Design Permit Overview
A Design Permit is required for new construction and substantial remodel projects. The purpose of a Design Permit is to implement the General Plan’s land use and aesthetic goals and policies, ensure compliance with the Zoning Code, and to promote high quality design and neighborhood compatibility. A Design Permit is a discretionary permit which is either considered by the Community Development Director or the Planning Commission at a publicly noticed hearing.

Design Permit Applicability
Capitola Zoning Code section 17.63, establishes the criteria for when a Design Permit is required. A Design Permit is not required for:

1. First floor additions at the rear of a home which are not visible to the general public, do not exceed four hundred square-feet; do not exceed fifteen feet in height (eight feet maximum plate height); and which utilize matching or compatible building materials.
2. A single accessory structure of less than eighty square-feet, less than nine feet in height, with no electrical or plumbing fixtures.
   - Remodel projects which do not include an addition are exempt from a Design Permit unless the work involves a historic structure.

The Community Development Director considers Design Permit applications which involve an addition of 400 square-feet or less on the ground floor.

The Planning Commission considers Design Permit applications which involve an addition more than 400 square-foot and/or an upper floor addition. A Design Permit is required for any commercial development which involves an exterior modification.

Application Requirements
Applicants must submit a Master Application and submit necessary fees as established in the City’s adopted Fee Schedule. Design Permit applications also require submission of:

- Site plan, floor plans, elevations, landscape plans
- Color and materials board
- Stormwater permit application
- Drainage/erosion control plans

Depending on the nature of the project, a streetscape, shadow study, or other information may be necessary.

Time and Cost
Design Permit applications typically require 45-120 days to process. The cost for Design Permits are as follows:

- Single-Family (Staff Review) - $773 fee
- Single-Family (PC Review) - $2,645 fee
- Multi-Family - $3,701 fee
- Commercial - $4000 deposit

Design Permit Process
City staff will process a Design Permit application concurrently with any other discretionary permits such as a Conditional Use Permit or a Coastal Development Permit. Design Permit applications are presented to the City’s Architecture and Site Review Committee prior to being considered for a decision. The Architecture and Site Review committee is an advisory body consisting of City staff, an architect, landscape architect, and historian. The Architecture and Site Review Committee does not make any decisions on a Design Permit application. Recommendations from the Architecture and Site Review Committee are forwarded to the appropriate decision-making body.

Design Permit Findings
In order to approve a Design Permit application, the decision-maker must make the following two findings that the project would:

1. Secure the general purposes of the Zoning Code and the General Plan;
2. Maintain the character and integrity of the neighborhood.
Public Hearing Process
Applicants for a Design Permit should attend the public hearing with their architect or designer, as applicable, and be prepared to present information to support their request. City staff will present its analysis of the request with a recommendation to approve or deny the application. The applicant and their representatives will then have an opportunity to present their case. The public will also have an opportunity to comment, either in support or in opposition of the proposal. After the hearing body receives all public testimony, the public hearing is closed and the decision-maker deliberate the merits of the proposal. The decision-maker then renders a decision to approve or deny the proposal. The decision-maker may approve a modified project or condition the project as necessary to ensure high quality design and compatibility with existing neighborhood character. Decisions of the Community Development Director may be appealed to the Planning Commission. Planning Commission decisions may be appealed to the City Council.