



# Community Development Department - Planning Division

3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522 (951) 826-5371 Fax: (951) 826-5981 www.Riversideca.gov

## *Administrative Environmental Review of Grading Plans*

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Generally speaking, any time 50 cubic yards or more of material is to be moved, a grading permit must be obtained from the City's Public Works Department. While review of the grading plan typically involves only engineering analysis by the City's Public Works Department, in specific instances environmental review of the grading plan is required. Such instances include the following:

1. The property to be graded has an average natural slope of 10% or greater; and/or
2. The property is in the RC - Residential Conservation Zone; and/or
3. The property is located within or adjacent to the Mockingbird Canyon, Woodcrest, Prenda, Alessandro, Tequesquite or Springbrook Arroyos, a blue line stream identified on USGS maps, a waterway or wetland area.

The environmental review process addresses such items as the degree to which the proposed grading blends with the surroundings; preservation of natural amenities such as trees, rock outcroppings, arroyos, ridgelines, etc.; provisions for erosion control; and other relevant environmental concerns. A Grading Ordinance (Title 17) has been adopted by the City which includes rules and regulations for hillside/arroyo grading in a manner which minimizes the adverse effects of grading on natural landforms, vegetation, wildlife communities, scenic qualities, and open space. A copy of the Grading Ordinance is included in this packet.

### **Arroyo Boundaries**

Boundaries of the most significant arroyos, including defined tributaries, have been plotted from available topographic data. Generally, arroyos include all areas with average natural slopes of 30% or greater. These maps have been adopted by the City Council and are now a discreet layer in the City's GIS. Detailed maps are available from the Planning Department. Generalized maps have been included within this packet for illustrative purposes; please do not use these maps to make specific determinations.

**APPLICATION SUBMITTAL:** Applications will be conditionally accepted on the presumption that the information, materials and signatures are complete and accurate. If the application is incomplete or inaccurate, your project may be delayed until corrections or additions are received.

The Planning Department may, during the course of its review of the application, determine that additional technical studies, such as biological and/or archeological reports, are required. Any required supplemental information must be provided to the Planning Department before the public comment period is initiated.

**APPLICATION PROCESSING:** The Grading Ordinance sets certain standards for grading, particularly in hillside areas. For instance, there are standards regarding the vertical heights of slopes and the area of level building pad. Chapter 17.32 provides that conditional exceptions to the standards may be granted by the Zoning Administrator. However, in certain cases, notably for level building pad area, the Zoning Administrator's authority to grant exceptions is limited to a certain percentage over the standard. Exceptions beyond that limit may only be approved by the Planning Commission or City Council. Please refer to the attached Grading Ordinance for further details, or consult with the Planning Department. The environmental review process for a grading plan can be handled administratively by the Planning Department except in the following instances:

1. The proposed grading plan is associated with another discretionary permit, such as a variance, tract map, conditional use permit, etc. If the grading plan is associated a discretionary permit, the board or commission will review the grading plan along with the related discretionary permit.
2. The Planning Department refers a grading plan to a board or commission if: unique environmental circumstances are associated with either the site or the grading plan; the board or commission has particular expertise that would be important in reviewing the grading plan; there is substantial public controversy regarding the impacts of the grading plan; or there are exceptions to the Grading Ordinance which are requested beyond the limits permitted to be approved administratively.
3. The Mayor or any City Council member sets the staff environmental determination on the grading plan for City Council consideration.

Upon receipt of a complete and accurate application including applicable fees, Planning staff will review your application and prepare a staff report which will be mailed to you. Extra copies are available from the Planning & Building Department.

**TIME:** The initial review will be done within 60 days of submittal of a complete application.

**HEARINGS:** If a hearing is required, the applicant, a representative, or the legal owner should be present.

**APPEAL PROCESS:** If your request is denied, or if you disagree with any of the conditions of approval, you have the right to appeal. Appeal information is available from the Planning & Building Department, on the City website or in the final report.

**PLANNING FEES:** See Fee Schedule (*FILING FEES ARE GENERALLY NOT REFUNDABLE*)

**REQUIRED ITEMS FOR FILING** (The following checklist gives you the requirements for application):

Following first check of the grading plan by the Public Works Department, the following must be submitted to the Planning Department for environmental review:

- Completed Application Form**
- Completed Environmental Information Form**
- Three copies of the grading plan** at engineering scale of not less than 1 inch equals 40 feet folded to a size not exceeding 8-1/2" x 14". Grading plans are to be stamped and signed by a Registered Civil Engineer or signed by a Registered Architect if the plans propose regular grading involving earthwork quantities that total less than 5,000 cubic yards. Grading plans submitted for environmental review must include the information required by Section 17.20.010 of the Grading Ordinance plus the following additional information:
  - The level area (square footage) of all proposed pads;
  - Natural slope of graded area for each lot excluding driveways;
  - All lot sizes;
  - Identification of all blue line streams and/or major arroyos, including the location of the arroyo boundaries as shown on Exhibits A-F of the Grading Ordinance and required 50 foot setback. Note: Should the site include a blue line stream or involve any other issue that requires State agency review, State law requires a 30-day review period for the Initial Study.
- One (1) completed **Grading Standards Exception Justification Form** for all deviations from the adopted grading standards included in Chapter 17.28 of the Grading Ordinance. A copy of this form is included in this packet.
- One (1) copy of the grading plan reduced to an 8 1/2" x 11" size. See Instructions for Preparation of Reduced Graphics (attached) for acceptable types of graphic reductions.
- One (1) copy of the **preliminary soils report**.

**AFTER APPROVAL:**

- Two (2) copies of the revised grading plan showing compliance with approved mitigation measures