



City of Santa Barbara

ZIR PHYSICAL INSPECTION COMMON QUESTIONS

A Zoning Information Report (ZIR) is required for every transfer of residential property (except condominiums) located within the City of Santa Barbara. The purpose of the ZIR is to provide information to the potential buyer regarding the zoning and permitted use of the property. As part of the ZIR preparation, a physical inspection of the property is performed. The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers regarding the ZIR physical inspection.

What is the extent and purpose of the physical inspection?

Unless the property owner or authorized agent consents to allow City staff to inspect the interior and exterior of all structures, the physical inspection is limited to what can be observed on the site from the public right-of-way and other publicly accessible viewing locations. The intent of the physical inspection is to identify the buildings, structures, and improvements on the property, as well as their associated uses, for comparison with the City's official records.

What should I expect during the physical inspection?

If the property owner or authorized agent consents to allow City staff to inspect the interior and exterior of all structures, the ZIR inspector will meet with either the owner or agent on site and explain the purpose of the inspection, the areas that will be inspected, and answer any questions the owner or agent may have regarding the inspection itself and the City's regulations and policies. The ZIR inspector will take notes and photographs during the inspection.

Who must be present for the site inspection?

A standard physical inspection does not require a pre-arranged meeting time between the ZIR inspector and the property owner or authorized agent. If the ZIR inspector is authorized to inspect the interior and exterior of the structures on the site, an adult must be present for the site inspection. This can be the seller, buyer, or agent for either party; tenant; or any other person over the age of 18. Failure of a representative to be present for the authorized inspection of the interior and exterior of structures will result in the need to schedule a new inspection and assessment of a re-inspection fee.

How long does a complete site inspection take?

Most inspections of the interior and exterior of all structures require approximately 15-20 minutes; however, multi-unit properties and large estates can exceed one hour, depending on the number of units and the size of the property.

What areas of the property are inspected?

The physical inspection is limited to what can be observed on the site from the public right-of-way and other publicly accessible viewing locations. A complete site inspection of the interior and exterior of all structures includes the interior of all residential units and accessory structures (garages, sheds, studios, etc.), and the entire grounds of the property. If all exterior and interior areas are not accessible, the ZIR inspector may need to return to the site when access is available and a re-inspection fee will be charged. Otherwise, the inspector will note in the ZIR the extent of access available during the time of the site inspection.

If your property also contains permitted non-residential uses/structures, those areas will not be inspected.

What items are typically noted during the site inspection?

Unless the property owner or authorized agent consents to allow City staff to inspect the interior and exterior of all structures, the physical inspection is limited to what can be observed on the site from the public right-of-way and other publicly accessible viewing locations.

To the extent possible, based on the level of site access granted, the ZIR inspector will document all buildings and structures (including trellis/patio covers, mechanical equipment, built-in barbeques, decks, fountains, pool/spa, etc.) on the property and their current use. Items noted during the inspection will vary based on the extent of site access granted and may include, but not be limited to: the number of residential units; number of bedrooms¹ and bathrooms; any extra sinks (laundry, bar, kitchen); accessory rooms; any building additions/alterations; location of laundry facilities; and the location of buildings/structures to determine any non-conformance with zoning requirements. To the extent possible, based on the level of site access granted, parking areas (covered and uncovered) and whether they are unobstructed for vehicular access are documented in the ZIR, as well as items that appear to be within setbacks, the front yard, or required open yard. Any over-height hedge or fence located on a street corner or adjacent to a driveway are also identified in the ZIR.

What if I need to cancel or reschedule the site inspection?

If you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment for a complete site inspection, please call the Planning and Zoning Counter at (805) 564-5578 at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled inspection time. Missed appointments without prior notification will be subject to a re-inspection fee. Otherwise, the inspector will note in the ZIR that the physical inspection was limited to what could be observed from the public right-of-way and other publicly accessible viewing locations.

Why does the inspector take photographs during the site inspection?

The photographs are used by the ZIR inspector, in addition to notes, to compare the exterior details (e.g., doors and windows, air conditioning units, patio covers and exterior alterations) and interior room configuration and floor plan layout to the building permit record and archive plans.

When can I expect to receive the final ZIR?

The City's goal is to provide the final written ZIR within three *working* days of the site inspection. The final ZIR is emailed to the person identified on the submitted ZIR application form. If this date cannot be met, the ZIR inspector will contact the property owner or agent to explain the reason for the delay. Delays are usually due to the need for additional information or records (such as County Assessor records) from the property owner.

¹ The number of rooms used as bedrooms are noted; however, the number of bedrooms that are indicated in the ZIR is based on City archive plans.