



Planning, Building and Code Enforcement

Plans That Require an Architect or Engineer

REFERENCE

California Business and Professions Code Section 5537

2016 California Building Code (CBC) Chapter 23

For instructions on plan submittals, see the **Plan Requirements and Checklists** section of our **Building Handouts and Forms** webpage at www.sanjoseca.gov/building

The type of property and project determines whether or not a registered architect or engineer must be involved in plan preparation. Table A below outlines when the involvement of a registered architect or engineer is required. Table B below outlines the project plans and drawings that may be prepared by a layperson.

California Business and Professions Code Section 5537: Exceptions to the requirements to involve a registered design professional. Section 5537 states that ALL plans are required to be signed by a California registered architect or engineer with certain exceptions and as long as those exceptions do NOT deviate from conventional wood framing construction requirements of 2016 California Building Code (CBC) Chapter 23 and associated tables of limitation for wood frame construction. If any portion of any structure exempted by Section 5537 deviates from those wood frame construction conventions, the City Building Official may require the preparation of plans, drawings, specifications or calculations for that portion by, or under the direct supervision of, a registered engineer or architect. The documents for that portion of the project must bear the stamp and signature of the licensed design professional who is responsible for their preparation. The project plans that may be prepared by a layperson (Table B below) reflect the exemptions allowed under Section 5537 of the California Business and Professions Code.

TABLE A. PROJECT PLANS THAT REQUIRE A REGISTERED ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any project not exempted under California Business and Professions Code Section 5537.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any project or portion of a project that deviates from conventional wood framing construction requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alterations that will change, affect, or potentially affect any components of the structural system or safety of the building or its occupants; see page 2.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any project deemed by the City Building Official to require a registered design professional.

TABLE B. PROJECT PLANS THAT CAN BE PREPARED BY LAYPERSONS*

Outside of the conditions in Table A, laypersons may prepare project plans for the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain single family dwelling projects. Laypersons may prepare project plans for additions, remodels, garages or accessory structures for single family dwellings that are 2 stories or less in height (excludes basement).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain multi-family dwelling projects. Laypersons may prepare project plans for additions, remodels, garages or accessory structures for multi-family dwellings up to 4 units that are 2 stories or less in height (excludes basement) and where there is a maximum of 4 dwelling units on the lot.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural and ranch buildings. Laypersons may prepare project plans for agricultural and ranch buildings unless the City Building Official deems that an undue risk to the public health, safety, or welfare is involved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonstructural commercial projects. As long as wall structures are not altered, laypersons may prepare plans for commercial store fronts, interior alterations or additions, fixtures, cabinet work, and appliance or equipment installations.

* Project plans and drawings must always be complete and accurate regardless of who prepares them. View the plan requirements and checklists for your type of project at www.sanjoseca.gov/building.

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ALTERATIONS THAT MAY AFFECT THE STRUCTURAL SYSTEM OR SAFETY OF THE BUILDING OR ITS OCCUPANTS

Except for the project plans for specific types of property outlined in Table B, the following projects are among those deemed as affecting or potentially affecting the safety of a building or its occupants and shall be stamped and signed by a registered engineer or architect:

ANY PROJECT THAT ENTAILS

- New buildings
- Additions to existing buildings
- Interior or exterior structural alterations
- Any interior alteration with an occupancy change
- Any alteration that changes exiting requirements
- High-rise remodeling projects in buildings having floors higher than 75 feet in height
- Remodels with changes to 1-hour rated corridors, fire rated occupancy separations, area separation walls Roof-mounted mechanical equipment

ANY PROJECT INVOLVING THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS

- Cripple walls exceeding 4 feet in height or adjacent to garage door openings
- Lateral force resisting systems utilizing poles embedded in the ground
- Machinery and equipment requiring design per 2016 CBC Section 1613
- Storage racks over 8 feet in height
- Tanks and vessels

ANY PROJECT WITH THE FOLLOWING OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION

- Assembly occupancies: A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4 and A-5
- B, F-1, F-2, S-1, S-2 and M occupancies where the project is an interior alteration with walls and partitions over 5 feet-9 inches in height or ceiling work over a floor area greater than 3,000 sf
- Hazardous occupancies H-1, H-2, H-3, H-4 and H-5
- Hotel, motel and apartment occupancies R-1 and R-2
- Institutional occupancies I-1, I-2, I-2.1, I-3, and I-4
- School and day care occupancies E
- Projects with S-1 and S-2 occupancies
- Projects with mixed occupancies