

Commonly Used Words & Definitions

Advanced Planning

Advanced Planning focuses on the long range needs of Mill Valley as identified in the [General Plan](#). Advanced Planning monitors the current and future development of the City by implementing programs and policies identified in the General Plan, as well as updating the General Plan as needed. Advanced Planning staff is responsible for the preparation and processing of ordinances, General Plan amendments and other planning documents, such as [Zoning Map](#) Amendments and corridor projects such as the [Miller Avenue Streetscape](#) Project. These planners also participate in regional planning efforts as well.

Current Planning

Current Planning guides the City's development by assuring compliance of all projects with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Planners oversee development projects of widely varying scales across the City while seeking to strike a healthy balance between the needs of residents and businesses to maintain the City's character and sustainability

Current Planners processes planning applications for residential and commercial properties within the City limits. Activities include the development or renovation of a property, variances, conditional use permits, and subdivisions. Current Planning staff also provides public assistance for planning and zoning questions by phone and at the public counter.

Easement

An easement is a legal right to cross, enter or otherwise be allowed on private property. A 'utility easement' can contain electrical, water or sewer lines. An 'access easement' allows other parties to cross one property to access another, typically present when one property does not have street frontage. See additional information below on easements.

General Plan

The State of California requires that each City have a long-range plan for its physical development through the adoption of a General Plan. The General Plan is a comprehensive document consisting of text, maps and exhibits that describe goals, objectives and policies for future development. Any new development is intended to conform with these new goals, objectives and policies.

There are seven elements required by the State of California to be included in the General Plan, although additions are allowable. These elements are as follows:

- **Land Use** -- This chapter designates the general distribution, location and extent of the uses of land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings, and other categories of public/private uses.
- **Circulation** -- This chapter identifies the general location and extent of the existing and proposed major roads, highways, trails, railroads, public transit routes and stations, and other public utilities and public facilities.
- **Housing** -- This chapter identifies the existing and projected housing needs for the city. It establishes goals, objectives, policies and programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing to meet the needs of all

economic segments of the economy. The housing element is one of the seven mandated elements of the local general plan. Housing element law, enacted in 1969, mandates that local governments adequately plan to meet the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community. By law the Housing Element must be updated every 3 years.

- **Open Space** -- This chapter details plans and measures for the preservation of open space for natural resources, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and public health, safety and welfare.
- **Conservation** -- This chapter provides for the conservation, development and use of natural resources such as water, forests, soils, air, rivers, lakes, harbors, fisheries, minerals and wildlife.
- **Safety** -- This chapter establishes standards and plans for emergency preparedness to protect the community from natural hazards such as fire, flooding, and earthquakes. There are also provisions for the identification of these hazards that municipalities must consider when making land use decisions.
- **Noise** -- This element examines the sources and impacts of unwanted sounds that disrupt the physical health, psychological stability, social cohesion, property values, and economic stability of the general public. It serves as a guide for land use policies and other decisions regarding proposals may effect the sound environment.

Municipal Code

The Municipal Code is the set of laws for the City of Mill Valley. The Municipal Code covers all aspects of City regulations, including zoning and various development related requirements.

All zoning district standards are included in the Municipal Code. In addition, standards for development and design review, parking, signs, variances and other similar topics are included in the Municipal Code.

Other City regulations included in the Municipal Code, include subdivision requirements, business license regulations, street, water and sewer standards and parking requirements.

Setback

A setback is the area adjacent to the property line where no buildings are permitted to be located. See additional information below on setbacks.

Zoning/Zoning Map

Zoning is a key tool for carrying out planning and land use policy within the City. Zoning shapes the look and feel of the city by establishing the size and use of buildings, where they are located and, in large measure, the densities of the city's neighborhoods.

The [zoning map](#) show the locations and boundaries of zoning districts, including single family residential districts, multifamily residential districts and commercial districts. Special overlay districts and historic overlay districts are also identified on the map. Identifying the zoning district of your property on the map can assist in determining zoning regulations that is applicable to your property.