



BUILDING PERMIT (BLD) APPLICATION GUIDE

INFORMATIONAL PACKET

QUESTIONS?

Additional information regarding the permit process can be obtained at the Building and Safety Counter at 630 Garden St, or call (805) 564-5485, email: CDBuildingCode@SantaBarbaraCA.gov



WHY IS A BUILDING PERMIT REQUIRED?

A [Building Permit](#) ensures that projects comply with minimum state and local building codes and other land use requirements, and that contractors are licensed pursuant to the Contractors' State License Law. It also certifies that any work being performed is inspected and matches approved plans. To obtain a building permit, applicants must demonstrate compliance with the code requirements specific to each project, pay required fees, and provide all forms, plans, and supplemental documents.

Building permits are not issued for construction proposed in the City streets or right-of-way; instead, a separate Public Works (PBW) Permit is required from the City of Santa Barbara Public Works Department. Contact the [Public Works Counter](#) for more information on Public Works Permits.

WHEN IS A BUILDING PERMIT REQUIRED?

A building permit is generally required whenever you construct, enlarge, alter, move, replace, repair, improve, convert, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure. Additionally, you will need to obtain a building permit to correct code violations, including property maintenance violations, when there is an Enforcement (ENF) Record on the property.

- **Work Exempt From a Permit**

Building permits are not required for certain minor work such as one-story detached accessory structure (sheds, playhouse, etc.) not exceeding 120 square feet, fences not over 42 inches high, retaining walls not over 4 ft. in height (measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall) with no surcharge. For a complete list of exemptions from permit requirements see Santa Barbara Municipal Code [22.04](#) and also the [Work Exempt From Permit](#) handout.



WHAT IS THE BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS?

1

Submit a Building Permit Application

Following all planning approvals, you are ready to submit for a Building Permit or a Public Works permit, if required. The project will be assigned to the Land Development Team who will review the application materials. Within 10 to 33 days, the permit will either be approved, or we will provide you with a list of corrections.

2

Corrections, Clarifications, Changes

The applicant will respond to the written correction list and resubmit the plans. When plans are resubmitted, they will be distributed to the same City staff that generated the initial corrections for subsequent review. The corrections and recheck process continues until the plans are approved and the permit is ready to be issued.

3

Issuing the Permit

Once the City has determined that the plans and submittal materials satisfy all code requirements, you will be notified of the approval. Upon full payment of fees and completion of final forms, the City will issue a building permit. All permit documents and approved plans are issued electronically. You may then begin construction.

4

Inspections

We will inspect your project as work progresses and you must have the inspection card and the approved plans available during all inspections. Give 24-hour notice to call for inspection. Once construction begins, you must pass at least one “milestone inspection” approval every 180 days (6 months) to avoid permit expiration.

5

Revisions

If you want to change part of your project while it is under construction, you must submit a new application called a “Revision”. The architect or building designer responsible for the original design should prepare new plan sheets that reflect the revision. Exterior changes may require a “Review after Final” at design review first.

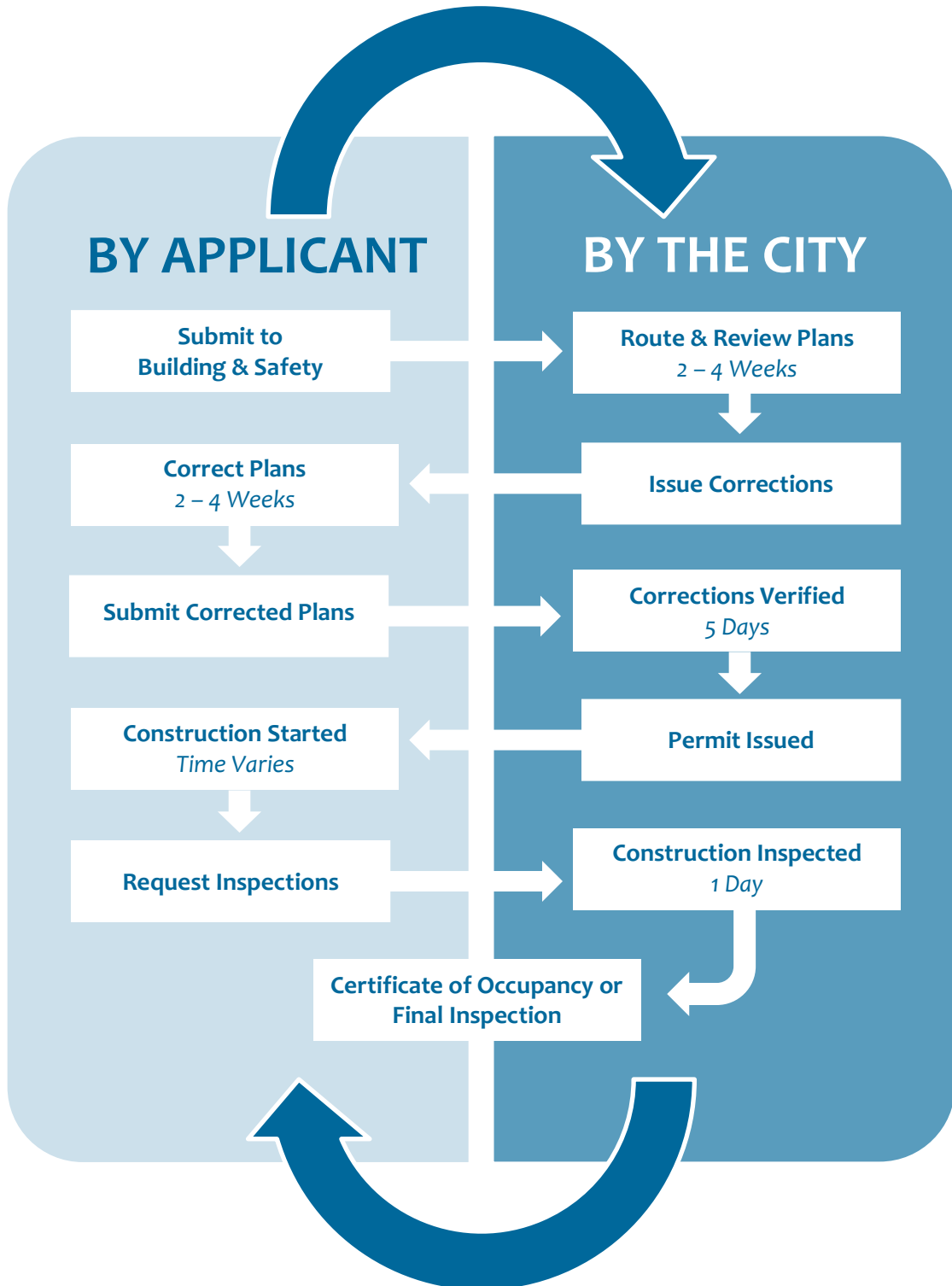
6

Certificate of Occupancy / Final Inspection

With final inspection approval, the City will provide a Certificate of Occupancy for new non-residential buildings only. All other projects can obtain an Inspection Summary, available through the Accela Citizen Access Portal (ACA).



WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW?



BEFORE YOU APPLY

We encourage you to contact us at (805) 564-5485 CDBuildingCode@SantaBarbaraCA.gov or visit the [Building & Safety](#) webpage before you submit your building permit application. Counter Staff can provide general direction on the process, fees, and timelines for review. You may be referred to other staff members to determine if your project will require any other City permits or planning approvals.

- **Planning Approvals**

If your project requires a planning approval, you must file a separate [Planning \(PLN\) Application](#) and pay required fees to the City's Planning Division. Those fees are separate from the building permit fees. Planning approvals must be granted *before* you can apply for a building permit. For more information, visit the [Planning Central](#) webpage.

WHO WILL REVIEW MY PLANS?

After your application is submitted and application fees are paid, plan check staff will review your plans. Depending on the nature of the project, the City review team could involve several different divisions and departments, collectively known as the **Land Development Team (LDT)**. Additional plan check and permit fees will be assessed by each City reviewer based on the scope of work.

- **Building & Safety Division** – Determines compliance with local, state, county, and federal standards, including building, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, energy conservation, green building, historic building code, FEMA flood mitigations and disabled access.
- **Fire Department** – Ensures emergency vehicle access, fire alarm, High Fire Hazard Area requirements, and fire suppression system requirements.
- **Public Works Engineering, Water Resources, and Transportation** – Confirms compliance with public easements, landscape water conservation, public water system protection, public wastewater system standards, access and arrangement of parking, driveway standards and public improvement requirements.
- **Planning Division** – Verifies zoning regulations including authorized uses within zoning districts, quantity of parking, and property development standards such as building height, setbacks, and density requirements.
- **Environmental Services** – Checks for trash and recycling facilities compliance.
- **Parks & Recreation, Creeks Division** – Reviews for storm water pollution prevention and creek habitat protections.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

We are committed to processing your plans as quickly and efficiently as possible, thus all building permit reviews are completed by all City reviewers simultaneously. The Accela Citizen Access Portal (ACA) allows applicants to apply for permits and pay fees from home or office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It also allows you to track the progress of your project from initial submittal to final inspection.

Submitting detailed and complete plans initially will help avoid numerous resubmittals. You can assist staff in providing a speedier response by notifying us of any significant changes to a project, responding thoroughly to all comments, and providing a written response to each item in the correction list. Your application will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis by members of the Land Development Team. The City’s goal is to complete the initial plan check within the following timeline:

FIRST REVIEW TIMELINE

<i>Category</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Residential Examples</i>	<i>Commercial Examples</i>
SMALL	10 Days	< 1,000 sq. ft., single-story additions; non-structural remodels; pools	Minor tenant improvements, grading, or other site improvements
MEDIUM	15 Days	< 1,000 sq. ft. two-story additions; structural remodels; addition to duplex; > 1,000 sq. ft. non-structural additions; < 1,000 sq. ft. structural additions	Interior only, non-structural, or minor structural (no new sq.ft.); minor exterior tenant improvements
LARGE	20 Days	> 1,000 sq. ft. structural additions; new single-family residence or duplexes	< 1000 sq. ft. additions; structural tenant improvements; New single occupancy buildings < 10,000 sq. ft.
X-LARGE	33 Days	New multi-unit housing; multiple custom tracts; projects that received Planning Commission approval	New single occupancy buildings >10,000 sq. ft.; new mixed-use buildings

CORRECTIONS, CLARIFICATIONS, AND CHANGES

The Building & Safety Division will notify you when the plan review for your project is completed. If the plans cannot be approved, we will provide you with a list of necessary corrections. When plans are resubmitted, they will be distributed to the same City staff that generated the initial corrections for subsequent review. The corrections and recheck process continues until the plans are approved and the permit is ready to be issued. Other division plan check fees will be invoiced after your first review, and must be paid before rechecks can begin, with any remaining fees due before permit issuance.

- **Resubmittal Timeline**

A “Resubmittal” is when you are submitting additional materials to an **existing application** that is already in process. A resubmittal is NOT a new application. Plans submitted for recheck will generally require less processing time than required for the initial check. The City’s goal is to process rechecks within **5 days**. If the initial plans were considered incomplete, another first review timeline may be instituted.

ISSUING THE PERMIT

After all the City departments and divisions have determined that the plans and submittal materials satisfy all code requirements, you will be notified of the approval and asked to complete any remaining forms and pay all remaining permit fees. Upon full payment and completion of all documents and plan approval, the City will issue a building permit. All permit documents and approved plans are issued electronically. You may then begin construction.

INSPECTIONS

You will be given a [Permit Packet](#) that includes the Inspection Record Card. City Building Inspectors will inspect your project as work progresses and you must have the inspection card and the approved plans available during all inspections. PDF format of these documents is acceptable. Inspector approval is required prior to covering or concealing your construction. Your inspector will update your inspection record results which can be found when you visit your online account. The City will provide a correction list, but the builder is responsible for confirming all construction meets applicable codes and standards.

- **Scheduling an Inspection**

Building inspectors will conduct an inspection on any City working day you request, provided you call or email a request for an inspection by no later than 5:00 p.m. **the day before** you wish the inspection to take place. (Building & Safety is closed every other Friday of the month.) The Inspection Request Line is (805) 564-5492 or e-mail to Inspections@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

REVISIONS TO APPROVED PLANS

A “revision” is defined as **changes to work already permitted**. If you want to change your project – after the permit has already been issued – you must submit a new permit application and reference the original building permit number (BLD) in the Scope of Revision. Generally, only the plan sheets showing changes must be provided. Work that goes beyond the scope of the original permit, or was not included in the original permit, is not considered a revision. No change to structures, site development, or uses for which a permit has been issued may commence until *after* the permit is revised and all required planning approvals are obtained.

- **Revisions – What to Submit**

If you are proposing a revision, see the [Revisions to Approved Plans](#) submittal packet. The architect or building designer responsible for the original design should prepare new plan sheets that reflect the revision. If the design professional has changed, a letter from the original design professional removing themselves from the project or agreeing to the revision is required.

- **Review After Final**

If your original permit required a planning approval, revisions that alter the exterior appearance of the building or site will usually require a new approval from the design review boards **before** you can submit the revision. Contact the City’s Planning Counter for more information on how to submit a “Review After Final” at (805) 564-5578 or PlanningCounter@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

COMPLETING YOUR PROJECT

Other than enforcement cases with an immediate health and safety risk, you are allowed 180 days (six months) to begin work on your project. If you are getting close to 6 months with no work started, please contact us to discuss a time extension at (805) 564-5485 or CDBuildingCode@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

- **Permit Expiration**

Once construction begins, you must have passed at least one “milestone inspection” approval every 180 days to avoid permit expiration. Milestone inspections are foundation, rough framing or combination frame, insulation, lath/drywall, final building inspection. When work is completed,

you must obtain approvals from all City departments listed on the Inspection Record Card before final inspection.

- **Certificate of Occupancy / Final Inspection**

Building & Safety will authorize “utility releases” allowing electricity and gas services to be connected when such inspections are requested and approved. With final inspection approval, we will provide a Certificate of Occupancy for new non-residential buildings only. All other projects can obtain an Inspection Summary, available through the Accela Citizen Access Portal (ACA). Your job card will identify if any inspections are required from other City departments.

DO I NEED TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL?

The permit process can be complex, even for seasoned professionals. Depending on the size and type of your project, you may need the services of a licensed professional. A licensed professional, such as an architect or engineer, is required for projects that are greater than two residential units on a lot, or greater than two stories in height. A licensed professional is required for all structural commercial tenant improvements and any work that alters the safety of a building.

- **Exemptions for Unlicensed Persons**

The [California Business & Professions Code](#) allows some exemptions for unlicensed persons to prepare plans, subject to approval by the Building Official. Check in with the Building & Safety Counter regarding the need for a licensed professional for your project.

APPEALS

An appeal is made when either an applicant or a third-party files a request for a decision to be reviewed by the next level of decision-making authority and asks for a formal change to an official decision. Any person may appeal a decision of the Building Official or Fire Code Official by filing a written appeal within 10-days of the issuance of the decision. Appeals are heard by the Building and Fire Code Board of Appeals (SBMC §8.04.020). Decisions are final with no further right of appeal. For more information on the process and an application, please see [Appealable Decisions](#).

EXPIRATIONS

Remember that you, the property owner or applicant, are responsible for keeping track of your own project time limits. The City is not responsible for sending you notification of pending application or approval expirations. If there is no case activity within 6 months, your application will automatically be expired, all submittal materials will be discarded, and all fees forfeited. If you are getting close to 6 months with no activity on your application, please contact the Building & Safety counter to discuss a time extension at (805) 564-5485 or CDBuildingCode@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.

- **Planning Approval Expirations**

Submittal of a building permit, or the granting of a building permit time extension, does not automatically extend a planning approval. Planning approvals generally expire three years after approval. You may request time extensions **before** the application or approval has expired. Contact the City’s Planning Counter for more information on how to request a planning approval time extension at (805) 564-5578 or PlanningCounter@SantaBarbaraCA.gov.