

## **WHAT IS A SUBDIVISION MAP?**

A subdivision map is one of the processes used to subdivide real property into smaller lots. Typically, the subdivision map is used to create five (5) or more residential lots. This type of subdivision is normally associated with full urban improvements, which would include paved streets, curb, gutter and sidewalk, fire hydrants, street lights, comprehensive drainage system, water and sewer service, and other infrastructure found in urban areas.

There is no statutory limit to the number of lots that can be created by using the subdivision map process. However, each lot must meet the minimum lot size required by the Madera County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, and the land must be capable of supporting the proposed number of lots and the permitted land use.

Applicants for subdivision maps are typically "developers" (those who are in the business of developing residential properties). A significant investment is involved in gaining approval of, and constructing, a subdivision. Other less costly and less complex processes are available to individual landowners who wish to subdivide their large parcel into fewer pieces.

## **WHAT ARE THE SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A SUBDIVISION MAP?**

Applications for a subdivision may be obtained online, at the Planning Department counter or mailed upon request. Typically, a licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer will submit the application on behalf of the developer provided the owner of record signs the application form. (Due to the technical nature of the mapping process, state and local laws require that the subdivision 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 completeness. An application package consists of the following:

- \* Application form, signed by the owners and agent/representative;
- \* One (1) original and one (1) copy of preliminary title report (no more than thirty (30) days old);
- \* Fifteen (15) copies of the proposed preliminary subdivision map, prepared by a land surveyor or civil engineer;
- \* Conceptual drainage plan, water supply, sewage disposal, roads;
- \* Statement of improvement financing, installation and method of maintenance;
- \* Preliminary review 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. Subdivision maps are not exempt from an 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 requested 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, a traffic study, 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 subdivision map (construction of one (1) residence per parcel) will have upon the environment.

## **WHAT IS THE PROCESS A SUBDIVISION MAP GOES THROUGH?**

After a preliminary subdivision map application has been formally accepted as complete, the map is sent to governmental agencies, utility companies, and the public for review and comment. (If an environmental study is required, the map is not circulated for review until the environmental document has been prepared.) Three (3) meetings are scheduled. One (1) is the Subdivision Review Committee meeting, and the others are public hearings. A Notice of Public Hearing is sent to all of the property owners within 300 feet of the site and is published in the local newspaper.

The Subdivision Review Committee consists of staff from the following county departments: Assessor's Office, Planning, Engineering, Environmental Health Services, Fire, and Road Department. The Planning Director acts as chairman of the Subdivision Review Committee. The purpose of the Subdivision Review Committee is to formulate a recommended action for the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors regarding the subdivision. This meeting also is held so the applicant can discuss the recommendation with the Subdivision Review Committee. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend the Subdivision Review Committee meeting and resolve all concerns at that level.

Written comments regarding the subdivision are made by each of the Parcel Map and Subdivision Review Committee departments. At the Subdivision Review Committee meeting, each department verbally presents its recommendation to the applicant and to other departments, and a list of recommended conditions is verbally formulated. After the Subdivision Review Committee meeting, the Planning Department compiles all of the comments and prepares a Preliminary Subdivision Report. The purpose of the report is to present the formal recommendation of the Subdivision Review Committee to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The report includes recommended conditions of approval and recommended findings for the subdivision. The Board of Supervisors is the hearing body that has final authority in these matters.

Their action is considered to be "quasi-judicial," and there is no appeal from their decision.

The subdivision map process consists of three (3) distinct phases. The "preliminary" process, "tentative" process and the "final" process. The Planning Department is responsible for processing the subdivision map from its initial submittal through to "final approval." Once a subdivision map is tentatively approved, the applicant works with the Planning Department to comply with the conditions and record the map.

### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PROCESS A SUBDIVISION MAP?**

An applicant can expect to receive a written response to the initial submittal of an application in approximately two (2) weeks. Once the application is deemed complete and formally accepted, the Subdivision Review Committee meeting occurs in approximately 45 days. A public hearing is normally held within 60 calendar days after receipt of the tentative map. However, 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 subdivision map is tentatively approved, processing of the final map varies, depending on the applicant's ability to satisfy the conditions of approval of the Board of Supervisors action and record the map. Once the subdivision map is recorded, the property is officially subdivided. It often will take several weeks for the county's official maps and computer data bases an Assessor's records/maps to be updated to reflect the new subdivision.

Staff is available to answer any questions you may have regarding the subdivision map process. Please telephone (559) 661-6333 if we can be of assistance.