

# THE REVIEW PROCESS AND TYPICAL COSTS FOR PLANNING AND ZONING APPLICATIONS

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# REVIEW PROCESS FOR PLANNING AND ZONING APPLICATIONS

- First step: Residents who have a proposed project call City Hall to inquire about the needed permits. City staff help them to determine if they need a building permit or a zoning permit to build their project.
- Common zoning permits include Conditional Use Permits and Variance requests.
- City staff help residents to determine what type of permit they need, provide applications, and provide basic information about the application process.

# REVIEW PROCESS FOR PLANNING AND ZONING APPLICATIONS

- City staff and the Building Inspector complete the review of most building permit applications. If the property is located in a floodplain, the City Engineer and Planner will also review it to make sure it complies with Floodplain regulations.
- The City's consulting Planner completes the reviews of Conditional Use Permit applications, Variance requests, Rezoning requests, and some other types of zoning permit requests. The Planner may need assistance from the Engineer for the application review.
- Applicants pay a fee and an escrow to pay for the costs of reviewing their applications.

## Why does Newport Use a Consulting Planner & Engineer and Charge Applicants for the Cost of Applicant Review?

- Prior to using consulting planner, Planning & Zoning applications were reviewed by City Staff—their salaries and review costs were paid by all City residents.
- Those staff positions were eliminated a few years ago to reduce costs because the City did not have enough work for a full-time planner.
- The City looked at options for completing the planning tasks that are required by the zoning ordinance and state law, since City no longer had staff to do this work.

## Why does Newport Use a Consulting Planner & Engineer and Charge Applicants for the Cost of Applicant Review?

- The City found that the typical way that smaller cities in Washington County and the Metro Area provide planning services and pay the costs of those services is by hiring a consultant who works on a hourly basis for just the time that is needed to review applications.
- The City decided costs for planning services would be charged to applicants on an hourly basis, rather than use the general tax levy to pay for planning services. This is the same way that other small cities pay for those costs.

# The Application Review Process

- The consulting Planner completes the steps that are required in state statute and the City's zoning ordinance for review of the applications.
- The Planner contacts the Engineer and other agencies (such as the Watershed District or Washington County) and includes their advise and comment on applications if necessary.

# The Application Review Process

**Planner tasks in typical review process include the following:**

- 1. Completeness review of application submittal**
  - Determine if it includes all of the items required by the ordinance
  - Call applicant if additional items are needed
  - Identifies the issues for review and any additional information needed
  - Send letter notifying the applicant that the application is complete, identifying the 60-day review period, and notifying the application of the process and meeting dates.
- State statutes require the City to determine that the application is complete and provide timely notice to the application regarding the 60-day review period.

# The Application Review Process

## 2. Review of application and creation of report for Planning Commission

- The City's zoning ordinance includes specific requirements and criteria for review of each type of planning and zoning application.
- The Planner's review must address each of the standards and criteria in the ordinance.
- The planner's report is a record of whether the proposed project meets the standards and criteria, so the City Planning Commission and Council can judge the application fairly.



# The Application Review Process

2. Review of application and creation of report for Planning Commission
  - The planner completes a staff report for the Planning Commission that analyzes whether application meets each code requirement (dimensions, lot coverage, performances standards, etc.)
  - For variances, the report must include Findings, by State law and City ordinance
  - Report must include Conditions for approval, if applicable

# The Application Review Process

## 3. **Coordination with other staff and agencies**

- Planner requests comments from other City staff and agencies (Watershed District, Washington County) and incorporates them as needed in the staff report

4. After the Planning Commission meeting, the Planner revises staff report, findings and conditions based on Planning Commission recommendations, and prepares the report and for the Council meeting. City staff prepare the resolutions for approval.

# Costs of recent planning applications

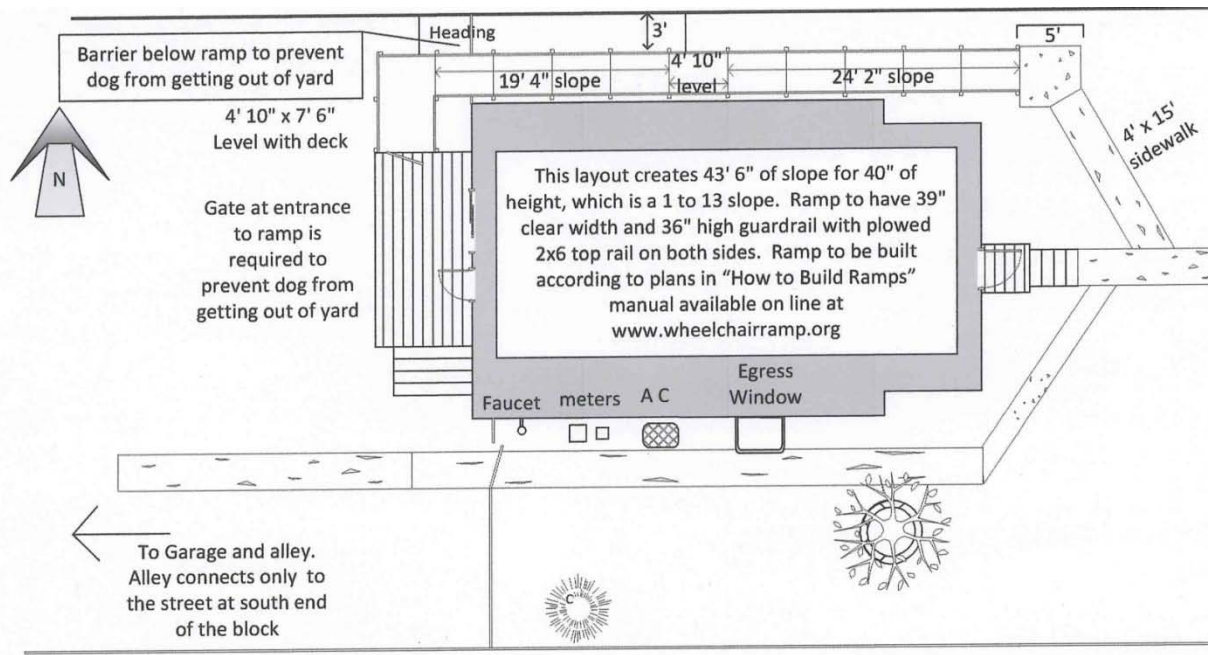
- Applicants pay a fee for application review and an escrow:
- The fee covers the costs of publishing the required public notice, and mailing the notice to the required geographic area
  - Fees for Variance: \$300.00
  - Fees for CUP (residential): \$300.00
  - Fees for CUP (commercial): \$450.00
- The escrow covers the costs of Planner and Engineer time to complete the application review. Typical escrow costs for variance and CUP applications (2013) were between \$400 and \$800
- The differences in costs among applications were based on:
  - Number and types of issues in the request
  - The quality of information provided by the applicant and need to obtain additional information to address the ordinance requirements
  - Number of phone calls with applicants
  - Results of Planning Commission process and number of changes to the report for Council

# Costs of recent planning applications

- The applications with the lowest costs had only one or two issues to analyze. Those that needed variances from several code requirements or standards needed more staff time and therefore had higher costs.
- Applications that required staff time from the City Engineer regarding right-of-way or utility issues needed to pay for the Engineer's time as well as the Planner's time.
- If applicants provided poor quality drawings or did not provide complete information, City staff or the Planner need to call to obtain the information, or obtain the information from the County or other sources, and this increases the cost of applications.
- When the Planning Commission makes significant changes to the recommendations, or tables the application to obtain additional information, it can take more time and raise the cost of application review.

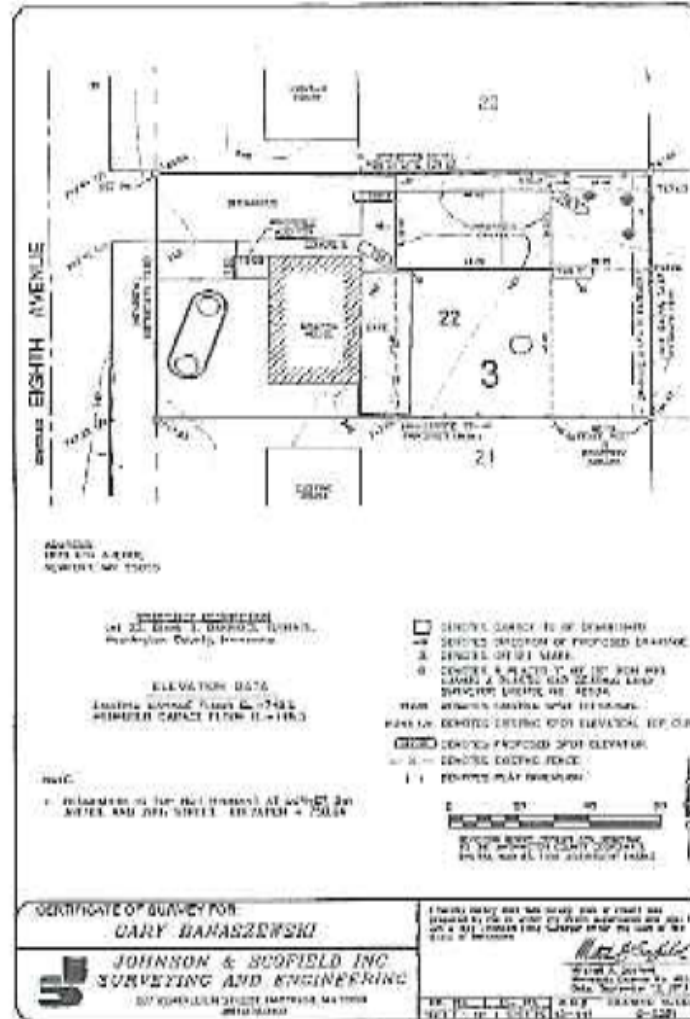
# Costs of recent planning applications

- Quality of submittals—This applicant provided a clear, scaled drawing that provided most of the information the Planner needed for the review—this reduces the time needed for review and the cost .



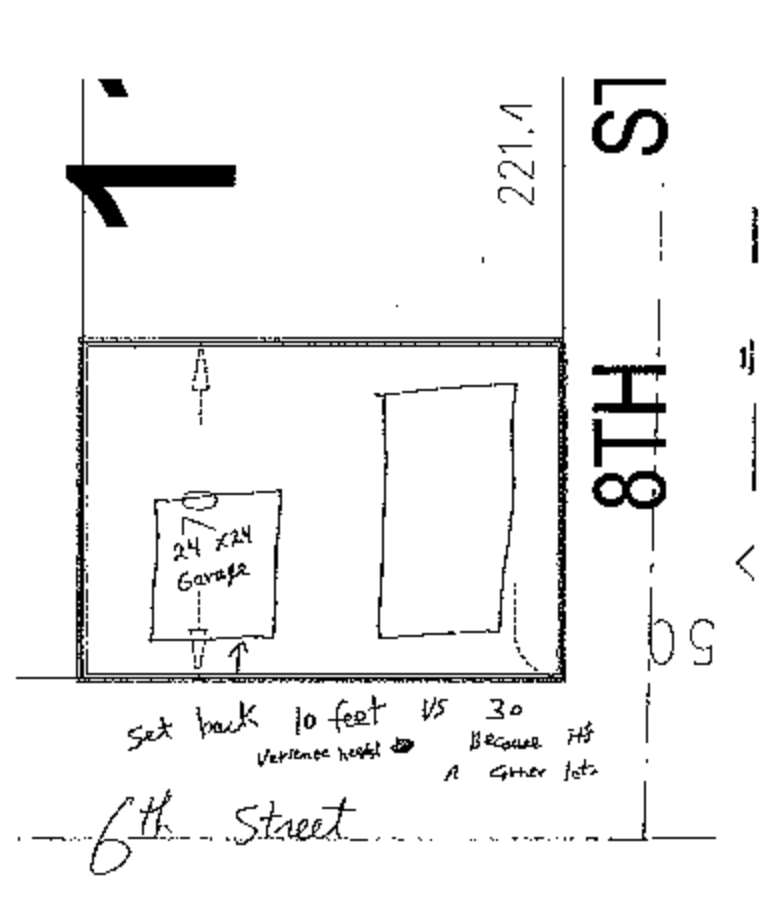
# Costs of recent planning applications

- This application also provided the information needed in a form that was easy to read and use for the required calculations.



# Costs of recent planning applications

- This sketch has no scale, and does not include the information needed for review. The Planner spent hours obtaining the necessary information, determining the scale, and completing calculations. Such drawings add significantly to the cost of the review of the Application.



# Costs of recent planning applications

- For the application on the previous page, the Planner needed to go to the County website for a scaled aerial photos and property information, and create a scaled drawing that included the required information.
- The Planner needs to complete measurements and calculations for setbacks, lot coverage, and other dimensional standards for all applications. All of that information was available on the first 2 sample drawings—none of the information was provided on the 3<sup>rd</sup> drawing, which increased the time needed to complete the calculations.
- The Planner need to call the 3<sup>rd</sup> applicant to clarify location of proposed garage, house size, and other info not supplied on drawing.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> applicant did not include an adequate rationale for the variance—the Planner needed to create this.
- Some cities would not accept the 3<sup>rd</sup> example as “complete.” Newport tries to avoid delays, but accepting such applications leads to additional cost for the applicant.



# Summary

- The steps in the process, items that need to be analyzed, and contents of the staff reports are governed by State Statutes and the City's Zoning Ordinance
- The City needs an adequate record of the analysis, findings, conditions, and process. The report forms the Planer uses have been developed over many years of working with City Attorneys and Administrators to provide the findings and record that the City needs for planning and zoning decisions.

# Summary

- The City and its consultants try to keep costs down by:
  - City staff handle as many questions as they can, receive and distribute of the application, and manage mailings and meetings
  - The applicants are not charged for meetings--\$100 meeting rate is paid by the City (no matter how much Planner time at Commission and Council meetings).
  - Staff and consultants work as efficiently as possible
- Applicants can keep costs down by
  - Reviewing the checklists for the application, and provide everything required in a clear format. Provide scaled drawings rather than “sketches”
  - Remember that applicants will be charged for the phone time with the Planner or Engineer—save lengthy rationale or discussion for the Planning Commission meeting.