

***Regular Meeting of the Building
Inspection Commission***

March 18, 2026

Agenda Item 9



Department of Building Inspection Accomplishments in Past Six Years

Tone at the Top

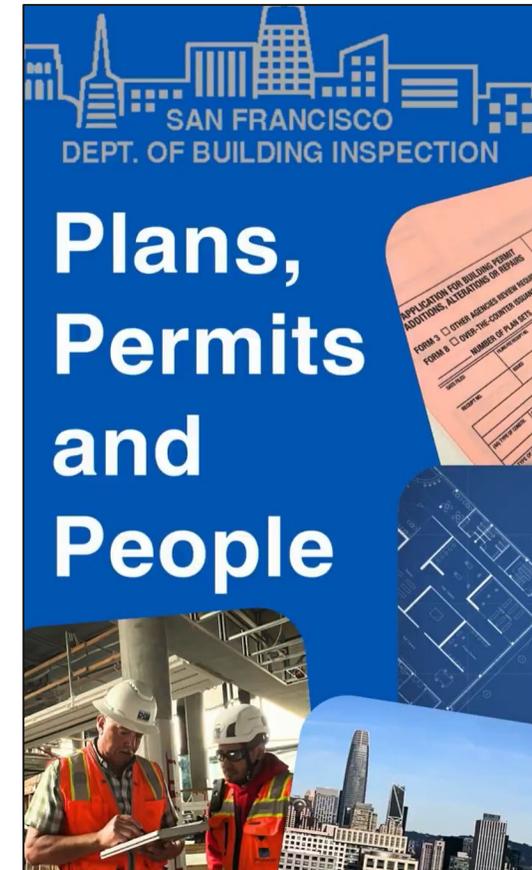
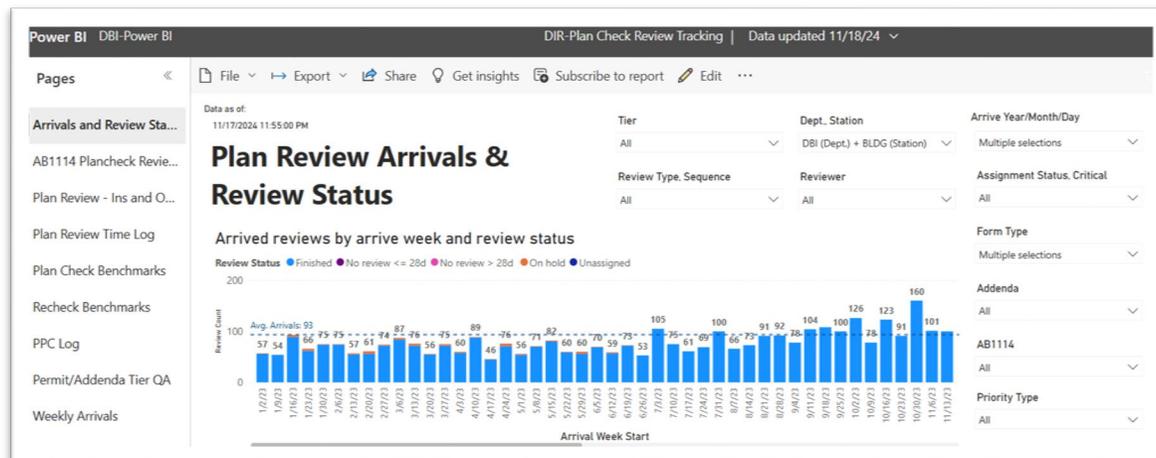
Today's DBI strives to have:

- An ethical, professional, respectful workplace.
- Customer service focus in all we do.
- Clear guidance, direct communication and full transparency.
- Staff empowered to make decisions and develop professionally.
- Data-driven planning and operations.

Director's Office

Expanded Focus

- Data and Performance Management
- Communications
- Policy and Legislative Affairs
- Compliance
- Disaster Coordination



Key Administration Initiatives

PeopleSoft

- Launched paperless timekeeping in 2022

Human Resources

- Standardized HR processes and built a team
- Updated our performance review process
- HR partnering with communications team on recruitment and internal communications

Technology

- Finishing up an upgrade of current PTS technology (Oracle Forms)
- Worked with PermitSF on OpenGov deployment

Revenue

- Part of strategic plan: reviewing fees and services and making recommendations

Key Permitting Improvements

EPR (electronic plan review) in 2020 (100% starting in 2024)

- Parallel plan review and better project management

Pre-plan check in July 2022

- Plans reviewed for level of effort and assigned a tier
- Dynamic plan review assignments for more transparency and accountability

New intake process and KPIs in January 2024

- Planning approval process before building permit application
- Completeness letter in 15 days
- Parallel review across permitting departments

OpenGov launch in February 2025

- System will eventually completely replace our existing Permit Tracking System and expand our online permitting capabilities

Improvements in Housing Permitting

Housing Permitting

- Nearly **100%** of completeness checks are done in 15 days or less.
- **94%** of housing plan checks are hitting state targets
 - 30 business days for first reviews for 25 or fewer units.
 - 60 business days for first reviews for 26+ units.
 - 10 business days for rechecks.



Improvements Are Showing Results

Citywide In-House Review Permitting

In-House Review is generally used for larger or more complex projects.

Percentage of projects meeting permit review targets at first DBI station:

Building Type	FY23	FY24	FY25	Percentage Improvement FY23 – FY25
1-2 Unit	24%	50%	63%	163%
Multi-Family / Mixed-Use	40%	71%	74%	85%
Commercial / Industrial	36%	69%	68%	89%



Permitting: Comprehensive Online Guidance

Sf.gov/dbi

Step-by-Step webpage for In-House Review Permits

Step by step

Get a building permit with In-House Review

You must have a building permit to do construction. Follow these steps for In-House Review permit applications.

The Department of Building Inspection reviews every building permit application for life safety and building code compliance. Other City departments, including Planning, Public Works, Public Utilities Commission, SF Fire, Public Health, Community Investment and Infrastructure, and Environment, also review some projects for code compliance and may require additional documentation as part of your permit application.

All of the requirements below went through a legislative process before being incorporated into the [San Francisco Municipal Code](#).

Follow these instructions to prepare the required information and submit your In-House Review building permit application and supporting documents online for electronic plan review (EPH).

We encourage you to print this webpage and use it as a checklist to ensure that your permit application and document submission is complete.

There are different building permit application processes for [accessory dwelling units \(ADUs\)](#) or [Department of Public Works projects](#). Please visit [get the services or permits you require](#) to learn more.

- Get City Planning zoning approval for your project**

Many building projects require zoning approval from the Planning Department. This approval is required prior to submitting a building permit. See the [Planning Department's website](#) to determine your project's zoning requirements and how to apply for the necessary approval.

If your project is in a [former independent zone](#) that is managed by the [Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure \(OCI\)](#), you will receive a letter from OCI instead.

Include the approval letter from either SF Planning or OCI when submitting your Building Permit application.
- Complete other pre-application requirements as necessary**

Your project may require additional analysis and certifications prior to applying for a building permit. Please review all of these requirements to determine which of them are applicable to your project and complete them prior to submitting your building permit application.

If any required prerequisite reviews are not completed, your building permit application will not be accepted.

Water reuse systems - SF Public Utilities Commission
Projects creating 45,000 square feet or more of space are required to obtain approval of a Water Budget Application. Additionally, Onsite water reuse systems for the collection, treatment and use of alternate water sources are required for new development projects 100,000 square feet or larger.

[Submit a water budget application](#)

Online Application Submission Portal

Apply for a building permit

We are currently accepting in-house applications with plans for new construction, alterations, additions, demolitions, and addenda submissions to existing permit applications.

We will ask you about:

- Your project's location
- Your project details
- Your contact info

You will also upload your plans and other required forms.

We will set up your building permit application, and email you your building permit application number. We will then review your application for completeness, and email you the results of our Completeness Review.

Convert your over-the-counter project

You can use also this form to convert an over-the-counter (OTC) project to in-house. Smaller projects may qualify for OTC processing. Visit our [OTC page](#) to learn more.

Resubmit in response to a Completeness Review letter

If you previously submitted an application for this project, and the City sent you a Completeness Review letter, use this form to resubmit your corrected application.

If your letter includes a detailed completeness review checklist, resubmit your entire packet, including the checklist items with an "incomplete" status, and a copy of your plans.

Expedited review for small businesses (Prop H)

If your permit is for a small business, you may qualify for expedited review. Do not use this form to submit your permit application. Follow the instructions to [get your small business permits with a 30-day review](#).

Projects in plan review use Bluebeam

If your application is already in plan review, and you are responding to plan check comments, do not use this form. You should:

- Add your updated documents directly to the Bluebeam session, or
- Follow these instructions to [upload revisions](#), if you do not have access to Bluebeam.

This application takes about 20 minutes if you have your documents.

[Get started →](#)

Detailed Design Bulletins

City and County of San Francisco
Department of Building Inspection

London N. Breed, Mayor
Patrick O'Riordan, C.B.O., Director

INFORMATION SHEET

NO. FS-06

DATE: November 2023

CATEGORY: Fire Safety

SUBJECT: Fire Protection for Residential Decks and Deck Stairways in Rear or Side Yard

PURPOSE: The purpose of this information sheet is to clarify the requirements for residential deck and deck stairway protection at the property lines located at the rear or side yards in alterations to existing buildings.

REFERENCE: San Francisco Building Code, Current Edition
California Building Code (CBC), Current Edition
CBC Section 705.2 Exterior Walls, Projections
CBC Section 705.8 Exterior Walls, Openings
CBC Section 705.11 Exterior Walls, Parapets
CBC Section 1015 Guards
CBC Section 1027.5 Exterior Exit Stairways and Ramps, Location

DISCUSSION: Residential decks and deck stairways in the rear or side yards represent an opening in exterior wall lines.

The fire separation distance (FSD) measured from property line for such openings are governed by CBC Table 705.8, unless a one-hour fire-resistive wall is provided extending from the ground to 30 inches above the walking surface of the deck and deck stairway. Note that guard requirements per CBC Section 1015 apply.

Without a fire-resistive wall, the minimum fire separation distance (FSD) of the deck and deck stairway from the property line shall be as follows:

- For R3 buildings, FSD = 3 feet or more.
- For R2 buildings, FSD = 5 feet or more, with the exception of egress components.

The discussion on "decks" in this information sheet is in reference to residential decks, which are exterior platforms built above the ground and connected to the main building. It is distinct from "backyard" or "pool" decks as defined by CBC Section 202.

Page 1 of 2

Department of Building Inspection - Technical Services
48 Bush Van Ness Avenue, Suite 900 - San Francisco, CA 94103
415-483-3723 | [dbi.org](#)

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Design & Permitting Resource Sheet

A general guide for obtaining a permit to construct an ADU
San Francisco Department of Building Inspection
Technical Services | Permit Services Division
Updated October 2024

DESIGN AN ADU THAT MEETS CITY CODES

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) must meet City requirements that keep buildings safe and neighborhoods healthy. Homeowners often hire an architect or designer to create the plans.

WHAT TO DO

After you decide to build an ADU, you must create architectural plans for your ADU. Then we review your plans to make sure they follow the rules in the building, fire and planning codes.

Follow these guidelines to create ADU plans that meet City codes. Refer to the building code on [dbi.org](#) for specific code requirements. See the ADU program companion team SF Planning for specifics at [adubuilding.org/accessory-dwelling-units](#).

When you must hire a design professional

We require that a licensed design professional sign and stamp most ADU plans. We do not require a licensed design professional in these cases: single-family homes with wood-frame construction (Type 1 construction) that are less than:

- 2 stories and basement in height
- 25 feet high

Multiple-unit dwellings containing less than 5 dwelling units of wood construction that are no more than 1 story and basement in height. Read more in Information Sheet G-01 on the [dbi.org](#) website.

Common limitations

- ADUs must be a minimum of 220 sq ft and have a minimum 7.5-ft ceiling height.
- Bathrooms, kitchens, storage rooms, and laundry rooms may have a minimum 7-ft ceiling height.
- You must provide adequate natural light and ventilation to the unit.
- You must provide adequate fire safety requirements for escape and rescue and egress.

For multi-family homes with 3 or more units, you may be required to add a fire alarm and sprinkler system to your ground floor for Local program ADUs.

Number of ADUs you can build at your property

Under State Law, you can build 1 ADU or junior ADU (ADUJ) in single-family homes.

You may build more than 1 ADU in some instances and under our Local ADU program.

If you want to build more than 1 ADU, see more about State and Local ADU programs on the SF Planning website at [sfplanning.org/accessory-dwelling-units](#).

UNIT REQUIREMENTS

Entrances, Exits, and Fire Dept. Access

Your ADU must have its own entrance. The person living in your ADU cannot be required to enter through another unit. The exit can share a common foyer or hallway.

Most ADUs require two exits for fire safety. The exit path must be at least 36 inches wide. The clear opening of all doors must be 32 inches wide, which is usually a 34 inch-wide door panel.

In some cases, there must also be a 5-foot clear access path for the fire department to rescue people when there is an emergency.

Natural light

All living spaces in the City must have natural light, also called open-air. The City uses the term "glazing" to refer to glass in windows, doors, or other fixed openings that let natural light into a building. Habitable rooms, including kitchens, home offices and media rooms, must have glazing that is at least 8% of the floor area.

Ceiling heights

In hallways and living and sleeping areas, the minimum ceiling height is 7.5 ft. In other spaces (like the bathroom and kitchen), the minimum ceiling height is 8 ft.

Rooms and sleeping areas

Your unit must have:

- At least one room that's more than 120 sq ft
- A designated sleeping area

Habitable rooms, like living rooms and bedrooms, must be:

- At least 70 sq ft
- At least 7 ft in any dimension

Kitchens must have a pathway of at least 3 ft between the counters and the wall and a 4-barrier stove.

Ventilation

Habitable rooms must have natural ventilation from a window that's at least 4% of the floor area. An exhaust fan also counts for the ventilation requirement, if that's not enough, you must have a mechanical ventilation system.

All bathrooms must have an exhaust fan.

ELECTRICAL

Independent wiring is required for each unit. Occupants shall have ready access to all overcurrent devices protecting the conductors supplying that occupancy. New detached, free-standing ADUs cannot have new gas appliances.

Gas: If the ADU has gas appliances, the property's gas lines will need to be extended to the new unit. Gas meter installation must be coordinated with Pacific Gas and Electric fire-standing ADUs need to be an electric meter.

Meters: All gas and electric meters must meet PG&E requirements. If the meter box is in the exit passageway, it must be 1-hour fire rated, and it cannot block the minimum width of the exit passageway.

Department of Building Inspection ADU Design Resource Sheet

Legislated Compliance Programs

Advanced and enhanced legislated compliance programs:

- Soft Story Program
- Façade Inspection and Maintenance Program
- Concrete Building Inspection Program
- Vacant and Abandoned Building Program
- Accessible Business Entrance Program (sunsetting)



Key Inspections Improvements

Internal audit

- Launched a compliance audit in March 2022 and completed in June 2025
- Created an amnesty program to waive fees for homeowners subject to audit, available until 2030

Expanded Compliance Control (ECC)

- DBI worked with Supervisor Ronen on the legislation in March 2021
- ECC list is subject to enhanced scrutiny

Centralized administration for inspections

- We reorganized inspections division administrative staff under a new manager for efficiency and cross-training last year

Office Policies and Procedures (OPPs) and dashboards

- As part of Strategic Plan, Inspection Services is systematically developing OPPs
- New dashboards for managing complaints, out-of-district inspections

Five-Year Strategic Plan – May 2024

Mission	The Department of Building Inspection protects our community by ensuring code-compliant construction, building safety, resilience, and habitability, and by supporting economic development in San Francisco.					
Vision	Our dedicated and knowledgeable staff will provide professional, effective customer service using clear processes and consistent standards to build trust, provide accountability, and safeguard the public.					
Values	Customer focus	Professionalism	Integrity	Supportive work environment	Diversity, equity, inclusion & belonging	Transparency & accountability
Goals	Ensure building safety and resilience	Improve building permitting	Enhance inspections processes	Increase public trust	Cultivate a highly effective workforce	Produce sufficient revenue to fund optimal operations



More information: sf.gov/dbi

THANK YOU