

SENIOR PLANNER

DEFINITION

Under general direction, to perform complex professional City planning functions and assignments; to develop planning studies, environmental reviews, community design, and general plan preparation and amendments; to assist with planning goals and policies formulation and implementation; to perform zoning enforcement; to explain planning and zoning ordinances, regulations, and policies to the public; and to do related work as required. Serves as Disaster Service Worker. FLSA Status: Exempt. Bargaining Group: Mid-Management Unit.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

This is the fully experienced journey level in the professional Planner class series, incumbents are expected to perform a board range of complex planning and zoning enforcement assignments. Incumbents perform the full scope of current and advanced planning work.

REPORTS TO

Community Development Director, or as assigned.

CLASSIFICATIONS SUPERVISED

Incumbents may provide work direction and coordination for technical planning support staff and less experienced professional planning personnel.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Duties may include, but are not limited to the following:

- All essential functions listed in the Associate Planner classification.
- Reliable and dependable attendance and punctuality.
- Leads and performs complex and high-level professional planning work in both current and long-range planning.
- Manages and coordinates major planning initiatives, including General Plan updates, Specific Plans, zoning code amendments, and strategic policy development.
- Conducts complex research, demographic analysis, and land use studies; synthesizes findings into planning recommendations and reports.
- Oversees the review and processing of advanced land use applications including subdivisions, rezonings, conditional use permits, and major development projects.
- Serves as project manager for high-profile and sensitive planning projects, including interdepartmental and interagency coordination.
- Prepares, reviews, and manages the preparation of staff reports, maps, exhibits, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation, and technical documents.
- Supervises and mentors planning staff.
- Assigns work, provides guidance, reviews performance, and ensures consistent application of policies and procedures.

- Interprets and applies state and local planning laws, zoning codes, subdivision regulations, environmental regulations, and development standards.
- Coordinates and facilitates public outreach efforts, stakeholder meetings, workshops, and community engagement processes.
- Presents recommendations and findings to the City Council, Planning Commission, and other advisory bodies.
- Prepares and delivers professional-level presentations at public meetings and hearings.
- Evaluates environmental impacts of proposed developments in compliance with CEQA.
- Prepares or oversees environmental documents such as Initial Studies, Negative Declarations, and Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs).
- Develops and drafts updates to zoning ordinances, development standards, design guidelines, and General Plan elements.
- Advises elected and appointed officials, senior management, and the public on planning-related policies and regulations.
- Responds to complex public inquiries, development proposals, and citizen concerns regarding planning policies, zoning requirements, and land use regulations.
- Investigates zoning violations and coordinates with code enforcement to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.
- Attends and may lead evening and weekend meetings, public hearings, and workshops as required.
- Stays current on planning trends, legislation, and best practices to inform policy and regulatory updates.
- Perform related duties as assigned.

Knowledge of:

- Correct English usage, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- General theory, principles, and practices of land use planning and their application to a variety of planning problems.
- Purposes and procedures of public agencies, boards, and governing bodies.
- Laws, rules, regulations, and policies affecting land use and zoning.
- Research methods and statistical analysis.
- Environmental impacts of changes in land use.
- Graphic illustration and presentation.
- Computers and software used in professional planning work.
- Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- Site and building plan review to ensure compliance with planning regulations.

Ability to:

- Perform advanced professional planning work with minimal supervision, including policy analysis, long-range planning, complex development review, and environmental compliance.

- Provide consistent leadership, mentorship, and technical direction to professional planners, technicians, interns, and administrative support staff.
- Interpret, analyze, and apply complex laws, codes, ordinances, General Plan elements, CEQA documents, and other planning-related materials with a high level of proficiency.
- Collect, evaluate, and synthesize technical, statistical, and spatial data to inform planning decisions and policy recommendations.
- Review and interpret site plans, architectural drawings, topographic maps, zoning maps, and other development-related graphics.
- Exercise sound professional judgment and independent decision-making in resolving planning, land use, and zoning issues, especially in high-stakes or politically sensitive situations.
- Prepare well-organized, accurate, and persuasive reports, plans, policies, and communications for decision-makers, the public, and other stakeholders.
- Use advanced features of planning software (such as GIS, permit tracking systems, and presentation tools) to support analysis, visualization, and reporting.
- Communicate complex planning concepts clearly and effectively through both oral presentations and written correspondence.
- Represent the planning division with professionalism in interdepartmental teams, public forums, community meetings, and regional working groups.
- Build consensus, facilitate productive dialogue, and resolve conflicts among diverse stakeholders, including developers, residents, staff, and elected officials.
- Maintain effective working relationships with City staff, public agencies, applicants, consultants, and the general public.
- Manage multiple projects and shifting priorities effectively, meeting deadlines while maintaining high-quality work and attention to detail.

TYPICAL PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Sit for extended periods; frequently stand and walk; normal manual dexterity and eye-hand coordination; lift and move objects weighing up to 25 lbs.; corrected hearing and vision to normal range; verbal communication; use of office equipment including computer, telephone, calculator, copiers, postage machine, and FAX.

TYPICAL WORKING CONDITIONS

Work is performed in an office environment; occasionally work outside; frequent contact with other staff and the public.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Possession of a valid California driver's license.
- Five (5) years of responsible work experience in performing professional planning work in a public agency.
- Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree with major work in urban and regional planning, public administration, geography, architecture or closely related field, **OR** an additional two (2) years of responsible work experience in performing professional planning work.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Graduation from an accredited college or university with a master's degree with major work in urban and regional planning, public administration, geography, architecture, or closely related field.
- One (1) to two (2) years of supervisory experience.

The contents of this class specification shall not be construed to constitute any expressed or implied warranty or guarantee, nor shall it constitute a contract of employment. The City of Atwater assumes no responsibility beyond the general accuracy of the document, nor does it assume responsibility for any errors or omissions in the information contained herein. The contents of this specification may be modified or revoked without notice. Terms and conditions of employment are determined through a meet and confer process and are subject to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) currently in effect.

Rev. 07-11-25