

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

August 19, 2026

BIC Agenda Item 5a



Director's Report for August 2026

To: Building Inspection Commission
From: Interim Director David Kane, S.E.
Date: 8/19/26

As we continue to streamline permitting and improve our operations, we are beginning to focus on specific areas where we believe modest code changes can make a big difference.

We've recently initiated several efforts to make it easier to build Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs, often referred to as "in-law units".

In San Francisco, ADUs are an important tool to help us build more housing on our existing property parcels. An ADU can be created in an existing residential building or constructed as a separate structure on the same parcel.

The challenge is that ADUs are often added in unconventional spaces that are code-compliant by state standards, but don't meet San Francisco's local requirements.

Over the years, many unpermitted ADUs have been built throughout San Francisco but cannot be legalized due to these strict local design requirements.

These illegal ADUs were built without permits, and therefore have never been inspected for safety.

So we are looking to better align our local ADU requirements with the state requirements in three specific areas.

Legislation has been introduced by Supervisor Wong to reduce ceiling height requirements from seven and a half feet down to seven feet for a habitable room. This is an especially important change for ADU's built at ground floors and basements where taller ceilings can be financially infeasible.

We're also considering alternatives to requiring natural light in every bedroom to help these legalize these unpermitted units. This is something we started to look at a couple of years back for commercial to residential conversions and found a number of smart, easy design solutions that will provide good lighting without needing to have an outside window in every bedroom.

Next, we are looking at whether we can establish a single room size for studio ADUs. Right now, there are three different standards that can be used – two state and one local – depending on which ADU program the owner chooses to build their unit.

While we appreciate the flexibility this can provide to some, we are considering whether a single standard would make it faster, easier and less expensive to build an ADU in San Francisco.

Like our overall efforts to streamline permitting, we're making good progress on ADUs but we still have more work to do.

I want to thank Permit Service's Building Inspector Jeff Ibarra for serving as our ADU point-person and for being an excellent thought partner as we work through these challenges.

Housing Inspection Hires

Starting August 31, DBI has four new housing inspectors coming aboard. As a result, we will have an inspector assigned to each of the 19 housing inspection districts, along with five senior inspectors overseeing their work.

Having a full complement of housing inspectors is going to make a significant difference in our investigations but also in ensuring the smooth operation of our other enforcement and outreach work, including the weekly Director's Hearings, our community outreach grants and our lien collections.

Thank you. This concludes the director's report.