

Universal Planning Notification Community Outreach

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SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Universal Planning Notification (**UPN**) Project

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Mission Statement

“To create consistent notification standards of planning processes and improve opportunity for timely public review and input on land use decisions.”



Benefits of Current Processes

- Public notification for a wide variety of project types.
- Each notification requirement was drafted to deal with unique entitlement standards of each process.
- Variety of distribution methods and formats.
- Summarizes key information related to a project, including project description, entitlement process and hearing information (if applicable)
- Section 311/312 – plans included to facilitate understanding of proposal



Issues/Concerns with Current Processes

- Inconsistent notification standards.
- Overlapping requirements (one project may trigger several unique notification processes).
- Notices do not provide enough time to respond.
- Notices do not reach all the necessary parties.
- Non-synchronized timing standards.
- Dissimilar notice and poster formats (across application types).
- Notices do not provide enough information about project.
- Lack of predictable notification standards confuses staff and public alike.
- Resource consumption.
- Cost to City and Applicant.



Goals of Universal Planning Notification

- Maintain benefits of current processes.
- Consolidate notification processes.
- Improve consistency of notification standards, including: timing, content/format and type.
- Improve staff productivity and reduce waiting time for other projects in the pipeline.
- Create more predictable and consistent notification processes.
- Reduce resource consumption and manage costs.



Summary of Public Survey Results

- Online survey (available since May 6, 2009)
- 10 questions regarding existing and preferred notification processes
- Multiple choice and open-ended format
- Option to add name to contact list
- 13 respondents



Summary of Public Survey Results

Within the past year, respondents reported receiving or viewing the following notices:

75% - Public hearing notice

66% - Posting (public hearing or Section 311/312)

55% - Section 311/312 or environmental review notice

15% - Newspaper ad



Summary of Public Survey Results

Did notice help you understand the project?

Yes – 66%

No – 33%

If not, why?

“Too much ‘planner-ese’ up front - not clear and concise in common language.”

“Posted notices lack sufficient detail - it would be helpful if there was a pointer to a more detailed on-line document”

“Simplify notices to key information and decisions/actions to be taken plus clear contact info for follow-up.”



Summary of Public Survey Results

For Section 311/312 notices, what was more useful – plans or notice?

Plans – 66%

Notice – 33%

“Seeing the plans allows me to understand exactly what is going to be done.”

“Very helpful to have plans...’picture tells a 1,000 words.”

“BOTH are essential - the plans help make sense of the abbreviated information in the notice.”



Summary of Public Survey Results

What are the most important elements of notification? (ranked 1-5)

- 1) Mailed notice (plans) - 4.5/5
- 2) Mailed notice (description) – 3.5/5
- 3) Posted notice – 3.3/5
- 4) Newspaper ad – 1.3/5



Summary of Public Survey Results

For PUBLIC HEARING NOTICES, what is your preferred notification method?

Mailed notice – 30%

Mailed notice with link to website – 30%

Posted notice – 25%

Ad – 0%

All of the above – 15%



Summary of Public Survey Results

For SECTION 311/312 NOTICES, what is your preferred notification method?

Mailed notice – 45%

Mailed notice with link to website – 25%

Posted notice – 15%

Ad – 0%

All of the above – 15%



Summary of Public Survey Results

If plans were available online rather than mailed, how likely would you be to review them electronically?

Extremely likely/likely – more than 90%

Never - I don't have a computer – less than 10% (1 response)

“Posted on the web, no need for paper any more, waste of expenses and resources.”

“I am most likely to see a mailed notice and be informed of what is planned. A mailed postcard with a link to the website would be fine too, if it saves money for the city and applicant.”

“Many of my neighbors are not web oriented, so a mailed postcard w/link is inadequate.”



Summary of Public Survey Results

Other comments...

“Adequate notification to neighborhood organizations, our organizations info. was not updated consistently and was not maintained accurately in the planning dept. database.”

“The geographic area for my notifications seems to be incomplete. I get them for the north half of my neighborhood, but not the south half.”

“Average person does not know the decision nor its significance. Need more descriptive explanation of what is being proposed. Top of notice page needs to grab attention, i.e. ‘30-DAY NOTICE’”



Summary of Public Survey Results

Other comments...

“Web access to information is sufficient, mail a postcard with a 29 cent stamp to owners and renters in area with link to view info.”

“Online is fine if I am notified by email or postcard of the need to look at the website to see a proposed project.”

“8 x 10 notices only serve to tell public something is up and then they have to go look it up. Information on website is basically non-existent. Nothing on Planning website and info on DBI is minimal at best.”

“OK, I would be likely to view [online], but had to point out that if I didn't have a computer, there's no way I could be filling this out now. There are people who do not have computers, and they tend to be poor, minorities, or other disenfranchised groups.”



Summary of Public Survey Results

Other comments...

*“Re: online plans - still need option to request hardcopy of plans on request to case planner.
Include CACs in noticing standards (if applicable to project location).”*

“Include larger boundary notification for state institution projects, and ensure adequate tenant organization notification to large properties since landlords do not notify tenants of scoping meetings or permits/projects in our neighborhoods.”



Summary of Public Survey Results

Other comments...

“Ah, finally. I was always told this couldn't be done!”



Notification Radius Comparison

- GIS survey of 21 properties in a variety of zoning districts (RH, RC, NC, C-3, MUR) to determine median number of owners and occupants within 150' and 300' of a property.

Radius	Owners	Occupants	Total
150'	40	106	152
300'	114	243	353



Planning Department Notification Statistics

- Annual notifications – more than 225,000 (est.)
- 2000-2009 – more than 2.2 million notices issued for project notification (est.)
- Annual cases (average of most common cases, 2001-2008):

Type	Number	Mailed Notice
Section 311/312	991	150' – owner/occupant
Environmental Review	274	300' - owner
Discretionary Review	270	Adjacent properties
Variance	246	300' owner
Conditional Use	163	300' owner
Section 309/309.1 (Downtown/Rincon Hill)	16	300' owner
Section 321 (Office)	7	none



Notification Costs

Radius*	Notice	8.5x11 plans	11x17 plans	Labels
150' owner/occupant	\$127.28	\$239.26	\$563.02	\$185-200
300' owner	\$64.98	\$342.09	\$859.68	\$180
300' owner/occupant	\$201.21	\$466.39	\$1,218.28	Up to \$600

Formulas:

Notice = .44 (postage) + .10 (paper) + .03 (envelope)

8.11x11 Plans = \$45 (base fee) + 22.50 (Board of Appeals Surcharge) x \$1.13 (postage/processing)

11x17 Plans = \$45 (base fee) + 22.50 (Board of Appeals Surcharge) x \$3.26 (postage/processing)

*Based on estimates from notification radius comparison.



Draft UPN Concepts - Overview

- Building Permit Application (Section 311/312) and Discretionary Review
- Public Hearings for Entitlements
- Environmental Review
- Preservation
- Text/Map Change
- Other Notifications
- General Standards



Draft UPN Concepts

Building Permit Application/Discretionary Review

- **Section 311/312** - 30 days - retain basic elements of current format (notice with numerical table and text description) - owner/occupant at 150' (change from linear to radius) - transition to online plans.
- **Mandatory and Staff-Initiated Discretionary Review** - 30 days - retain basic elements of current format (notice with numerical table and written description) - owner/occupant at 150' (change from linear to radius) - combined notice with DR hearing information - transition to online plans (see below).
- **Mandatory Discretionary Review (MCD)** - 30 days - retain basic elements of current format - owner/occupant at 300' - combined notice with DR hearing information.
- **Public-Initiated Discretionary Review Hearings** - 20 days - retain basic elements of current format. Adjacent owner/occupants.



Draft UPN Concepts

Building Permit Application/Discretionary Review (continued)

- **Reduced 311/312** - 10 days mailed and posted - adjacent property owners/occupants - same format as 311/312 notice - projects subject to reduced notification to be identified in ZA bulletin and consist of minor projects that currently trigger 311, but have limited impact, including:
 - 1) Deck triggering 311 notice because required firewall (except when the deck encroaches into the required rear yard via Section 136(c)(25))
 - 2) Deck on non-complying structure
 - 3) Lightwell that is visible from an offsite location



Draft UPN Concepts

Public Hearings for Entitlements

- **Conditional Use, Variance, Section 309/309.1 (Downtown), Section 321 (Office), etc.** - 20 days mailed and posted – add numerical table (where appropriate) to text description - owner/occupant @ 300' - online plans

Environmental Review

- Under review (may expand existing notice to owners *and occupants*)

Preservation

- Under review



Draft UPN Concepts

Text/Map Change

- Increase duration of mailed notice to 20 days.

Other Notifications

- **BBN** – Phase-out BBN requests as subscriptions expire. BBN notices pre-date Section 311/312 requirements and have been made obsolescent/redundant by these notification procedures.
- **Coastal Zone Permit** – apply Section 311/312 requirements
- **IMP** - Increase duration of mailed notice to 20 days.



Draft UPN Concepts

General Standards

Notices to contain...

- Title bar stating length of notification period (i.e. "30-Day Notice")
- Environmental review status/determination
- Results of Historic Resource Evaluation
- Plan Areas where appropriate (i.e. Bayview-Hunters Point, Market-Octavia, Rincon Hill, Eastern Neighborhoods, Balboa Park, Glen Park)
- Basics - project address, cross streets, block/lot, zoning, height/bulk district, existing/proposed use, multiple language (Spanish/Chinese) on how to get additional information.



Draft UPN Concepts

General Standards (continued)

- **Online Plans** - Available as required by project in .pdf format (submitted by applicant or scanned) with elevations and site plan only (no floor plans). Link to automatically expire at end of notification period.
- **Community/Neighborhood Groups** will continue to be added to mailing lists. Department will review/update Community Group list and poll groups regarding what notices they would like to receive (including option for email in-lieu of mailed notice where possible). Department has submittal proposal for GIS-based community group mailing list database/application to allow community groups to select boundaries by block (rather than current 35+ neighborhood boundaries which were established in 1988).
- **PACs** - Upon request, PACs will be added to relevant neighborhood mailing lists.



Draft UPN Concepts

General Standards (continued)

- **Newspaper Ads** - UPN does not propose additional newspaper ad requirements. Ads will continue to be provided on Department website and past ads will be archived where possible. Department will monitor any pending ballot measures to amend City Charter regarding ad requirements.
- **Reporting** – Department to investigate development online reporting mechanism to list newly submitted cases.
- **Guidelines/Training** - Develop procedures manual for new notification requirements and consolidate existing notification policies in one document. Perform training for all relevant staff in notification procedures.
- **Department of Building Inspection (DBI)** – Coordinate with DBI to investigate improved/consolidated notification processes.



Next Steps

- Informational hearing at Planning Commission – August 13, 2009
- Proposal to Planning Commission for initiation – September 2009



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