

PARCEL MAP WHAT IS A PARCEL MAP (PM)?

A "parcel map" is a legal mechanism to divide real property into smaller parcels. There is a limit to the number of parcels that can be created by using the parcel map process. Typically, a maximum of four (4) residential parcels can be created with a parcel map. Consequently, the required improvements to the infrastructure may be less than that required of larger projects.

The parcel map process is used by landowners who are not "developers," who happen to have a parcel of property and desire to create smaller parcels. A landowner can only use the parcel map process once, in most circumstances, otherwise future divisions of the same or adjacent property by the same property owner will require a subdivision map.

WHAT ARE THE SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A PARCEL MAP?

Applications for a parcel map may be obtained online, at the Planning Department counter or mailed upon request. A licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer will submit the application on behalf of the property owner. (Due to the technical nature of the mapping process, state law requires that the final parcel map be prepared by a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer.)

Once an application is submitted to this office, it will be reviewed to determine if it is complete. An application package will consist of the following:

- * Application form, signed by the owners and agent/representative;
- * One (1) original and one (1) copy of the title report (less than thirty (30) days old);
- * Fifteen (15) copies of the proposed parcel map, prepared by a land surveyor or engineer;
- * Parcel Map filing fee.

(Forms and fee chart are available online)

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an environmental study be prepared for some types of projects. Parcel maps are not found to be exempt from CEQA. Some parcel maps require a more extensive environmental review. The environmental study can take the form of a Negative Declaration, a Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an Environmental Impact Report. If the Planning Director determines that an environmental study will be required, the applicant will be required to submit a completed Environmental Information Form. Technical reports may also be required. These may include: a biological report, an archaeological survey, a soils report, a geologic hazard report, and a groundwater analysis, among other studies/reports. These studies will be used to assess the existing physical condition of the property and to determine the impacts the parcel map may have upon the environment.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS A PARCEL MAP GOES THROUGH?

After a parcel map application has been formally accepted as complete, the map is sent to several governmental agencies, utility companies, and the public to review and comment. The Parcel Map is scheduled for review by the Parcel map Committee.

After the consideration of the Parcel Map Committee, a "staff report" will be prepared. The staff report contains information on the proposed use, an analysis of the proposed use in relation to surrounding properties, and a staff recommendation to the decision-making body. Recommended conditions of approval are included as part of the staff report. Copies of the staff report are normally available four (4) to five (5) working days before the scheduled public hearing. Applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully read the recommended conditions attached to the staff report and to contact the staff planner with any questions or concerns prior to the date of the public hearing. On a predetermined date, action is taken to conditionally approve or deny the parcel map. If the parcel map is approved, it is considered to be "tentatively approved."

A Notice Public Hearing is sent to all of the property owners within 300 feet of the site and is published in the local newspaper for the tentative parcel map. All of the comments received during this "review period" are compiled by the Planning Department. A list of recommended conditions of approval and recommended findings will then be prepared to ensure all local and state requirements are notified.

The Madera County Planning Commission will be the decision-making body to act on the parcel map application. This Commission meets the first Tuesday (excluding holidays) of every month and begins its meetings at 6:00 p.m.

Conditions of approval must be satisfied before the parcel map can record. These conditions will often require: improvements and dedications be made for roads, drainage issues be resolved, fire protection be provided, water and sewer service be supplied, or other fees be paid or improvements constructed.

The parcel map process consists of two (2) distinct phases. The "tentative" process and the "final" process. The Planning Department acts as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency is responsible for processing the parcel map from its initial submittal through to the tentative approval. The Planning Department is responsible for processing the parcel map from tentative approval through to the recordation of the final parcel map. The Engineering Department acts as the County Surveyor. Once a parcel map is tentatively approved, the applicant works with the Planning Department to comply with the conditions of approval.

Once the final parcel map is approved in its final form by the Planning Department and all conditions of approval have been satisfied, the final parcel map is then ready to be recorded.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PROCESS A PARCEL MAP?

Once the application is deemed complete and formally accepted, action to conditionally approve or deny the map will occur within sixty (60) calendar days. If an environmental study is required, this processing time is lengthened considerably. (Typically, ten (10) months to twelve (12) months are added onto the process.) Once a parcel map is tentatively approved, processing of the final parcel map varies. It is dependent upon you and your surveyor's or engineer's ability to satisfy the conditions of approval and record the map. Once the parcel map is recorded, the property is subdivided; the land division has occurred. It will often take several weeks for the county's official maps and computer data bases and Assessor's maps to be updated to reflect the new subdivision.

I WANT TO DIVIDE MY PROPERTY!! WHERE DO I START?

The first step in dividing land is to determine if such a proposal is feasible. Contact our Department to find the zoning and general plan designation for the site. This will determine if the land can be divided, and it will determine the minimum lot size. Occasionally, it is necessary to obtain a zone change or other discretionary approvals prior to, or concurrent with, a parcel map.

Upon determining that it is feasible to divide the land, you may desire to employ the services of a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer to work with this Department to ensure that approval of the tentative parcel map and recordation of the final parcel map comply with all local and state requirements.

Should you have any questions regarding the county's parcel map process, please contact this Department at (559) 675-7821 and ask to speak to a planner assigned to the Land Division Unit.