

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

June 18, 2025

Agenda Item 8



June 12, 2025

Building Inspection Commission
49 South Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94103

Re: Building, Planning Codes – Existing Awning, Sign, and Gate Amnesty Program; Design Standards for Gates, Railings, and Grillwork

Honorable Members of the Commission:

On June 11, 2025 the full Code Advisory Committee (CAC) met to consider adoption of the File No.250539 Awning, Sign, and Gate Amnesty Program. After a discussion as to the merits of adding signs and gates to the Awning Amnesty, the CAC voted unanimously to recommend the Building Inspection Commission (BIC) approve the proposed ordinance as written. CAC also recommend the Department of Building Inspection (DBI) develop an information sheet for code compliant gates.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Fessler
DBI Technical Services
Secretary to the Code Advisory Committee

cc. Patrick O'Riordan, C.B.O. Director
Mary Wilkinson-Church, Acting Deputy Director
Christine Gasparac, Assistant Director
Tate Hanna, Legislative Affairs Manager
J. Edgar Fennie, Chair, Code Advisory Committee

Building Inspection Commission
June 18, 2025

Agenda Item #8 – File No. 250539

Ordinance amending the Building and Planning Codes to extend the Awning Amnesty Program to apply to existing unpermitted Signs and Gates; amending the Planning Code to remove design standards for gates, railings, and grillwork on ground floor street frontages of non-historic buildings in Neighborhood Commercial, Residential-Commercial, Commercial, and Mixed-Use Districts; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1; and making findings of public necessity, convenience, and welfare pursuant to Planning Code, Section 302.

Background

In 2023, to respond to a wave of awning-related complaints, DBI created, via File No. 240447, a temporary awning amnesty program. The program was intended to streamline the process for existing non-compliant awnings to acquire a permit and legalize the building attachment. The program was set to sunset by June 1, 2024.

The program specified the following criteria:

- Awnings must have been installed on or before Aug. 20, 2023 to be eligible.
- Any awning is eligible, despite an outstanding complaint or NOV.
- Awnings that require any corrective action to come into compliance with the building code aside from attaining a permit are not eligible to use this program.

Additionally, the program set up a fee waiver for eligible awnings. This waiver was intended to apply to any fees associated with acquiring the permit for an awning. However, the legislation also specified that if an awning was not eligible for this program due to the need for corrective action, any fees for those corrective actions and associated permits would be waived as well.

The Planning Department, via the same ordinance, also created an awning and sign amnesty program. This program allows these existing awnings and signs to be considered an 'existing non-complying structure and/or nonconforming use'. If DBI determined an awning needs to be replaced or repaired, it may be altered consistent with that requirement and subsequently considered noncomplying/nonconforming uses so long as the replacement or alteration does not increase the degree of nonconformity or noncompliance.

Ordinance's Proposed Changes to Existing Law

This ordinance seeks to amend both the Building and Planning codes to unify the existing amnesty programs and expand them. To do this, the ordinance adds signs to the existing program under the Building Code, as well as including gates under both the Building and Planning codes.

Specific to the Building Code, this ordinance will:

- Include non-illuminated signs under 250 pounds, and 25 square feet or less in the program
- Include gates in the program, specific to B, S and M occupancies.
 - o The definition provided in the ordinance explicitly disallows vehicular gates
- Clarify that the fee waiver will apply to all eligible awnings, signs and gates in the program. However, if any signs or gates need corrective action, the fees for those corrective actions and associated permits shall not be waived.

The Department, to provide this streamlined permitting pathway, has established a round table to process applications. Signs and awnings will be eligible for the round table and won't require plans. Horizontal or accordion-style gates are eligible for the round table, and will have similarly minimal submittal requirements. However, any roll-down gates are not eligible for the round table, and must submit a manufacturer's cut sheet, as well as other information as determined by the Department.

Code Advisory Committee Recommendation

The Administrative and General Design & Disability Access Subcommittee, as well as the Code Advisory Committee, met on June 11, 2025 and by a unanimous vote by both bodies, recommend approval of the ordinance.

File No. 250539 – Awning, Sign & Gate Amnesty

Department of Building Inspection
June 18, 2025

Background on Awning Amnesty Program

Since 2023, DBI has instituted an **Awning Amnesty Program**, providing a streamlined path for existing non-permitted awnings, installed on or before August 20, 2023, to pursue a permit and come into compliance with the Building Code.

The streamlined path created by the program reduces submittal requirements, removing the need for professionally prepared plans.

However, no corrective actions may be authorized under this program; if the existing awning is found to have any building code non-compliance aside from the lack of a permit, they must follow typical permitting pathways.



Fee Waiver

The Awning Amnesty program includes a **fee waiver**. This waiver is applicable to the fees for an existing awning to receive a permit through the program.

The waiver is also applicable to fees for existing awnings that are in need of corrective actions to meet building code compliance. While these awnings aren't eligible for the streamlined pathway, any fees for plan review, permit issuance, inspection or enforcement fees are waived.

The fee waiver is currently set **to sunset on July 1, 2025**.

File No. 250539

File No. 250539 seeks to expand the existing Awning Amnesty Program to be applicable to existing signs and security gates. These building attachments will have reduced submittal requirements and a streamlined pathway to receive a permit if no corrective action is needed.

For signs to be eligible for the program, they must be non-illuminated, under 250 pounds, and 25 square feet or less.

Recommended Amendments

The Department recommends the following amendments:

- Eligible gates must be securely attached to a building in a B, S, or M occupancy. Additionally, vehicular gates are explicitly excluded.
- Fees for any permits that address corrective action for signs or gates shall not be waived.
- An additional code reference for the definition of an awning for clarity.



Code Advisory Committee

On June 11, 2025, the Administrative and General Design and Disability Access Subcommittee, as well as the full Code Advisory Committee, reviewed the ordinance and recommended approval unanimously.

The Department recommends approval of the ordinance with our amendments.



THANK YOU