Representation (Colored Perspective).** This exhibit should indicate the project design from two sides simultaneously. The purpose is to indicate the project's design as it will be seen spatially. This representation can be from pedestrian level or from above. Please refer to our website for examples of required exhibits.
- ☐ **One (1) Color and Materials Sample Board.** This labeled exhibit identifies all proposed exterior finishes including awnings/canopies, railings, glazing type, window/door frame materials, as well as the material and color selections for the proposed structure(s). Include manufacturers color samples, manufacturer and color names/numbers. Electronic submittal of Sample Board is required.
- ☐ **One (1) Set of Context Photos and Key Plan.** These photos and key plan illustrate the project in relation to its immediate surroundings. These photos should be in color and should show the site from multiple angles. Please do not provide photos from Google Street View or other publicly available resources.
- ☐ **One (1) Site Amenities and Furnishings Package.** This package includes manufacturer's cut sheet information, representative imagery, or detail drawing for all required or proposed site furnishings, such as building or site lighting, outdoor furniture, trash and recycling receptacles, bike racks and lockers, and any proposed walls, fences, or gates. Include proposed finish/color/material.

² Some materials may be waived by the Design Review Administrator if the project scope merits it.

³ Please note that you may be required to provide physical exhibits at a later time. Please do not provide physical exhibits unless directed by your assigned project planner or the Design Review Administrator.

Awnings and Freestanding Signs

- ☐ **One (1) Site Plan** drawn to scale showing all existing and proposed improvements. Aerial photo site plans are not acceptable.
- ☐ **One (1) Enlarged Plan View**
- ☐ **One (1) Set of Colored Elevations** with actual color sample attached.