

City of Capitola
SENIOR PLANNER
Effective Date: August 12, 2005
Revised: July 23, 2025

GENERAL PURPOSE

Under the direction of the Community and Economic Development Director, the Senior Planner manages, coordinates, and conducts advanced professional planning work. This includes the review and processing of development applications; preparation of staff reports and presentations for the Planning Commission, City Council, and advisory bodies; decision-making on administrative applications; and supervision of planning staff. The Senior Planner also leads complex planning and economic development projects, zoning and policy updates, grant administration, environmental review, and community engagement efforts.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED

Reports to and works under the general direction of the Community and Economic Development Director.

SUPERVISION EXERCISED

May supervise Associate Planner, Assistant Planner, Development Services Technician, interns, and consultants/contract planners, as assigned.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage the processing of discretionary and administrative permits, including scheduling, noticing, agenda preparation, and participation for Planning Commission, administrative design review meetings, and other City established committees and boards.
- Tracking and reporting billable permit costs for development applications.
- Serve as lead staff for major development proposals, preparing and presenting written and oral reports with analysis, findings, and recommendations.
- Plan review of building permit applications for consistency with applicable codes and planning permit conditions.
- Interpret and apply the City's General Plan, Local Coastal Program, Zoning Code, CEQA, and other applicable regulations.
- Collaborate with applicants, architects, and the public to improve project design and ensure compliance with city policies and ordinances.
- Make administrative permit decisions as authorized by the Municipal Code.
- Provide technical assistance and policy interpretation to the public, elected officials, City departments, and outside agencies.
- Conduct long-range planning projects, including General Plan updates and implementation, Specific Plan development, housing element implementation and annual reporting, and zoning code amendments.
- Oversee or participate in the preparation of environmental documents under CEQA/NEPA, including managing consultant contracts and peer review.
- Manage preparation of development projects by City through the planning and design phase, including the administration of consultant contracts.
- Support economic development initiatives in coordination with local businesses, property owners, and regional partners. Help implement economic development programs such as façade improvement grants, business incubators or pop-up programs, and technical assistance.

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- Coordinate and support special topic committees, including the Art & Cultural Commission, Historical Museum Board, and Commission on the Environment.
- Research and prepare grant applications; administer awarded grants, ensuring compliance with reporting and funding requirements.
- Support historic preservation efforts and resource protection programs, including preparation of designations, review of alterations to historic resources, and coordination with state and federal agencies.
- Carry out code enforcement activities, resolve violations, and oversee enforcement activities of supervised positions.
- Supervise and mentor planning staff, interns, and consultants. Provide guidance and quality control for permit processing and policy work.
- Contribute to process improvements, including refining public handouts, application forms, and digital workflows.
- Prepare and present maps, charts, and visual exhibits using GIS and permit tracking systems.
- Perform related duties as assigned.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Education and Experience

- Bachelor's degree in urban planning, architecture, public policy, geography, or a related field from an accredited college or university.
- Minimum of four (4) years of increasingly responsible experience in municipal or regional planning. A master's degree in a related field may substitute for one (1) year of experience.
- AICP certification is desirable.

Knowledge of:

- Principles, practices, and current trends in urban planning, land use regulation, environmental review, and economic development.
- State and federal planning laws, including CEQA, NEPA, the Subdivision Map Act, Coastal Act, Permit Streamlining Act, and Housing Accountability Act.
- Preparation and processing of development applications, zoning code interpretation, long-range policy planning, and permit streamlining.
- Historic preservation practices and environmental resource management.
- Principles of supervision and staff development.
- Grant writing and administration processes.
- Modern office software, including Microsoft Office, GIS tools, permit tracking, staff report and agenda software, and graphic presentation tools.

Skill and Ability to:

- Communicate clearly, effectively, and professionally, both orally and in writing.
- Interpret and apply laws, ordinances, regulations, and policies to complex planning problems.
- Prepare and deliver presentations to boards, commissions, elected officials, and the public.
- Analyze issues and develop logical and well-supported recommendations.
- Conduct complex research and prepare technical reports.
- Supervise, mentor, and evaluate staff performance.
- Manage multiple assignments with competing deadlines.

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- Administer and enforce zoning and land development laws with good judgement and impartiality.
- Foster positive working relationships with staff, officials, consultants, applicants, and the public.
- Operate standard office equipment, GIS systems, and other planning-related tools.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Possession of, and continued maintenance of, a valid California Driver's License and a safe driving record.

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT USED

- Personal computer and software (Microsoft Office, GIS, Adobe Acrobat, permit tracking systems, staff report and meeting agenda preparation tools, and related programs).
- Telephone, copier, scanner, calculator, camera, light and noise meters, vehicle, and other standard office equipment and light gear necessary for field inspections.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

The physical demands and work environment characteristics described below are representative of those an employee must meet to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform these functions.

Work is primarily performed in an office setting. However, some outdoor or field work is required, including posting public notices, observing zoning and other code violations, inspecting properties and development projects for compliance with applicable codes and conditions of approval, and attending off-site meetings. The employee may occasionally be required to climb or balance, stoop, kneel, or crouch.

While performing the duties of this position, the employee is frequently required to stand or sit for extended periods, drive a motor vehicle, walk, talk, and hear. The use of hands to finger, handle, feel, or operate objects, tools, or controls—and the ability to reach with hands and arms—is also frequently required. Hand-eye coordination is essential for operating computers and a variety of office equipment. The employee must regularly retrieve files and may occasionally lift and/or move objects weighing up to 25 pounds.

Specific vision requirements for this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus—necessary for detailed computer work, reading, and field inspections. The noise level is typically moderately quiet, though it can become moderately noisy at the public counter.

DISCLAIMER

This job description is intended to describe the general nature and level of work performed by employees in this position. It is not an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and qualifications required. The City reserves the right to modify this job description at any time as the needs of the City and the position evolve.