

How to Get a Building Permit



Important benefits of permits and inspections:

- **SAFETY** Your project is checked to ensure that it meets building safety standards.
- **QUALITY** Permits and inspections help assure the quality of your remodeling investment and are important to the value of your property.
- **LEGAL** They are required by state and local laws. Unless voluntarily corrected, illegally conducted work may incur costs for citations, permits, and reconstruction.

We'll answer your questions about permits and inspections.

Contestaremos sus preguntas referente a permisos en Español.

Chúng tôi sẽ trả lời thắc mắc về giấy phép của quý vị bằng tiếng Việt.

San José Permit Center
San José City Hall
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113
408-535-3555
www.sanjoseca.gov/building

If you are planning to improve your property, you may need a building permit. Any change to the structural, electrical, plumbing or mechanical configuration of any part of a home or building requires a permit. Installing certain appliances or equipment, such as a water heater, also requires a permit. Painting, flooring and other cosmetic work don't need a permit. For more information or if you're seeking to legalize work done without a permit, see the bulletins entitled [Projects That Don't Need a Building Permit](#) or [How to Legalize Unpermitted Work](#).

Here are the steps for getting a building permit, including any trade permit for electrical, mechanical or plumbing work:

- **STEP 1 Choose the permit service that fits your project.** This bulletin describes our permit services and helps you choose the right permit service for your project.
- **STEP 2 Complete and submit a Building Permit Application.** This form is required except in the case of online permits. The application covers all types of permits—building, electrical, plumbing or mechanical. If other forms are needed, our Permit Center staff will let you know.
- **STEP 3 Accurately prepare project plans.** Except for online permits, all projects require accurately drawn plans. For some projects, anyone can draw the plans as long as they are accurate, but some project plans must be produced by licensed professionals. Permit Center staff will help you understand what you need to submit, or visit the [Building Handouts and Forms](#) web page for helpful information on the content and production of project plans.

CHOOSE THE PERMIT SERVICE THAT FITS

Our permit services are scaled to fit projects that range from simple to complex:
See inside for details



ONLINE PERMIT SERVICE Download our lowest-cost permit at www.sjpermits.org. Fast and easy. Limited to simple projects and installations of equipment and major appliances.

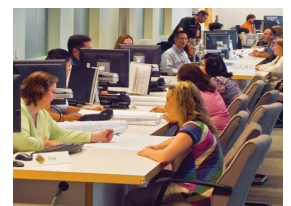
OVER-THE-COUNTER SERVICE. Walk in with your accurate plans, walk out with a permit.

For residential projects with no or only minor structural changes.

PLAN REVIEW SERVICE. For projects with structural changes or new construction. Your plans are reviewed by experts for compliance with zoning and codes. On a tight timeframe? The Express or Enhanced Express options provide faster service.

SMALL BUSINESS PERMIT HELP. Are you looking to find or improve your restaurant or business space? Our no-cost [Small Business Ally](#) will guide you through the permit and plan review process. Learn more at www.sanjoseca.gov/businesscoach.

NO-COST GUIDANCE FOR ALL. Staff at the Permit Center provide answers to your questions on what your project needs at no cost to you — just call or visit us!



[learn more>](#)

ONLINE PERMIT SERVICE WWW.SJPERMITS.ORG
PROJECTS THAT QUALIFY

M & P = both a mechanical and plumbing permit apply			
	SF/D	MF	C/I
BUILDING-STRUCTURAL permits			
Reroof	●	●	●
Chimney Repair	●		
ELECTRICAL permits			
Air Conditioning	●		
Appliance - New or Replacements	●	●	●
Electric Vehicle Charging Station	●		
Light Fixtures - New or Replacements	●	●	
Receptacles and Switches - New <i>Replacements in an existing location don't require a permit</i>	●	●	●
Rewire - 1 or 2 story	●	●	
Solar (Photovoltaic) Systems	●	●	●
Service Change up to 200 amps	●	●	●
Service Change 1 meter up to 600 amps	●	●	●
Subpanel/s	●		
MECHANICAL permits			
Air Conditioning	●	●	
Appliance - New or Replacements	●	●	●
Decorative Gas Fireplace Appliance	●	●	●
Duct/Flue Alteration	●		
Evaporative Cooler	●		
Exhaust Fan	●	●	●
Furnace, New	●		
Furnace, Replacement	●	●	●
Heat Pump including condensate	●		
PLUMBING permits			
Backflow/Vacuum Breaker		●	●
Condensate Waste or Inlet Drain M & P			●
DWV (Drain-Waste-Vent)/Water Alteration	●		
Dry Well or French Drain M & P	●	●	●
Fixture - New or Multiple Replacements	●	●	
Fixture - Single Replacement	●	●	●
Gas Earthquake Valve	●	●	●
Gas Line Rough & Final M & P	●	●	●
Gas Line Retest M & P	●	●	●
Gas Log Lighter	●		
Property Line Cleanout	●	●	●
Repipe	●		●
Repipe, Gyp or Gyp & Shear Repair		●	●
Sanitary Sewer Replacement	●	●	●
Water Heater Replacement	●	●	●
Water Service Change	●	●	●
Water Softener Installation	●	●	
Water Treatment Equipment		●	●

For

- **SF/D** - Single-Family/Duplex properties
- **MF** - Multifamily properties
- **C/I** - Commercial/Industrial properties
- **Simple projects**
- **Certain equipment installations**

Benefits

- saves time, download a permit from home
- saves \$40 compared to Over-the-Counter Service
- permit fee includes one inspection
- you can schedule inspections online

How to use sjpermits.org

First register at sjpermits.org. Be prepared to provide the property address, your email address, and credit card for payment.

Contractors must provide their state license number and City of San José business license number.

The system will guide you as you enter your information and select the desired permit.



Most online permits do not require plans; only a [rooftop solar installation](#) requires a plan; it is not submitted but rather reviewed at the time of inspection.

The list of permits that can be obtained online is subject to change; a current list is maintained at sjpermits.org.

OVER-THE-COUNTER SERVICE: PROJECTS THAT QUALIFY

Service is available for:	SF/D	MF
1-story Additions ≤ 500 sf	●	●
1-story Remodeling ≤ 750 sf (e.g., kitchen or bathroom work that does not entail moving weight-bearing walls; this remodeling may include an addition of up to ≤ 500 sf)	●	●
Accessory structures ≤ 500 sf	●	●
Engineered ICC-approved patios and screen rooms	●	●
Fire or auto damage repair work to a structure	●	●
Foundation improvements such as adding seismic bolting	●	●
Foundation repairs	●	●
Pool and septic tank abatements	●	●
Pools with a current master structural file	●	
Siding or stucco replacement	●	●
Termite and dry rot repairs; must include a report from the company performing the work	●	●
Remodeling required for code compliance, subject to above size limitations	●	

For

- **SF/D** single-family/duplex homes
- **MF** multifamily properties that are **1-story, non-sprinklered**
- **projects with no or minor structural changes**
- **certain repairs or abatements**

Benefits

- same day permit issuance
- fees are lower than Plan Review service
- no appointment needed

To use Over-the-Counter Service, come to the Permit Center and bring:

- A completed [Building Permit Application](#)
- Accurate project plans; they do not have to be professionally drawn, but they must be accurate in order to get the permit issued on the day you visit.
- View our [Building Handouts and Forms](#) web page for guides on the content of project plans. Or visit the Permit Center where staff provide no-cost guidance on what your plans should include.



**Walk in with accurate plans;
walk out with a permit!**

RESIDENTIAL PLAN REVIEW SERVICE: PROJECTS THAT QUALIFY

Service is available for:	Plan Review	Express Plan Review	Enhanced Express Plan Review
New construction	any size		
Single story additions	any size	750 sf or less	750 sf or less
Two-story remodeling	any size	750 sf or less	750 sf or less*
Second units	Yes	—	
Code compliance cases	any size	—	

For

- **SF/D** single-family/duplex homes
- **MF** multifamily properties
- **new construction**
- **projects with structural changes**
- **second units**

Benefits

Staff experts review projects that involve structural changes. **Express Plan Review** provides concurrent review of plans with all involved City staff (Planning, Building, Public Works, and Fire Prevention) and the professional designer in one meeting for a time-saving review. The fee is 1.5 times the regular plan review fee. For projects on tight deadlines, you can opt for **Enhanced Express** for a higher fee and obtain even faster service.

For single-family/duplex projects, see the [handout, Single-Family/Duplex Plan Submittal Checklist](#), or talk to a planner at the Permit Center

* only for projects with minor structural calculations

NON-RESIDENTIAL PLAN REVIEW SERVICE: PROJECTS THAT QUALIFY



Service is available to
C/I - Commercial/Industrial properties including restaurants, offices, retail, and industrial use

PROJECT TYPE	Plan Review	Express Plan Review	Enhanced Express Plan Review
Retail tenant improvement	any size	Total floor area is less than 1,500 sf	Total floor area is less than 10,000 sf
Office/R&D tenant improvement	any size	Total floor area is less than 10,000 sf	Total floor area is less than 20,000 sf. No HazMat.
Restaurant tenant improvement	any size	Dining area is less than 750 sf; Scope limited to customer area	No change in use. No increase in assembly or square footage. Requires prior County Health Department and Regional Wastewater Facility approvals.
Code compliance cases	Yes	—	—
Cell site installations	Yes	—	Battery electrolyte is less than 50 gallons. Exterior battery system only. No HazMat.
Rooftop mechanical units	Yes	—	Maximum 2,500 lbs. Maximum 2,000 CFM. No HazMat.

For

- non-residential properties
- projects with structural changes
- code compliance cases
- certain installations

Benefits

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For projects on tight deadlines, you can opt for **Enhanced Express** for a higher fee and obtain even faster service.

**Appointment required.
 Call 408-535-3555**

Learn more and get a plan review checklist at www.sanjoseca.gov/building



WHAT DOES A PERMIT COST?

Fees are subject to change and vary according to the type and scope of project. For current fees, view the [Building Division Schedule of Fees](#).

You can obtain a no-cost estimate of your permit fees by submitting a [Permit Cost Estimate Worksheet](#). Instructions are provided on the worksheet.

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This publication can be made available in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, audio tape or computer disk. To make a request, call 408-535-7770 (voice) or 408-294-9337 (TTY).