



Introduction

The world of urban planning can be an incredibly difficult area to understand and navigate for someone who is not familiar with the terms, processes, and standards planners use everyday. Planners can work in a variety of different regions for many different agencies, firms, or groups. Depending upon where they work, and who they work for, the job of a “planner” can vary considerably. This white paper will specifically focus on the role that many find to be the most perplexing within the professional plan-

ning world - the private planner. Due to the fact that private planners are usually not quite as visible to a given community (e.g., they are not participating in every single planning commission hearing that is televised weekly, etc.), it is understandable that one may have questions regarding what a private planner does and how they could directly benefit from the services and experience they offer.

The best way to answer these questions is first to explain what a private planner does not do by differentiating between their role the planning roles in the public and non-profit sectors. This description will be followed by an explanation of the general bureaucratic process that many clients interested in developing land have to follow. Overall, a variety of different agencies, institutions, companies, or individuals can greatly benefit from hiring a land use planner.



Private planners often represent their clients at Planning Commission hearings. Photo: www.noozhawk.com



Private planners have in-depth knowledge of the development process. Photo: www.ipsgroup.us.



Private planners hold a much different role than public planners; however, both work together collaboratively toward the desired “vision” of a community. Photo: <http://sites.google.com/site/dundeewildcats/meeting-full.jpg>

Depending upon where they work, and who they work for, the job of a “planner” can vary considerably.

The Three Sectors in Planning: Private, Public, and Non-profit

Planners work everywhere within the United States and the world, including rural areas, suburban areas, and large cities. They can function within the public sector (federal, state, or local governments), nonprofit sector, or private sector (e.g., real estate development companies and planning / multi-disciplinary consulting firms). Whichever sector a planner may work for, it is the common goal of all planners to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, sustainable, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for present and future generations. This goal is a lofty one, and in order to accomplish it many different people on all sides of development have to take part. For example, one of the many possible roles of a private planner would be to assist, advice, and/or manage private development projects for a developer. The

planner's expansive knowledge on both broad and specific issues that are oftentimes incredibly complex (e.g., storm water management, permitting, and environmental regulation) enables the realization of a development that obtains the goals and objectives of the client, while also satisfying the appropriate regulatory constraints and acknowledging the "vision" of the community.

All planning sectors – public, private, and non-profit, should consciously strive to improve the community they work within for present and future generations. In order to do this effectively, it is important that every planner both acknowledges and learns from the successes and failures of past planning. In doing so, falling into a cyclic pattern of repeating past planning mistakes will be avoided, and success in city planning will increase steadily over time.



Private planners often learn from progressive developments in cities like Seattle.
Photo: www.goseattlecard.com



Private planners can guide developers through the entitlement process.. Photo: www.bigokhosting.com



All planners - private, public, and non-profit - would like to create convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for city residents.

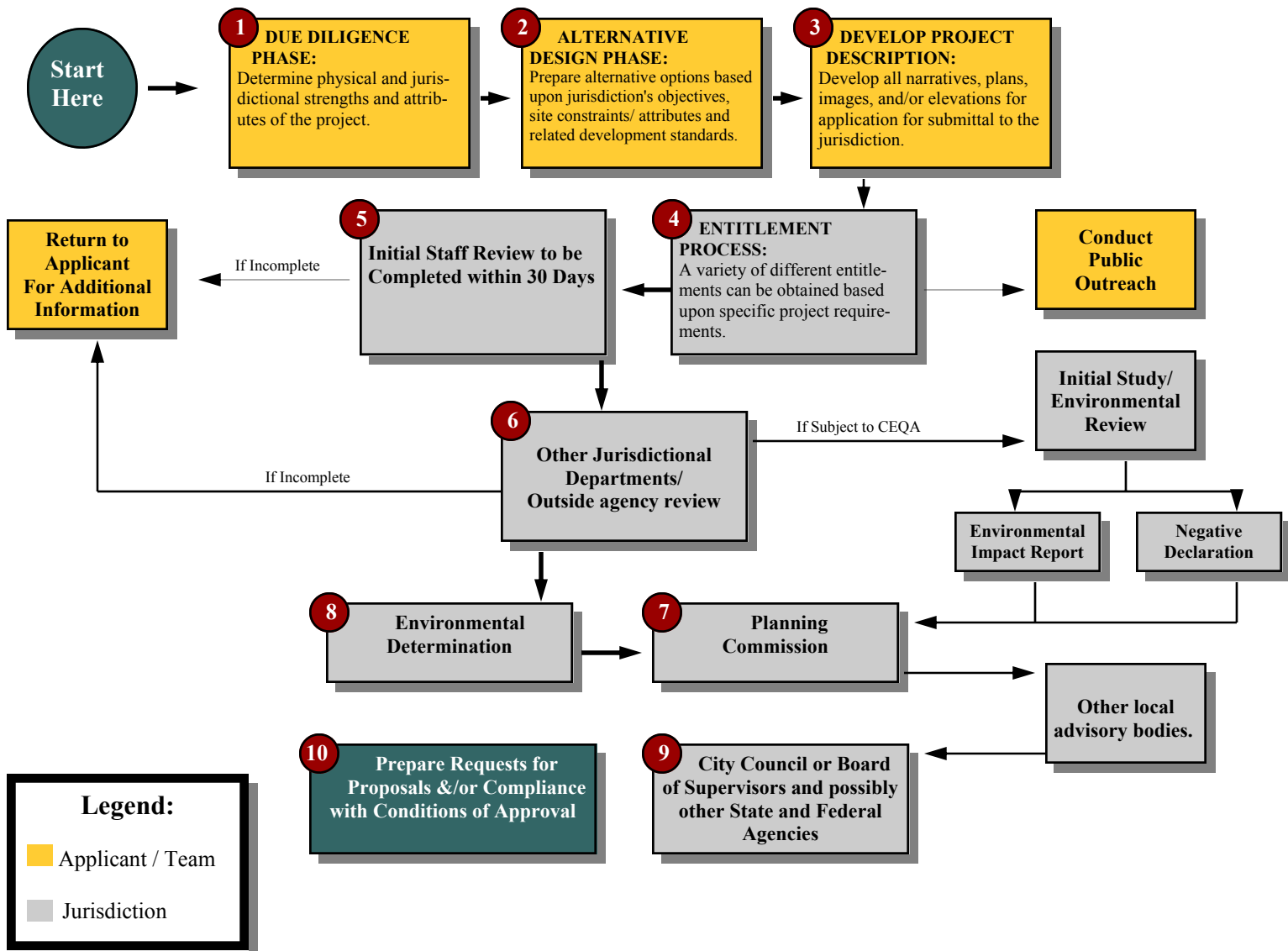
Photo: www.planning.org

Planning Process and the Role of the Private Planner

At first glance the planning process may seem to be a simple bureaucratic checklist that anyone could comprehend and “get through” to reach their ultimate goal of entitlement (e.g., a building permit, rezone of their land, etc.). However, many individuals, companies, etc. pursuing a specific entitlement soon realize that they have gotten in way over their heads – if the city council decides to not grant the entitlement requested, thousands of dollars (spent on project design,

etc.) could be wasted. It is the job of a private land use planner to use their strategic thinking skills; deep knowledge of the process (and the wide range of people whom are involved in the process); and effective time management ability to ultimately help their client reach entitlement. Although this is by no means the entire scope of what a private land use planner does, it is an incredibly important portion of what they do on a day-to-day basis.

Land Use Planning / Entitlement Processing



Private Planning in the Real World

Every project that a private land use planner will work on will be different in a variety of ways; however, it is the training and range of experience this planner accumulates over the years (that can be applied to any project), which makes them an invaluable member of any project team. As many might already be aware, incredibly complicated circumstances can arise at any given moment. A private land use planner will know the questions to ask regarding issues that might “make

or break a project,” and if the planner herself / himself can not answer the question, she / he will be cognizant of the specific experts in the field who could. Due to the fact that planning and development occur in such a dynamic atmosphere (with frequently changing laws, regulations, and standards), awareness and access to the most current information is absolutely crucial – something a good land use planner will always be on top of.



A private planner's training and experience makes them an invaluable member of any project team. Photo: www.bottlecapdev.com