

# A GENERAL GUIDE TO CEQA



Here you will find a very brief and basic information to general concepts and popular terminologies you may encounter during or considering the CEQA Process for your project.

## What is CEQA?

“CEQA” stands for California Environmental Quality Act. It is a statute that requires state and local agencies to diagnose the significant environmental impacts of certain development and project actions in order to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.

## First step in CEQA :



## Does your project require CEQA ?

The smoothest and most accurate way to identify whether your project or development will need further CEQA evaluation, is to start with a “Pre-application” meeting with the Planning Department and fill out an [Environmental Information Form](#). The Environmental Information Form will aid in determining if your project is a CEQA project.

Lead Agency determines if project requires CEQA action.

Agency determines CEQA process applies to project.

If the agency determines that the action is not a project or is ministerial no further CEQA action is required.

If an agency determines that their action, or a private action, is a project for CEQA procedures, the next step is to determine if the project is possibly exempt for the process.

**-CEQA IS NOT ACTIVATED-**

**-CEQA IS ACTIVATED-**

## The Purposes of CEQA are to:

1. Provide information about the environmental effects of projects.
2. Identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or reduced.
3. Prevent significant environmental damage through mitigation measures or alternatives.
4. Disclose the reasons why a project was approved despite significant environmental impacts.

## Initial Study Step 2:

The process may begin with an Initial Study (IS). The IS is a preliminary analysis which is prepared to determine the relative environmental impacts associated with a proposed project.

## Notice of Exemption:

Agency determines that project is possibly exempt, then Lead Agency files Notice of Exemption (NOE) which is a brief statement of reasons supporting the finding that there is no possibility that the activity in question (project) may have a significant effect on the environment.

**Next Page:**

## Initial Study Step 2 Continued:

It is designed as a measuring mechanism to determine if a project will have a significant adverse effect on the environment, thereby triggering the need to prepare a full environmental Impact Report (EIR). It also functions as an evidentiary document containing information which supports conclusions that the project will not have a significant environmental impact or that the impacts can be mitigated to a "Less Than Significant" or "No Impact" level. \*Initial Studies may not be required, if the lead agency can clearly determine that an EIR will be necessary.



Planning Department

[Please click here for the link to the Environmental Impact Form.](#)

## Step 3: Determination:

The Lead Agency determines the appropriate environmental documents (ND, MND or EIR) required for every unique project. If an EIR is required, the Agency will identify what impact issues are to be covered and made available to the public, if a "Negative Declaration" (ND) document is prepared after the "Initial Study" that means no environmental review is needed- and if a "Mitigated Negative Review" is prepared, then that means certain steps must be taken but no further review is necessary.

## Negative Declaration:

Upon completion of an initial study, a "Negative Declaration" is a document that suggests that there is no substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. The findings of the "Initial Study" are reviewed by the "Lead Agency" which is usually a local government entity that reviews the study of the proposed development or project a determines that it would have no effect on the environment and therefore the developer need not prepare and file an "environmental impact report."

## Mitigated Negative Declaration:

After an Initial Study is reviewed, if there are any potential or foreseeable environmental effects revisions can be made or mitigation measures can be implemented, and if these measures are able to be put into effect and will reduce all potentially significant impacts to less than significant level then a mitigated negative declaration can be declared.

## Environmental Impact Report

A study of all the factors which a land development or construction project would have on the environment in the area, including population, traffic, schools, fire protection, endangered species, archeological artifacts, and community beauty.