



Study Session: Planning 101 (Navigating the Development Review Process)

Salinas Planning Commission - October 15, 2025

Son Pham-Gallardo – Senior Planner

Training/Study Sessions

- 10/1/25 - Overview of Planning Document Hierarchy/Zoning Code Update Engagement Plan (Presented by Jonathan Moore, APPI Senior Planner)
- 10/15/25 - Planning 101 (Presentation by Son Pham-Gallardo, Current Planning, Senior Planner)
- 11/5/25 - Role of the Planning Commission (Presentation by Chris Callahan, City Attorney)

Overview of Current Planning 101

Current Planning in the Community Development Department focuses on process and review of development applications to ensure compliance with the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance and other applicable plans, regulations and standards.

Additionally, Current Planning manages the Cannabis regulations and conducts environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Terminology: Permits & Land Use Entitlements

Permits: These are official approvals issued by governmental authorities that allow individuals or businesses to engage in specific activities, such as construction, modification, or demolition. Permits ensure compliance with health, safety, and building code standards. Common types of permits include building permits and occupancy permits.

Land Use Entitlements: This term refers to the legal rights granted to property owners or developers to use land for specific purposes, such as residential, commercial, or industrial development. The entitlement may often involve public hearings and community engagement, allowing stakeholders to voice their opinions on proposed developments. In some cases, environmental analysis under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) would be required.

Types of Applications:

Permit Applications

- Administrative Permit – no construction, occupancy only
- City Report – transfer of real estate property – residential
- Commercial
- Demolition
- Electrical
- Mechanical
- Mixed Use
- Plumbing
- Reroofing
- Residential
- Revision
- Solar
- Sign Permit



Land Use Entitlement Applications

- General Plan Amendment
- Zoning Code Amendment
- Variance
- Planned Unit Development Permit
- Tentative Map
- Parcel Map
- Conditional Use Permit
- Site Plan Review
- Temporary Use of Land Permit
- Home Occupation Permit
- Master Sign Plan and Sign Permit



Examples of Land Use Entitlement Applications:

Site Plan Review: Streamlined administrative review process, verifying compliance with zoning code, design and development standards.

Examples: Amazon warehouse, ag cooler, or remodel and tenant improvement/conversion of a florist shop to a dental office.

Conditional Use Permit: Review under land use and development regulations necessary to achieve the purpose of the Zoning Code by establishing procedures for approval (subject to CEQA).

Examples: Off-Sale Alcohol Related Use, Outdoor Storage, or Commercial Recreation (billiard parlor, health and fitness club).

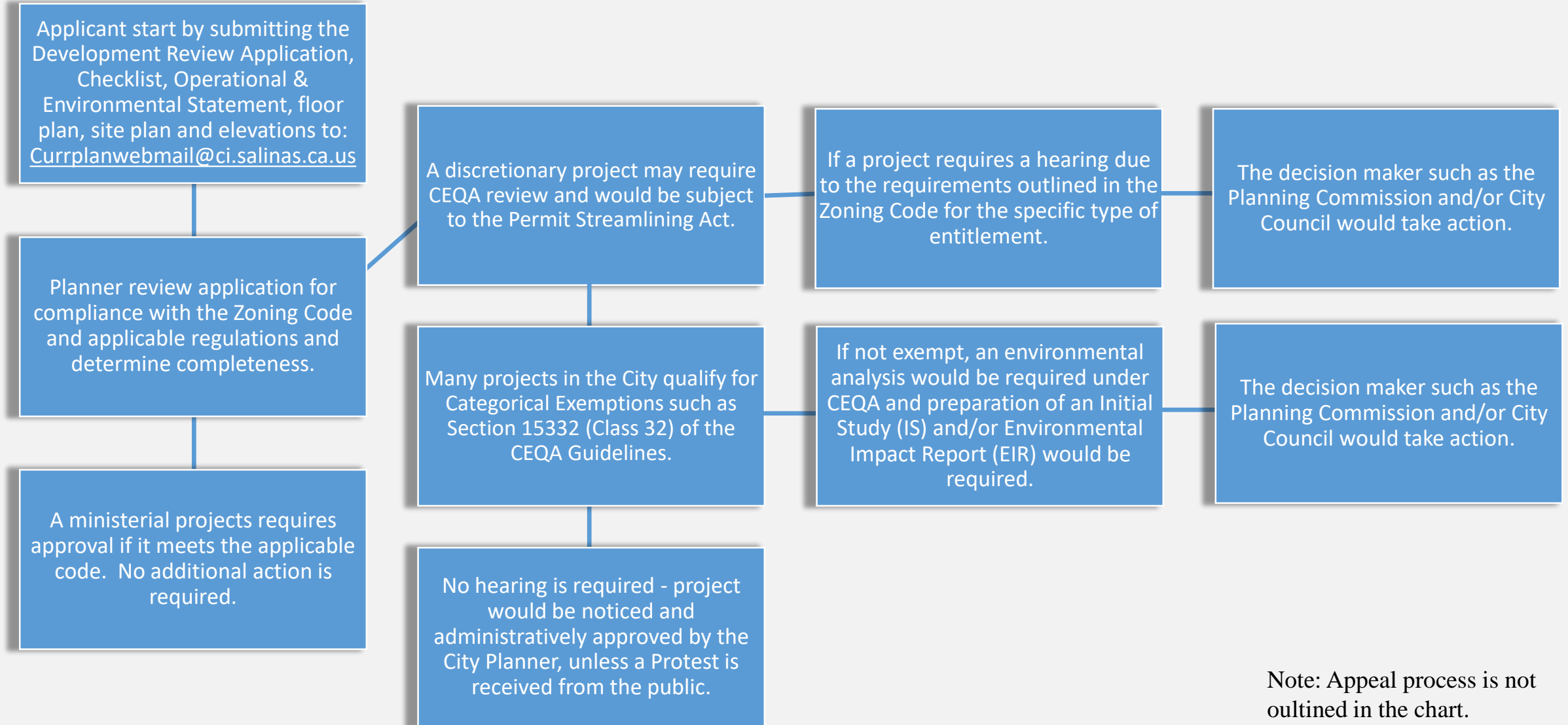
Planned Unit Development Permits: Process for development of land to ensure orderly and thorough planning review procedures that will result in quality urban design (subject to CEQA). Project involving alternative standards.

Examples: Small lot subdivision with reduced setbacks, or mixed-use development with alternative development standards.

Land Use Entitlement Application Process:

1. ***Where to Start?*** Applicants start by completing the Development Review Application, Checklist and Operational/Environmental Statement. The application should be accompanied by plans (site plan, floor plans, and elevations).
2. ***Who do they submit it to?*** Applications are submitted to: Curplanwebmail@ci.salinas.ca.us.
3. ***Who will process the application?*** Once submitted, a planner will review the application for compliance with the Zoning Code and other applicable regulations. The planner will look at the use classification table and development standards table for the applicable zoning district. Depending on the type of application, the planner would review the application (development projects) for “completeness” subject to the Permit Streamlining Act. The Permit Streamlining Act ensure that the government jurisdiction has 30 days after an application is submitted in which to inform the applicant of whether the application is complete.
4. ***What is a ministerial vs. a discretionary action?*** A ministerial action would not require environmental review under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) nor would it be subject to the Permit Streamlining Act. Ministerial projects require approval if it meets the applicable code. However, if it’s a discretionary permit, then it would require CEQA review, and would be subject to the Permit Streamlining Act.
5. ***When does a project require a public notice and a public hearing?*** A project would go to hearing depending on the requirements outlined in the zoning code for that specific type of entitlement. For example, the Zoning Code specifies that the City Planner has the authority to approve a Conditional Use Permit for certain types of alcohol related uses.
6. ***What is categorical exemption?*** Most projects do not require a public hearing because they are considered “exempt” under CEQA. CEQA guidelines include categorical exemptions, such as the infill development exemption (CEQA Exemption 15332).

Application Process:



Note: Appeal process is not outlined in the chart.

State Driven Regulations/Housing Crisis Act of 2019

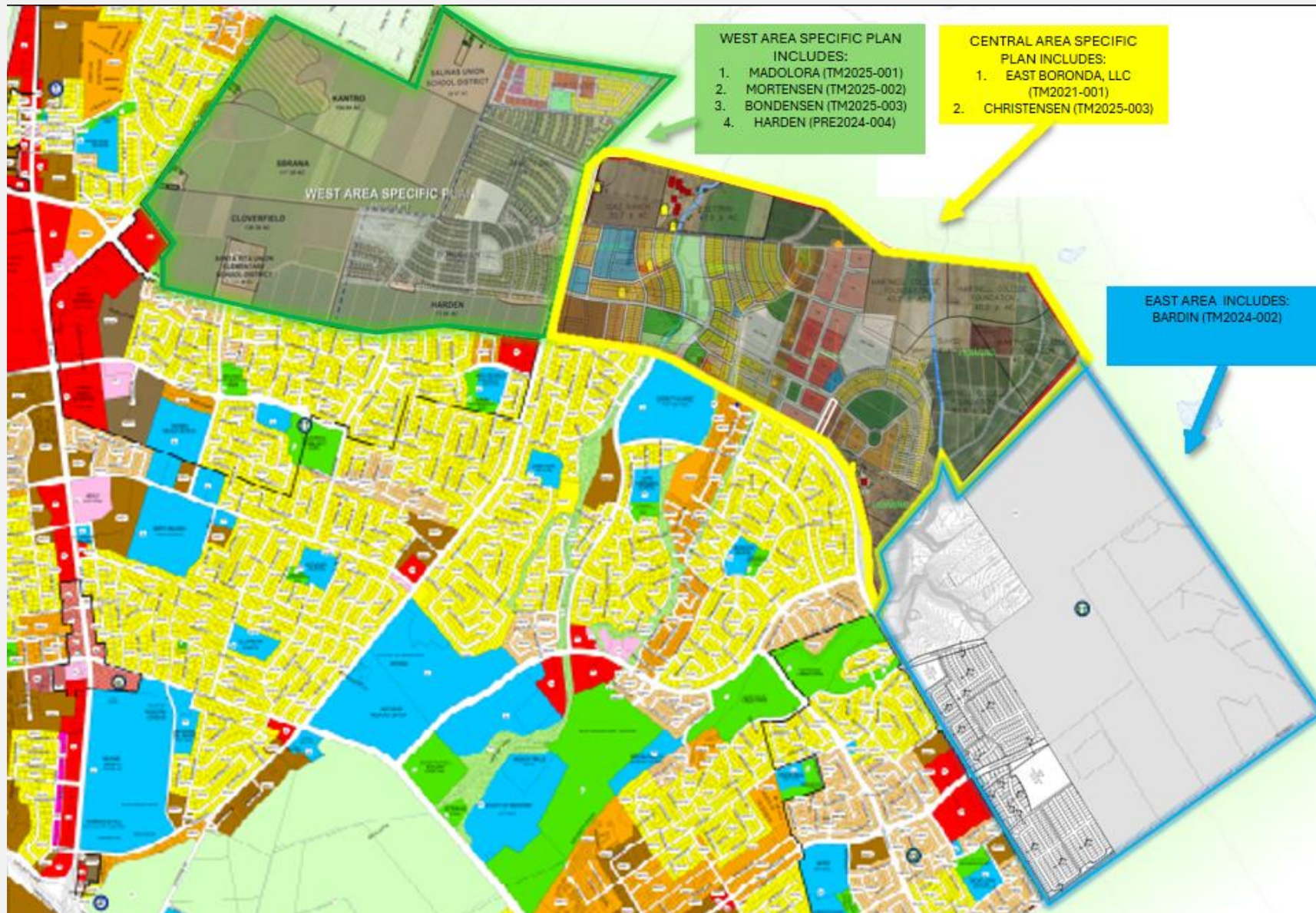
SB330

SB9

SB35

AB130

SB131



Questions