



PERMITSF REFORMING CITY PERMITTING PROCESSES



PermitSF

PermitSF: Executive Directive / May 20, 2025

BAY AREA // SAN FRANCISCO

Mayor Lurie launches initiative to speed up S.F.'s slow permitting process

By **Reiland U.**, Business Reporter
Feb 13, 2025

Gift Article



It took a year for Jeff Cobb to get a permit to remove and replace a tree in front of his San Francisco home. Daniel Lurie wants to speed up the permitting process.
Source: Bloomberg/The Chronicle 2024



BAY AREA // SAN FRANCISCO

Mayor Daniel Lurie unveils S.F. permit reforms to eliminate rules that 'no longer make sense'

By **J.D. Morris**, City Hall Reporter
May 20, 2025

Gift Article

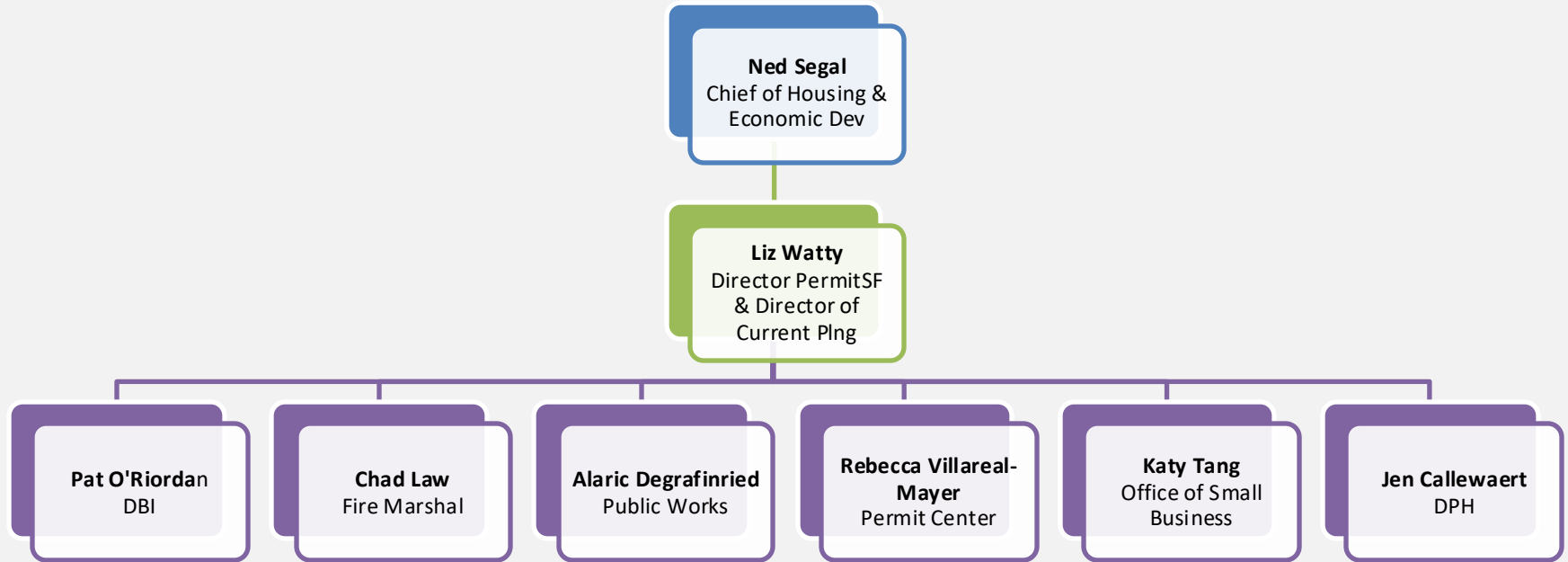


Mayor Daniel Lurie advanced his efforts to reform San Francisco's notoriously complicated permitting system with proposals that aim to eliminate onerous requirements that hinder small businesses.
Jessica Christian/S.F. Chronicle



“San Francisco is coming back, but we need to create clearer pathways to open businesses and build housing. PermitSF is an important step to show the world ... that San Francisco is open for business and that we will do everything in our power to help open businesses and create jobs,” Lurie said in a statement.

The PermitSF Leadership Team

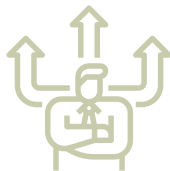


PermitSF: Reforming the City's Permitting Process

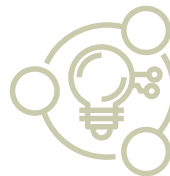
PermitSF leadership in charge of driving key reforms in these priority areas:



**Customer Experience
& Operations**



**Government
Accountability &
Policy**



Technology



**Performance
Management**

Executive Directive: 100 Day Actions



Customer Experience:

- Centralize permit intake across departments.
- Expand Permit Center hours to meet demand.
- Publish permit data online for easier access.
- Identify and eliminate unnecessary codes and policies that add time and cost
- Audit permitting agencies for consistency and set performance measures.

Government Accountability:

- Establish permit processing deadlines (“shot clocks”) and performance targets.
- Align staff evaluations with permit processing efficiency.

Executive Directive: 1 Year Actions

Customer Experience:



- Create a consolidated permit application
- Establish a permit status lookup tool for customers to track the status of their permit across departments
- Allow for any permit to be filed online
- Modify building and other codes to standardize processes with other California jurisdictions

Government Accountability:



- Develop and recommend amendments to City Charter to merge key permitting functions into a single department.
- Monitor performance and adherence to performance standards
- Train managers and supervisors to better support their operations and teams

Technology:



- Launch first phase of cross-department permit solution
- Develop a comprehensive cross-departmental permit architecture to unify work, data, and technology
- Incorporate new technologies to assist employees in delivering and customers in viewing reliable and transparent permit information

PermitSF – What's Next?

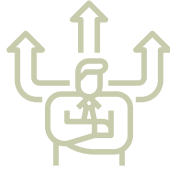
Day 200

Future Work: Technology

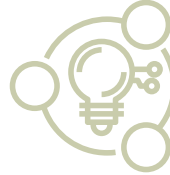
On May 20th a Request for Information (RFI) was released



City looking at industry leaders to help build a new technology platform for permitting



City will form new partnerships to modernize our aging technology



Improved application process will be launched with many of your suggestions incorporated



An easier way to relate permits and applications will be part of this work

Future Improvements: Customer Experience

Code Amendments: Building Code

DBI code amendments introduced 7/29

- Slope Protection Act
- Size limits for rooftop structures
- Driveway and sidewalk load requirements
- Outdated Lighting efficiency standards

Code Amendments : Planning

Planning code amendments introduced 9/2

- Removes code that says property owners cannot park in their own driveway
- ZA appeals – restore to 15 days
- Flex Uses for Historic Buildings
- Temporary Signage
- ADU - alignment with State Law
- Expand Residential Use Permissibility in NCDs
- Planning Fees: timing shift, reduce CEQA for lg projects

Code Amendments : Public Works

Public Works code amendments introduced 9/2

- Removes code that requires “parking plan”
- Removes process in “commemorative plaque” code requirements
- Pollution Liability Insurance: reduces costs for projects not requiring liability insurance

Future Improvements: Customer Experience

Over-the-Counter



- Expanding scopes of work accepted in person to include more
- Adding some appointments to support longer plan reviews
- Look for more ways to incorporate technology and streamline steps in the OTC process

Solar Permit Streamlining:



- Launch a simplified process for solar permits that resembles other building permit processes
- Applicants can apply online (similar to other in-house permits)
- Information will be visible on PTS online (like other building permits)

Addressing:



- Addressing processes will be more transparent by:
 - Moving addressing requests to Salesforce
 - Publishing processes online by September 2025

We want to hear from you!

We won't be able to do this without you.
Send us your feedback or email us at:

PermitSF@sfgov.org

sf.gov/permitsf



PermitSF

Backup Slides

Fenestration, Transparency, and Sign Requirements; Sales & Service Uses in the C-3 and RC District / Effective September 1, 2025

Storefront Transparency

- Certain critical uses are now exempt from storefront transparency requirements
- Example: A Child Care Facility received a complaint for violating the storefront transparency requirement; they did not want children visible from a busy corridor



Business Signs

- The legislation removed permit requirement for business signs applied to building facades, window signs and interior signs (e.g., paint, vinyl stickers).
- Example: Both businesses shown below received complaints for unpermitted signs; they had to obtain a permit to close out the complaint. One business owner came to the Permit Center twice and spent several hours there.



Fenestration, Transparency, and Sign Requirements; Sales & Service Uses in the C-3 and RC District / Effective September 1, 2025

Downtown Uses

- The legislation principally permits certain non-retail sales and service uses on the ground floor in the Downtown-Commercial (C-3) Districts, including office, business services, and trade offices through 2030.



Example of activated ground floor workspace downtown



RC & RH-DTR Districts

- To ease the filling of non-ground floor vacancies within Residential-Commercial (RC) Districts, the legislation principally permits retail sales and service uses and non-retail sales and services uses at the second floor and above.
- Example: Industrial design studio on the second floor along Van Ness Ave received a complaint and would need to vacate its space because the use is not currently permitted.
- Expand permitted ground floor uses within historic structures in the RH-DTR ("Rincon Hill Downtown Residential") District (Section 803.9).

Nighttime and Entertainment Permits / Effective August 16, 2025

Reduce Permit Processing Timelines

- Reduces permit processing timelines for nighttime and entertainment uses by eliminating the routing of permits to certain departments where the review is not relevant to entertainment permits and is otherwise redundant.

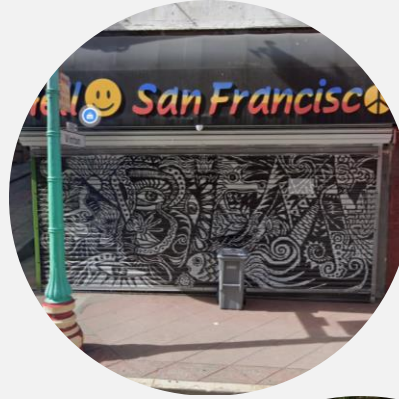
Reduce Costs

- Extended Hours and Place of Entertainment Permits no longer need to be reviewed by the Department of Building Inspection.
- Limited Live Performance and Fixed Place Amplified Sound permits no longer need to be reviewed by the Planning Department.
- Reduces costs for events and venues.



Existing Awning, Sign, and Gate Amnesty Program; Design Standards for Gates, Railings, and Grillwork / Effective August 16, 2025

- Allows businesses with security gates to participate in amnesty program and ease transparency requirements for security gates, allowing them to be 100% non-transparent.
- Approx. 100 small businesses currently facing Planning Code violation complaints for security gate installations without a permit
- Examples: Businesses along Grant Ave and Mission Street with pending complaints for unpermitted gates



Temporary Use Authorization / Effective August 16, 2025

- Simplifies and clarifies the duration of allowable temporary uses, and clarify and expands the definition of "Retail Pop Up" uses



Example: Retail sales activities within
RH-1 District – Outer Sunset Farmers
Market

Previous Temporary Use Authorization Categories

TEMPORARY USE CATEGORY

Check the box for the temporary use category into which the proposed use would fall. Please note that this summary table in no way supersedes Planning Code Section 205 et. seq. or Section 211.1(g) which provide greater detail on allowable uses and conditions of operation. If the proposed use does not conform to one of the following categories it cannot be approved as a Temporary Use.

	USE TYPE	MAXIMUM TIME LIMIT	ZONING DISTRICT	CODE SECTION
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Neighborhood festival sponsored by residents in the vicinity	60 days	all	205.1(a)
<input type="checkbox"/>	B Neighborhood festival sponsored by property owners or businesses in the vicinity	60 days	NC, Mixed Use, PDR, C, M	205.1(a)
<input type="checkbox"/>	C Booth for charitable, patriotic or welfare purpose	60 days	all	205.1(b)
<input type="checkbox"/>	D Open air sale of seasonal decorations such as Christmas trees or Halloween pumpkins.	60 days	all	205.1(c)
<input type="checkbox"/>	E Outdoor "intermittent activities" such as mobile food facilities (a.k.a. street food) or farmers markets	3 days/week or 6 twelve-hour days/week for 1 year	all except RH, RM, RED, RTO	205.4
<input type="checkbox"/>	F Mobile food facilities located in P Districts larger than one acre	1 year, no hourly/daily limit	P	205.4(b)(3)
<input type="checkbox"/>	G Rental or sales office incidental to a new residential development	1 year	all	205.2(b)
<input type="checkbox"/>	H Automobile wrecking	2 years	M-1, M-2	205.2(c)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I Structures and uses incidental to construction activities	2 years	all	205.2(a)
<input type="checkbox"/>	J Celebration or exhibition sponsored by a residential or commercial occupant(s)	single 24-hour event per month for 1 year	PDR, C, M, NC, Mixed Use Districts	205.3(a) & (b)
<input type="checkbox"/>	K Wireless facility	1 year	all where WTS permitted	205.2(d)
<input type="checkbox"/>	L Temporary uses on Public Property	3 years	P	211.1(g)
<input type="checkbox"/>	M "Pop Up" retail or Host Facility	60 days	all; limited in R-districts; must be within either a vacant commercial space or a space occupied by a legally established Commercial Use.	205.1(d)
<input type="checkbox"/>	N Long Term parking of and overnight camping in vehicles and ancillary uses	2 years	NCT-2, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 6973, Lot No. 039	205.2(f)
<input type="checkbox"/>	O Interim Uses within Bars and Entertainment Uses	Not to exceed 4 years from effective date of any such authorization, provided that the period terminates within 6 years of December 18, 2020	all	205.6
<input type="checkbox"/>	P Arts Activities, Social Service or Philanthropic Facilities, and COVID-19 Relief and Recovery uses in vacant storefronts	2 years, may be extended for an additional 2 years	all except R districts	205.7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Q Entertainment, Arts, and Recreational Uses in outdoor areas/temporary structures and ancillary uses of indoor areas	1 year, may be extended for 1 additional year. Maximum daily hours 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.	all	205.8
<input type="checkbox"/>	R Interim Activities on Development Sites	36 months may be extended up to 12 months	Eligible development sites as identified in Sec. 205.5	205.5
<input type="checkbox"/>	S Pop-Up Activations	1 year	Certain streets within C-2 or C-3 districts	205.2(a)(2)

PAGE 5 | CURRENT PLANNING: TEMPORARY USE AUTHORIZATIONS

6/16/2020 SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Consolidating the Planning Commissions Community Priority Processing Program

Priority Processing for Certain Commercial Use /

Effective August 16, 2025



San Francisco
Planning

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San Francisco, CA 94103
www.sfplanning.org

COMMUNITY BUSINESS PRIORITY PROCESSING PROGRAM (CB3P) CHECKLIST FOR ELIGIBILITY

The CB3P streamlines the Conditional Use process for certain small and mid-sized businesses applications.

Projects that qualify for, and enroll in, the CB3P are guaranteed (1) a hearing date within 90 days of filing a complete application and (2) placement on the Planning Commission's consent calendar. The analysis of CB3P projects is documented through a two-page Project Summary and Motion ("PS&M") rather than the lengthier Executive Summary and Draft Motion documents prepared in connection with conventional applications.

WHAT TO SUBMIT:

1. One (1) complete checklist (available on the next page) documenting eligibility for participation.

THE PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS:

The following types of projects require a Pre-Application Meeting Notification. Please be aware that a Pre-Application meeting is also required.

SEC. 303.2. PRIORITY PROCESSING FOR CERTAIN USES IN COMMERCIAL SPACE: EXPEDITED CONDITIONAL USE REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS AND REDUCED APPLICATION FEE.

(a) Findings.

- (1) In April 2013, the Planning Commission adopted the Small Business Priority Processing Pilot Program. The stated goal of the pilot program was to business applications without compromising the review times of other applications.
- (2) Building on the success of the pilot program, Planning Department staff in consultation with staff from the Office of Small Business proposed expa applications. The expanded program was adopted by the Planning Commission in February 2015 and renamed the Community Business Priority Process Commission's adoption Resolution No. 19323, the intent was to support the business community – especially small and mid-sized businesses – and to incre Commission and Department handle related applications.
- (3) By enacting this Section 303.2, the Board of Supervisors underscores the importance of small and mid-sized businesses to the economic vitality of S the City as a whole, its residents, and visitors. The intent of this Section 303.2 is to expedite the review and hearing process for these vital small and mid-size public notice and input or the review times of other applications, and to build upon the success of the Community Business Priority Process Program by exp and ensuring that all eligible projects are considered accordingly, while preserving critical opportunities for community input and accountability to the legal
- (4) The Calle 24 Special Use District is still in its infancy, and due to its unique history and special identity the projects within its boundaries require sp enhance, and support its character. It is, therefore, exempted from the priority processing provisions of this Section 303.2.

The legislation consolidated two similar priority permit processing programs under the Planning Commission and Planning Department.

The key benefit of the priority permit processing programs, which will remain, is to guarantee that a business needing a Conditional Use Authorization from the Planning Commission will have certainty over timing of their hearing – guaranteed to be held within 90 days of a completed and accepted application.

- The proposed legislation also updates the eligibility requirements to align with the CB3P, including:
 - allowing formula retail uses with fewer than 20 locations to participate in the priority processing program; and
 - disallowing Cannabis Retail uses from priority processing.

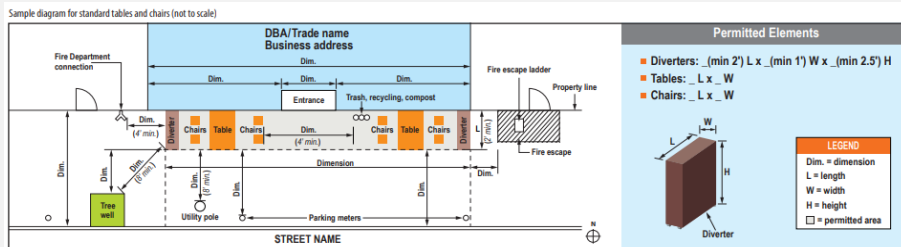
Businesses from the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD), North Beach Special Use District (SUD), and Calle 24 SUD will continue to be excluded from the priority processing program.

- Supervisor Sauter introduced legislation on June 17, 2025 to allow businesses in the North Beach NCD and SUD to participate in the priority permit processing program (BOS File 250682)

Café Tables and Chairs, Display Merchandise, Appurtenant Building Features, and Sidewalk Shared Spaces / Effective August 16, 2025

Previous Tables and Chairs Requirements

- Permit application + annual renewal fee
 - A typical business pays approximately \$1,000
- Certificate of Insurance
- Site plan



New Process

- Registration (no fee)
- Attestation to operating guidelines and program requirements
- Administrative penalties on second and subsequent valid and unaddressed violations



Approx. 215 businesses currently hold Tables and Chairs permits

Café Tables and Chairs, Display Merchandise, Appurtenant Building Features, and Sidewalk Shared Spaces / Effective August 16, 2025

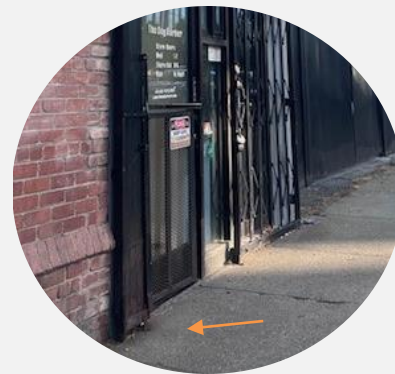
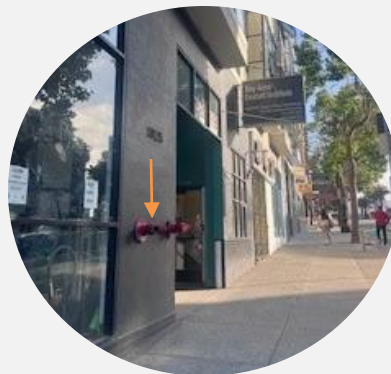
The legislation eliminated minor encroachment permits for routine tenant improvements

Businesses spend significant time and money for permits to install:

- Door actuators, wheelchair lifts, or other elements constructed for compliant with accessibility standards
- Water spouts, standpipes, outswinging doors, and security gates – which are affixed to the building extending no more than four inches into the public right of way

These permits can cost thousands of dollars upfront, and they are assessed an annual fee thereafter.

Applications for accessibility related sidewalk improvements commonly take 6 –12 months.



Variances for existing structures / Effective / August 16, 2025

The legislation eliminates the requirement to obtain a variance from the Planning Commission to rebuild existing noncomplying structures, such as replacing a back deck or stairs.

- The legislation aligns the permissible size of accessory structures between Planning Department and Department of Building Inspection, which will be in better alignment with state law.



Reforming Health Department review / Effective August 16, 2025

- The legislation removes the requirement for the Department of Public Health to review and issue permits for laundry facilities and veterinary hospitals
- The legislation reduces fees for certified farmers' market permits

