

ASSISTANT PLANNER

DEFINITION

Under direct supervision, performs various professional field and office planning work related to current planning, including review of development and land use applications, zoning, site plans, and environmental documents; provides project management and administration; completes technical assessments and prepares written project analyses; provides environmental review and project analysis of assigned projects; provides professional advice and assistance to the public on planning, community development, zoning, permits, and environmental review; provides complex professional staff assistance to the Director of Community Development, committees and commissions, other departments, and the public in areas of expertise; performs a variety of studies and prepares and presents staff reports; and performs related work as required.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives direct supervision from the Director of Community Development. Exercises no direct supervision over staff.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is the entry-level class in the professional planning series. Initially under close supervision, incumbents with basic planning experience perform professional and technical planning work in current planning activities. As experience is gained, assignments become more varied and are performed with greater independence. Positions at this level usually perform most of the duties required of the positions at the Associate level, but are not expected to function at the same skill level and usually exercise less independent discretion and judgment in matters related to work procedures and methods. Work is usually supervised while in progress and fits an established structure or pattern. Exceptions or changes in procedures are explained in detail as they arise. This class is distinguished from Associate Planner in that the latter is capable of performing the most complex and controversial planning and project management duties assigned to the function, including advance planning and providing staff support to the Historic Landmarks Board and/or Housing Element Task Force.

EXAMPLES OF ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change, or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.

- Reviews routine to complex commercial, industrial, and residential development proposals, plans, and applications for issuance of zoning clearance and for compliance with appropriate codes, ordinances, standards, laws, rules, regulations, and policies.
- Reviews permit applications and building plans for completeness and compliance with current City codes and regulations; provides interpretations of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Subdivision Map Act, and local environmental guidelines; identifies corrective actions to be taken by owners; recommends improvement and rehabilitation programs; conducts follow-up and re-check and approves or denies submittals.
- Reviews and signs off on plans submitted for building plan check and permits.
- Prepares and reviews environmental impact reports; prepares written initial studies, negative declarations, and staff reports related to development projects or City projects.

- Assists the public at the front counter and on the phone, answering questions and providing information regarding zoning, land use, development standards, approved development proposals, and the City's entitlement process; receives and reviews applications for building permits for completeness.
- Serves as project manager on planning and development projects, which includes application and plan review, coordination with project applicants and other City departments, preparation and posting of legal notices, background research, environmental review, preparation of staff reports, scheduling meetings and hearings, and monitoring of project implementation to verify substantial conformance with approved plans, conditions, and mitigation measures; suggests revisions to site plans and architecture; inspects project development sites.
- Compiles information for a variety of studies and reports; researches, analyzes, and interprets social, economic, population, and land use data and trends; researches and reviews previous entitlements and City records; develops recommendations and prepares written reports on various planning matters and the City's General Plan; participates in the implementation and administration of the City's General Plan and development regulations.
- Receives and records all code compliance complaints and establishes appropriate files; coordinates actions with other staff as appropriate.
- Investigates complaints from the public and staff regarding violations of zoning codes; initiates contacts with residents, business representatives, and other parties to explain the nature of incurred violations and to encourage compliance with codes, ordinances, and community standards; prepares and issues notices of violation or noncompliance, final notices, and other correspondence according to applicable codes and regulations; implements appropriate procedures to correct or resolve each complaint and violation; provides confirmation regarding code regulations to the public by telephone and in person.
- Provides staff support to the Trees and Views Committee; prepares and presents agendas, minutes, staff reports, and resolutions; receives applications; conducts site inspections to determine project compliance; develops recommendations for approval or denial; provides recommendation to the Committee.
- Prepares and presents staff reports for the City Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator, and various other committees and advisory boards as directed; prepares research, reports, maps, and conducts briefings and meetings.
- Confers with and advises architects, developers, contractors, engineers, and the general public regarding City development policies and standards; provides and clarifies information relative to land use, zoning, code interpretation, general plan compliance, signage, and other issues.
- Researches and assists in preparing ordinances for review and approval.
- Participates in coordinating City planning and development related activities with other City departments and with outside agencies.
- Attends meetings, conferences, workshops, and training sessions; attends and participates in professional group meetings; stays abreast of new trends and innovations in the field of urban planning and other types of public services as they relate to the area of assignment.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Modern principles and practices of technical and legal issues of urban and regional planning, zoning, urban economics, demographics, and environmental planning.
- Geographic, socio-economic, transportation, political, and other elements related to city planning.
- Comprehensive plans and current planning processes and the development process.
- Site planning and architectural design principles.

- Operational characteristics, services, and activities of a comprehensive environmental planning program.
- Principles, practices, methods, and techniques of code violation investigation and compliance including citation issuance procedures, methods used to obtain various types of inspection warrants, and principles used to prepare legal documents.
- Applicable Federal, State, and local laws, rules, regulations, ordinances, and organizational policies and procedures relevant to assigned area of responsibility.
- Project management principles and techniques.
- Researching and reporting methods, techniques, and procedures.
- Recent developments, current literature, and sources of information related to planning, zoning, and environmental review.
- Practices of researching planning and land use issues, evaluating alternatives, making sound recommendations, and preparing and presenting effective staff reports.
- Principles of advanced mathematics and their application to planning work.
- Modern office practices, methods, and computer equipment and applications related to the work.
- Methods and techniques of effective technical report preparation and presentation.
- English usage, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation.
- Techniques for effectively representing the City in contacts with governmental agencies, community groups, various business, professional, educational and regulatory organizations, and with property owners, developers, contractors, and the public.
- Techniques for providing a high level of customer service by effectively dealing with the public, vendors, contractors, and City staff.

Ability to:

- Interpret planning and zoning programs to the general public; identify and respond to issues and concerns of the public, City Council, and other boards and commissions.
- Read plans and specifications and make effective site visits.
- Assess, monitor, and report environmental impact on and of various City programs, projects, and services.
- Analyze site design, terrain constraints, land use compatibility, utilities, and other urban services.
- Conduct routine research projects, evaluate alternatives, and make sound recommendations.
- Interpret, apply, explain, and ensure compliance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Read and understand technical drawings and specifications.
- Perform mathematical and planning computations with precision.
- Effectively represent the department and the City in meetings with governmental agencies, community groups, and various business, professional, and regulatory organizations and individuals.
- Coordinate assigned activities with other City departments and agencies as required.
- Prepare and present clear, concise, and logical written and oral reports, correspondence, policies, procedures, and other written materials.
- Establish and maintain a variety of filing, record keeping, and tracking systems.
- Make sound, independent decisions within established policy and procedural guidelines.
- Organize own work, set priorities, and meet critical time deadlines.
- Operate modern office equipment including computer equipment and specialized software applications programs.
- Use English effectively to communicate in person, over the telephone, and in writing.
- Use tact, initiative, prudence, and independent judgment within general policy, procedural, and legal guidelines.
- Establish, maintain, and foster positive and effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

Education and Experience:

Any combination of training and experience that would provide the required knowledge, skills, and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required qualifications would be:

Equivalent to graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with major coursework in urban planning, community development, business or public administration, or a related field and some experience in planning, zoning, and related community development activities.

Licenses and Certifications:

- Possession of, or ability to obtain, a valid California Driver's License by time of appointment.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer, to inspect City development sites, to operate a motor vehicle, and to visit various City and meeting sites; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person, before groups, and over the telephone. This is primarily a sedentary office classification although standing in and walking between work areas may be required. Finger dexterity is needed to access, enter, and retrieve data using a computer keyboard or calculator and to operate standard office equipment. Positions in this classification occasionally bend, stoop, kneel, reach, push, and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information. Employees must possess the ability to lift, carry, push, and pull materials and objects weighing up to 25 pounds.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS

Employees work in an office environment with moderate noise levels, controlled temperature conditions, and no direct exposure to hazardous physical substances. Employees may work in the field and occasionally be exposed to loud noise levels, cold and hot temperatures, inclement weather conditions, road hazards, vibration, mechanical and/or electrical hazards, and hazardous physical substances and fumes. Employees may interact with upset staff and/or public and private representatives in interpreting and enforcing departmental policies and procedures.