

About Conditional Use Permits

*This explains 1) what a “conditional use permit” is,
2) how such permits fit into our efforts to shape our surroundings, and
3) how you can participate in the decision-making process.*

What is a Conditional Use Permit?

A key goal of land use rules is for nearby land uses to be compatible with one another. One way cities and counties do this is to say that certain kinds of uses are allowed only under certain conditions.

If someone wants to make such a use of property, he or she must get a *conditional use permit*. Sometimes planners call this a “CUP.” Other names include “special use permit” or just “use permit.” Zoning rules usually explain when someone needs a conditional use permit.

The permit process allows decision-makers to create requirements to avoid problems. These requirements must relate to the expected problems a use will create. The relationship must be backed up with facts presented to decision-makers.

Decision-makers must explain their decision with findings. Such findings explain why the decision-maker decided that the permit is or is not justified under the circumstances.

Example

An example is a bar. Such a use can have negative impacts on neighbors. Common restrictions include limited hours of operation, soundproofing and noise limits, security guards and parking requirements.

To Learn More

- Planner’s Training Series, The Conditional Use Permit, 2007 (available at www.ceres.ca.gov/planning/cup/condition.htm#what_is_anchor)
- [Government Code Section 65901](#)

Key Questions

- Is the permit consistent with the general plan, specific plan (if any) and zoning ordinance?
- Does the proposed use make sense for the site?
- Is the proposed use compatible with surrounding uses?
- If not, are there things that can be done to make it more compatible?
- Will the project have any environmental effects? What will those effects be? What level of environmental review must occur?
- Can the proposed use adequately be served by existing public facilities and services (for example, police and fire protection, parking and roads)?
- How will the use, as restricted, affect the community as a whole?