

# **PLANNING - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **MENDOCINO COUNTY PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES**

### **1. I get two tax bills and have two separate Assessor's parcel numbers for my property -- do I have two separate salable parcels?**

The fact that an area of land has multiple Assessor's parcel numbers does not mean that there are multiple salable and developable lots. The Assessor assigns parcel numbers solely for assessment purposes and a single lot may have two or more Assessor's parcel numbers.

### **2. Can I put a second residential dwelling on my property?**

A second dwelling unit is allowed on most property outside of the Coastal Zone.<sup>1</sup> If you intend to use a septic system and onsite well, a minimum of one acre is required, except in Redwood Valley 1.2 acres are required unless a connection to the Redwood Valley County Water District is obtained. If you intend to use a septic system and public water supply, a minimum of 24,000 square feet are required. You should check with the County Division of Environmental Health regarding proof of water and sewage disposal requirements.

### **3. What are the restrictions on fences?**

Solid, view-obscuring fences are limited to 3 ½ feet in height in the front yard setback. A building permit is required for a fence over 6 feet high. A Coastal Development Permit may be required if the property is in the Coastal Zone.

### **4. Where can I obtain the County General Plan or zoning ordinance?**

The General Plan and Coastal Element, and Zoning Ordinances are available for purchase at the Ukiah or Fort Bragg offices of the Department of Planning and Building Services. Call for the current fees. General Plan and zoning maps are sold separately. The General Plan can be viewed at the County library or on the Internet at <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/planning>. The Zoning Ordinances can also be viewed at <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/planning>.

### **5. Does the County enforce the covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&R's) in my subdivision?**

Many subdivisions in the County are privately regulated through CC&R's. The County does not enforce these restrictions established by the subdivider to regulate development within the subdivision. Enforcement is a civil matter among the affected lot owners.

### **6. What is the address of my property?**

County Code establishes the Department of Planning and Building Services as responsible for assigning addresses throughout the unincorporated area of the County. You should call 707-463-4281 with your Assessor's parcel number to obtain the address of your property.

### **7. My property is located on the east side of Highway 1 – am I in the Coastal Zone?**

The Coastal Zone boundary is not a standard distance from the ocean. The eastern boundary of the Coastal Zone varies from Highway 1 to several miles inland. In general, areas near rivers and streams are more likely to be within the Coastal Zone. A very generalized location map of the Coastal Zone appears earlier in this chapter. You should check with a Planner in our Ukiah or Fort Bragg office for precise locations.

### **8. What is the difference between the General Plan and Zoning?**

<sup>1</sup> A second dwelling is allowed in limited areas of the Coastal Zone; however a coastal development permit may be required-check with the Planning staff in the Fort Bragg office.

The General Plan is the County's long-term plan for land use development in the County, including land use densities and uses based on environmental resources, physical hazards and social and economic goals. Zoning sets forth the specific lot sizes, land uses and other land use standards for each parcel in the County. They are both important in guiding development, to varying degrees depending on what you want to do.

**9. What permits are needed to build my project or open my business?**

*The Permit Place* binder lists all County permits that may be required. County staff will assist you in identifying permits required for your project. Permits commonly required by state, federal or local agencies and contacts will also be listed in *The Permit Place* binder.

**10. What information should I have when I call or come in regarding building a new business or other project?**

At minimum, provide the Assessor's parcel number (the number can be obtained from your tax bill) and site address if there is one. Be able to state precisely what you want to do, including your ultimate plans. A plot plan is useful. County staff will direct you further.

**11. What is the difference between a dwelling and a guest cottage?**

A "Guest Cottage" has no kitchen, may not exceed 640 square feet and is used by the family or guests without compensation. A second unit is a detached or attached independent dwelling unit on the same parcel as the existing dwelling.

**12. Are fees refundable if my project is denied?**

No. Fees represent the cost of processing your application. If you withdraw the project application during the process, you may request a refund of the unused portion.

**13. Do I need a permit to remove gravel on my property?**

Outside the Coastal Zone, a permit is not required unless the removal involves more than one acre or more than 1,000 cubic yards of material. If the removal exceeds these amounts cumulatively, a use permit and reclamation plan will need to be secured. Any stream disturbance, no matter how large or small, will require a stream alteration agreement from the Department of Fish and Game and may require a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers.

**14. May I live in a travel trailer while I build my home?**

Yes, you may occupy a travel trailer, provided you have a valid building permit for the proposed residence and you secure an Administrative Permit for the "temporary occupancy of a travel trailer while constructing a residence." The permit is valid for two years unless renewed.