The Planning and Building Department consists of the following budget units:

1100 262 Building Inspections

1100 268 Cannabis Planning

1100 277 Current Planning

1100 282 Advance Planning

Mission

Provide knowledgeable facilitation for permitting processes, development decisions and housing programs that support a safe, healthy and economically vibrant community.

- Commitment to Service
- Community Partnerships
- Resourceful Leadership
- Equitable and Excellent Customer Service
- Dynamic and Supportive Teamwork
- Continuous Improvement
Organizational Chart:
Purpose

The Advance Planning budget unit consists of the Advance Planning Division and Grant and Housing Program.

The Advance Planning Division conducts long-range planning, and develops and implements programs to accomplish planning objectives per state and federal requirements. California state law requires that each city and county adopt a general plan “for the physical development of the county or city and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning” (California Government Code, Section 65300). The plan can be understood as an expression of a community’s values and its vision for the future, a “blueprint” for anticipated growth and development, both public and private, this forms the basis for most local government land-use decision making. The division also secures grant funding to support the implementation of the General Plan, including the Housing Element.

The Advance Planning budget unit supports the Board’s Strategic Framework, Core Roles, by managing resources to ensure the sustainability of services.

Recommended Budget

The recommended budget for Advance Planning is $2,171,193, a decrease of $608,559, or 22 percent, from FY 2015-16. This change is due to a decrease in department expenditures including lower projected professional and special services costs. These costs are connected to the completion of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) associated with the General Plan update. The recommended budget includes a General Fund contribution of $298,614, a decrease $135,238 from FY 2015-16.
Recommended Personnel Allocation

The recommended position allocation for FY 2016-17 is 6.00 FTE with no frozen positions. There are no changes in the recommended positions.

Program Discussion

The Advance Planning team prepares and updates the General Plan and Land Use and Development codes, including Community Plans, Housing Element, and Local Coastal Plans. Staff contacts the community for participation in advanced planning programs and provides public information. Advance Planning maintains an online Geographical Information System (GIS) to support internal data needs offering this service to the general public and partner agencies such as Public Works and CalFire. Advance Planning manages a General Plan implementation grant program, conducts special studies, and leads the county’s housing grants and programs.

The Advance Planning Division will be managing five distinct program initiatives in FY 2016-17:

General Plan Update
One of the primary goals of the Advance Planning Division will be the completion of the County’s General Plan Update. This includes the re-circulation and final adoption of an EIR for the Hearing Draft General Plan. The Board of Supervisors was presented with the Planning Commission Hearing Draft Plan in May 2012 and is finished with review and deliberation of the main document. The Board of Supervisors has updated the appendices and reviewed for overall consistency. Final adoption of the General Plan is tentatively scheduled for December 2016.

Housing Element Implementation
Staff will continue to manage the Phase II Multifamily Rezoning effort and other measures to implement the adopted 2014 Housing Element.

GIS and Technical Support
The GIS program provides services to the department, other county departments, and the general public. The GIS Group will finalize the program at the end of the current fiscal year and the update is scheduled to be available to the public in the first quarter of FY 2016-17. The GIS program is a significant support to the Building and Current Planning Divisions permit processing programs.

General Plan Implementation Program
This program is responsible for preparing ordinances, Coastal Plan Updates and Community Plan Updates necessary for General Plan update implementation. The General Plan Implementation Program also pursues grant funding opportunities to help support Advance Planning and implementation costs associated with the General Plan update.

Affordable Housing and Grants
This program manages first-time homebuyer and owner-occupied rehabilitation programs. In addition, staff manages State of California Housing and Community Development grants and actively seeks funding for implementation of the Housing Element and General Plan.

Local Coastal Plan Updates
Staff is working to certify areas of deferred certification, which will create a more user-friendly permitting process for coastal property owners. Staff will work to complete mapping and analysis of Industrial/Coastal Dependent lands around Humboldt Bay and revise land use maps and policies as necessary. Staff will review and update resources and hazards mapping and policies, including coastal access points and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA), in relation to Coastal Act priorities and the Coastal Commission Local Coastal Plan Update Guide. Review and update natural resource and hazard mapping for changed conditions and convert paper maps to geographic information system data.
Purpose

The Building Inspection budget unit consists of the Building Inspection Division and Permit Assistance and is responsible for issuing building permits and performing inspections to verify compliance with mandated codes and standards. The Building Inspection Division has jurisdiction in all unincorporated areas of Humboldt County. Statutory authority is provided by the California Health and Safety Code, California Business and Professions Code, and the Administrative Code.

This budget unit supports the Board’s Strategic Framework, Core Roles, by enforcing laws and regulations.

Recommended Budget

The recommended budget is $1,464,653, an increase of $37,532, or almost three percent, from FY 2015-16. This change is primarily due to an increase in the administrative charges anticipated to be reimbursed for services provided by the Planning and Advanced Planning budget units. The recommended budget for FY 2016-17 includes a General Fund contribution of $219,332 or 15 percent of the total recommended budget and an increase of 5 percent from the previous fiscal year.

Recommended Personnel Allocation

The recommended position allocation for Building Inspection is 12.0 FTE with no frozen positions. There are no changes in the recommended positions for FY 2016-17.

Program Discussion

The workload of the Building Inspection Division consists of four primary program areas: Inspections,
Permit Processing, Plan Checking, and Public Information.

Inspections and Violations
A major function of the Building Inspection Division is field inspections. Building Inspectors perform all facets of new construction, addition and remodel inspections from the beginning to the end of the project. They interpret and enforce State of California Title 24 Codes and Standards and local ordinances.

Building Inspectors also perform site inspections for the Current Planning Division, check building plans, perform health and safety inspections, check structures for conformance with business license applications, investigate alleged violations for the Compliance Assistance Program and provide information in the field to owners, contractors and other professionals. With over 3,500 square miles in Humboldt County, inspectors average over 100 miles of driving and six inspections daily.

Permit Processing
Permit Specialists process building permit applications, interpret zoning regulations and verify completeness of applications. Permit Specialists determine and apply appropriate land use and building regulations, codes and ordinances. Permit Specialists are responsible for tracking the status of various permit applications as those applications are reviewed by other agencies and departments through a referral process. Permit Specialists meet with both the permit applicants and the general public to advise them of application requirements.

Additionally, Permit Specialists are responsible for accurate calculation of permit fees, permit issuance, collection of fees and maintenance of permit records. Each Permit Specialist averages approximately 20 customer contacts per day including email, telephone and face-to-face encounters.

The Building Inspection Division also collects fees for the following departments: Environmental Health Division of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Land Use Division of the Public Works Department, and the Current Planning Division. The Building Inspection Division also collects special drainage fees on behalf of the Public Works Department, and development impact fees for McKinleyville Union School District, Hydesville Elementary School District, Pacific Union School District, Fortuna Elementary School District, Ferndale Unified School District, and Humboldt Bay Fire District 1.

Plan Review
Plan review ensures that construction plans for proposed construction conform to adopted building codes and other ordinances. The plan checker provides written correction information and is available to discuss any correction requirements with owners, applicants, contractors and other professionals.

Commercial, industrial and some complex construction plans are outsourced to one of several private-sector firms for review.
Purpose

The Current Planning Division processes land use permit applications based on the policies of the General Plan, Community Plans, County Codes and ordinances, as well as state and federal regulations. State planning law is codified within Government Code Section 65000. The division also implements other state and federally mandated programs including flood hazard protection, geologic and/or seismic safety, timber production zoning, administration of Williamson Act contracts, and coastal planning and permitting authority.

This budget unit supports the Board’s Strategic Framework, Core Roles, by providing community-appropriate level of service.

Recommended Budget

The recommended budget is $1,928,280, a decrease of $76,540, or four percent, from FY 2015-16. The Current Planning Division is projecting a decrease in salary cost due to salaries reimbursements from services provided to Planning and Building Department’s other budget units. In addition, Current Planning is planning no fixed asset purchases in FY 2016-17.

Recommended Personnel Allocation

The Current Planning budget unit has a total staffing of 17.0 FTE, of which 1.0 FTE is frozen. There are no changes in the recommended positions for FY 2016-17.
Program Discussion

The Current Planning budget unit consists of three service divisions: Current Planning Division, development assistance division, and central administration.

Current Planning

Current Planning’s principal work is processing land use permit applications for subdivisions, lot line adjustments, coastal development permits, special permits and use permits. The Division also processes applicant-initiated amendments to the General Plan and zoning text and maps. A primary function of the Current Planning Division involves support of the Planning Commission and zoning administrator.

The Current Planning Division also provides staff support to the Forestry Review Committee and the Williamson Act Advisory Committee. In addition, Current Planning provides public information and reviews building applications.

This fiscal year, the Current Planning staff has also been working to complete cannabis related ordinances and land use policies. As a result of the medical marijuana ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors, Current Planning has received a steady stream of applications related to cannabis and the resulting workload has been shared among the divisions in the Planning and Building department.

Most recent data indicate that permit applications are have shown a recent spike following the passage of the medical marijuana ordinance while service requests continue to increase from year to year. Service requests include but are not limited to application assistance, information requests, burn down letters, and tree removal requests.

Development Assistance

Development assistance provides project facilitation services as well as print and digital resource information to the public. The Division is also responsible for managing department-wide systems and procedures related to both building and planning permit applications including the multi-department OnTrack software platform. Development assistance also reviews business license referrals, assigns addresses and street names, and manages the Compliance Assistance Program.

The Compliance Assistance Program responds to public complaints and helps the public identify and resolve code violations.

Central Administration

Central administration is responsible for providing business, organizational and administrative support to the Planning and Building Department. Additionally, central administration staff supports the Planning Commission, the zoning administrator and the attendant public hearings. A top priority for central administration is to provide excellent customer service to internal and external customers and provide appropriate fiscal support and oversight.
Purpose

The Cannabis Planning budget unit is a division of the Planning and Building Department responsible for long-range planning, development and implementation of local ordinances and code related to commercial medical cannabis activities. In addition, the division supports the permitting processes for projects associated with medical cannabis.

This budget unit supports the Board’s Strategic Framework, Core Roles, by encouraging new local enterprise and ensures proper operation of markets.

Recommended Budget

The total recommended budget for Cannabis Planning is $523,040. This includes a General Fund contribution of $137,953. This is a new division and was approved by the Board during FY 2015-16.

Recommended Personnel Allocation

The recommended position allocation for FY 2016-17 is 5.00 FTE. These positions were added during FY 2015-16.

Program Discussion

Humboldt County is the first county in the state to enact land use regulations in accordance with California’s Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act law. Humboldt County ordinance No. 2544 was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 26, 2016.

In addition to long-range planning, development and implementation of local ordinances and code related to commercial cannabis activities, Cannabis Planning engages in outreach, education and coordination with other agencies.
It is anticipated that the division will support all of the permits related to commercial cannabis.

During the permitting process, the Cannabis Planning staff will be engaged in inspections and monitoring. As discussed in the narrative section for budget unit 277, Current Planning has received a steady stream of applications related to cannabis and the resulting workload has been shared among all the divisions in the Planning and Building Department. With the next fiscal year, the dispersal of assignments related to medical cannabis cultivation permits is anticipated to funnel into this newly-created budget unit.