



How can I get involved in helping plan my community?

Public meetings on issues ranging from individual development projects to changes to countywide policies and regulations are held several times a month, and are always open for public comment. Comment can be made on specific items under consideration at the meeting, but can also be made on any other issue important to the person commenting. You also don't need to comment to watch - these meetings can be attended in-person and are many are also streamed online as well. Meeting dates and agendas can be found on the County's website.

Community engagement meetings are periodically held throughout the county to gather input on major issues - keep an eye on the department website for more information.

The Planning Commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors - you can reach out to your Supervisor to request consideration if you wish to serve. You may also be eligible to run for office to serve on the Board of Supervisors itself!

What do Planners do?

Planners ensure that development and land use in the county takes into account environmental impacts, long-term goals, and the disparate interests of all parties in the community. They maintain the General Plan, Zoning Code, and other such regulations, and evaluate development projects as they are proposed to guarantee consistency with these policies and goals. Planners perform research on projects and shepherd them through the public review process, consulting with and synthesizing comments from other agencies and members of the public and presenting them in hearings before elected or appointed decisionmakers. Planners are also charged with maintaining the public record on how these decisions were made and what went into them.

This work helps to create communities that are resilient, inclusive, and economically strong, while preserving the area's environmental and cultural heritage for current residents, visitors, and future generations.

Mendocino County Planning Landing Page



County of Mendocino

— *California*

Planning & Building Services

Planning Division

FAQs



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Fort Bragg, CA 95437
707-964-5379

What is a General Plan?

The General Plan is the County's blueprint for meeting the community's long-term vision for the future. All other land use policies and regulations enacted by the County need be grounded in the General Plan. Mendocino County's General Plan is accessible at the planning department's website. Every city and county in California is required to have a General Plan and periodically update it. Implementation of the General Plan ensures future development is consistent with the community's goals and that adequate services are available to meet the needs of all.

What is Zoning?

Zoning is the principal way the General Plan policies are implemented. The county is divided into different Zoning Districts to designate what development is best suited to each area. Specific land uses and standards for each Zoning District are found in the Mendocino County Zoning Ordinance, also known as the Zoning Code. The Zoning Code, like the General Plan, is maintained by the Board of Supervisors, the elected governing body of the County.

County Zoning Code



What can I do with my property?

The first step in determining what you can do with your property is finding out what zoning district it is in. The easiest way to do this is by checking the online [Zoning Lookup](#) or [Zoning Web Map](#), both available from the planning department's website. You can also reach out to the department directly and staff can assist you.

Once you know your property's zoning, you can find what regulations apply by reviewing the relevant chapter in the Zoning Code. This will tell you what can be done on your property, and what permits will be required (if any). Other chapters will go into more detail on standards for specific land uses. If you need help interpreting the code or are unsure about something, department staff are available to assist by phone, mail, email, or in person at their offices in Ukiah and Fort Bragg. If you'd like a more formal determination on a specific use, to present to investors or for another reason, you can also request a Zoning Letter or Pre-Application Conference where, for a fee, County Staff will research any specific areas of concern you may have in greater depth. Changes to a properties zoning are possible, but this is a lengthy process and generally not done on an individual property level.

Permitted Uses

Some uses are permitted "by right," requiring no additional permits from the County. Agriculture is often one such use. These will be listed in each Zoning District's chapter in the Zoning Code, near the top. Please note that even when built in support of a by-right use, new structures or grading generally still require Building Permits, though there are some exceptions.

Ministerial vs. Discretionary Permits

Some permits, like Building Permits, are *ministerial*. These have specific standards defined in the zoning code. If your project meets all these standards, it gets approved. These approvals are done by County staff and in some cases can even be done over the counter.

Other permits, like Use Permits, are *discretionary*. These require someone (often the Planning Commission) to make a determination on whether certain findings can be made that the project supports the County's overall goals, based on the facts of that individual case. When you apply for one of these permits, County staff will review it, refer it out for comments by other agencies and groups, and prepare a Staff Report recommending approval or denial. These Staff Reports, and most comments and materials that inform them, are public records, and may be accessed by anyone for any project upon request. Recent ones are also posted on the County website. Once a Staff Report has been prepared, a public hearing is usually held where Staff presents their recommendation to the deciding body and the applicant has time to present as well. There is also a public comment period, where any member of the public can raise concerns or speak in support of the project, either by submitting written comment or speaking at the hearing itself.

Once all comments and material has been heard, the deciding body publicly deliberates and makes its decision on whether to approve the project. Approvals of discretionary permits often come with conditions to ensure environmental protection, community safety, or other goals of development in the county.