

DRAFT

# RESIDENTIAL DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

For the Unincorporated Communities of West Alameda County



TASK FORCE MEETING  
October 7, 2010



Kahn  
Mortimer  
Associates  
PLANNING • ARCHITECTURE

**DYETT & BHATIA**  
Urban and Regional Planners

# Tonight's Meeting

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- *Task Force Consensus on Public Review Draft*
- *Continued Discussion of Existing County Procedures, Issues and Options and Recommendation on Alternatives for Administering Design Review*
- *Next Steps*

## Key Components of Design Review Process

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- ✓ Objectives—Desired outcomes
- ✓ Applicability—Types or categories of projects that require design review
- ✓ Design standards
- ✓ Design guidelines
- Responsibility—Parties involved in process and their respective roles and responsibilities
- Process and procedures—When does design review occur? How are decisions made?

# Design Review Roles and Responsibilities

- Who is involved in design review?
  - *Staff*
  - *Planning Commission*
  - *Board of Zoning Adjustments*
  - *Public*
  - *Other?*
- Assignment of responsibility by project type or category
  - *Alterations and additions—single family, multi-family, mixed-use*
  - *New single-family homes*
  - *Land divisions—parcel maps, tentative maps*
  - *New multi-family and mixed use projects*
- Role of respective authorities
  - *Review and recommend*
  - *Decisions*
  - *Appeals*

## Design Review Process and Procedures

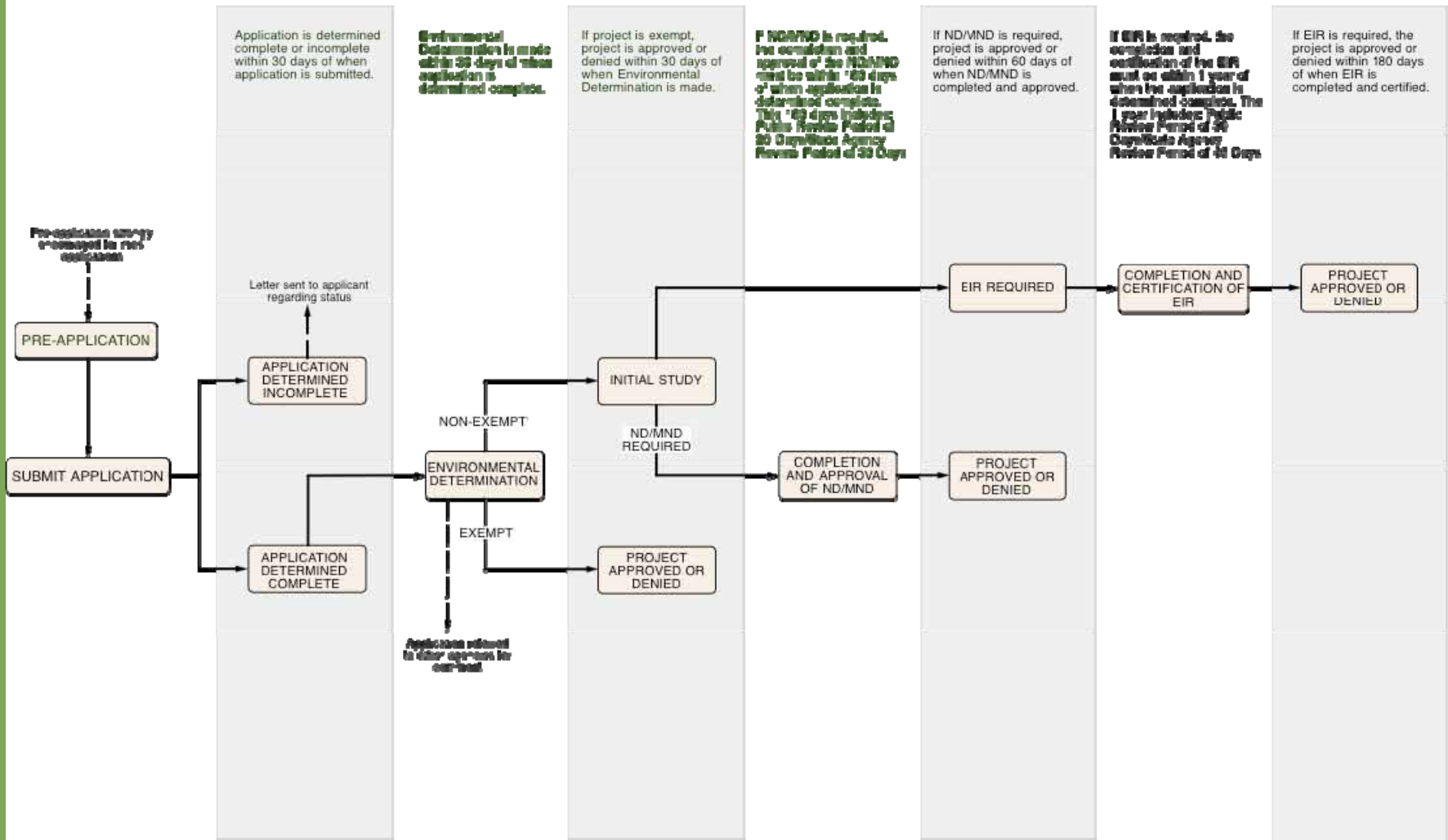
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- Application and review
- Interdepartmental and procedural coordination
- Public notice and review
- Decision-making
- Enforcement

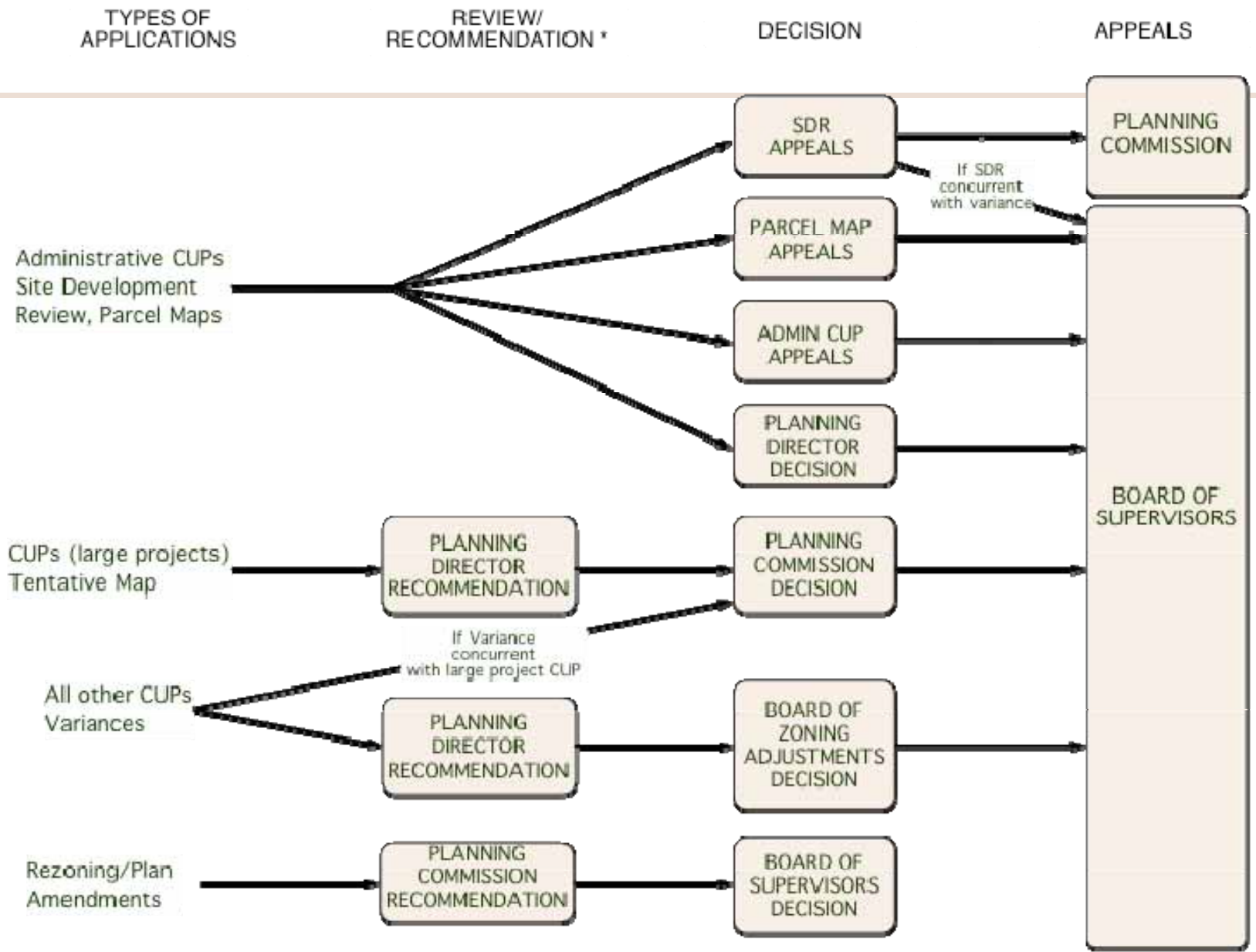
# Current Procedures

- *Public Notice*
  - Sign posted on-site visible to passersby
  - Mailed notice to owners and residents within 500 feet or 1,000 feet at Planning Director's discretion
- *Responsibility*
  - Director conducts site development review, approves plans in consultation with county surveyor, building official, public works, other interested public agencies
- *Application Requirements*
  - Preparation by licensed civil engineer, land surveyor, architect, landscape architect or registered building designer
  - Contents:
    - *Lot dimensions in distance*
    - *Location, size, height, and use of existing and proposed buildings*
    - *Dimensions of yards and open spaces between buildings;*
    - *Fences and walls—their location, height and materials;*
    - *Parking and circulation—location, number, dimensions, ingress and egress, internal circulation, design, and improvements;*
    - *Street dedications and improvements—existing, and proposed, if any;*
    - *Other data Director requires to make the required findings.*

# APPLICATION PROCESS



# APPROVAL PROCESS



\* Castro Valley residential projects with more than 4 units and commercial development require CVMAC review and recommendation.



# Proposed Multi-Track Design Review Process

- *Exempt—Staff-level compliance review*
  - Construction not requiring building permit
  - Interior alterations
  - New construction on a lot with design review approval and determination of compliance with approved plans
  - Alterations, additions, or construction subject to review by the Alameda County Parks, Recreation, and Historical Commission or other body
  - Exempt signs and awnings
  - Required landscaping under 2,500 sf total area required with alteration of existing structure
  - Any project consistent with previous design review approval, ADA compliant or per other government requirements
  - Anything else Director deems to have a negligible visible effect

# Proposed Multi-Track Design Review Process

- *Track 1—Staff-level ministerial checklist review*
  - Minor additions/alterations not exceeding 1,000 square feet (500 in A District), or 10 percent increase in floor area, whichever is less.
  - Remodel of exterior commercial façade.
  - New accessory structure that does not exceed 400 square feet
  - Single-family detached residential structure on a single lot, detached accessory unit on a lot with an existing single family detached structure, or attached duplex structure not exceeding 5,000 sf
  - Modification of more than 2,500 square feet of total landscaped area or any reduction in landscaped area of mixed-use or multi-family residential projects.
  - Signs, awnings, and fences not eligible for exemption

# Proposed Multi-Track Design Review Process

- *Track 2—Review by Director or in-house architectural consultant*
  - Any Track 1 project more than 50% taller or with FAR more than 50% greater than average of residential structures on abutting parcels
  - Any residential or mixed-use project that exceeds Track 1 thresholds or “fails” checklist review
  - Any Track 1 project that requires administrative CUP or parcel map



# Proposed Multi-Track Design Review Process

- *Track 3—Review by Planning Commission or other body to be determined*
  - Any residential or mixed-use project that exceeds Track 2 thresholds
  - All tentative maps (except for condominium conversions with no physical alterations)
  - Any project that requires a use permit or variance for construction and exceeds Track 2 thresholds
  - All other applications subject to design review.

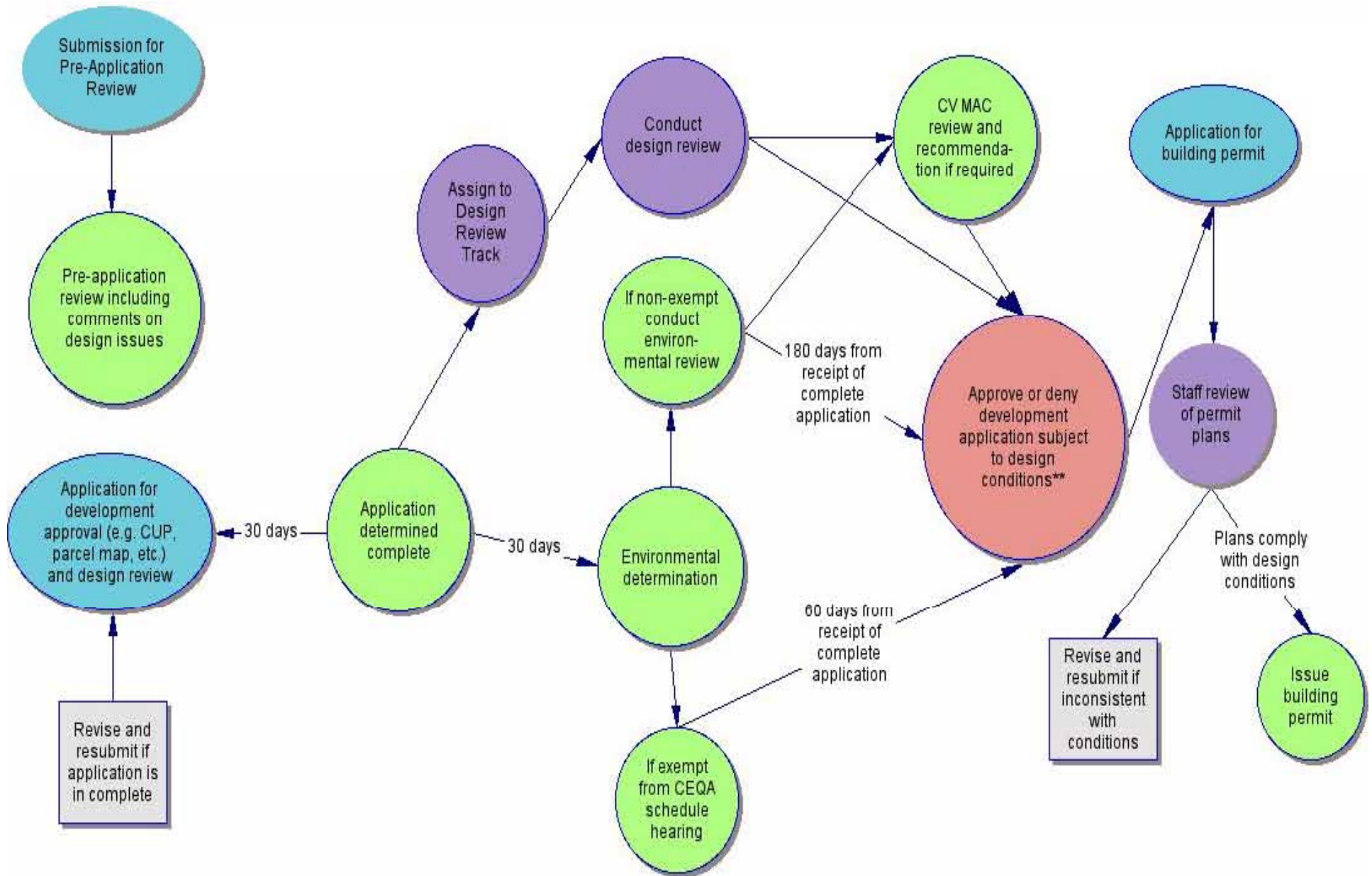


# Design Review Checklist

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- Ministerial (i.e. non-discretionary checklist) review of single-family detached structures on existing lots
- Projects must meet all zoning standards
- Points awarded for projects that exceed minimum standards
- Projects must achieve minimum points in each category and minimum total score for approval through checklist review process
- Projects that don't pass checklist review require Track 2 discretionary review

# PROPOSED DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS FOR TRACK 2 AND 3 APPLICATIONS



# Options and Alternatives

- **Pre-Application Review**
  - *Preliminary non-binding review by advisory and/or decision-making bodies*
  - *Focus on features that will define character—height, bulk, building and parking location*
- **Issues**
  - *Additional cost to applicant and County*
  - *Public review role*
  - *Possible reluctance to devote time to review prior to “real” application*
  - *Comments not binding on applicant or County*
  - *Typically available only for larger, more controversial, or more visible projects*



# Options and Alternatives

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- **Process Informed by Design Professionals**
  - *Train existing staff*
  - *Create new positions requiring design expertise*
  - *Staff consultant with design expertise*
  - *Planning Commission/BZA design review sub-committee*
  - *Amend ordinance to require some Commission/BZA members to have design expertise*
- **Issues**
  - *Cost to County and/or applicant*
  - *Funding sources*
  - *Recruiting Commission and BZA members with requisite experience*



# Options and Alternatives

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- **Enforcement**

- *Reviewing proposed plans for compliance with standards and guidelines*
- *Procedures for reviewing changes required or authorized on appeal*
- *Ensuring that projects are constructed in compliance with design approval*
- *Establishing systems for recording and tracking conditions of approval*

- **Issues**

- *Cost to County and/or applicant for additional plan check and inspection services*
- *Balancing design objectives with other County goals (e.g. fire safety, housing affordability, etc.) and political considerations*

# Next Steps

Public Review

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