



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of San Diego Virtual Inspection Program Achieves Record Numbers in Customer Service

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT OFFERS ECO-FRIENDLY VIRTUAL PERMITTING SERVICE TO SAVE CUSTOMERS TIME AND MONEY

SAN DIEGO – In its continuing effort to maximize efficiency and deliver high-quality customer service on a digital platform, the City of San Diego's Development Services Department (DSD) recorded its highest number of virtual residential inspections conducted in a month since the [program began in 2020](#).

In August, City building inspectors conducted 849 virtual residential inspections, doubling the previous high of 400 achieved in July of this year. Each month, staff perform nearly 5,400 residential inspections – both virtually and in person – for new homes, room additions, alterations or improvements to single-family homes, duplexes and townhomes. These inspections are required before any permitted construction work can be covered, concealed, occupied or placed into use.

"We are seeing exponential growth in the number of requests for virtual inspections for projects at residences," said Deputy Director and the City's Chief Building Official Kelly Charles. **"The increase in inspections reflects the growing demand to install new solar systems and upgrade water heaters and heating and cooling systems, among other home improvements. These virtual inspections are convenient for customers and more efficient for City employees. The City can squeeze in more inspections per day performing the inspections online as we no longer need to commute to multiple sites daily."**

Before the availability of virtual inspections, customers were required to block out up to four hours of time and wait for an inspector at the project site. The online service has helped increase the number of inspections each inspector can conduct by more than 40% per day. Inspectors conduct approximately 20 virtual inspections daily, providing customers a guaranteed appointment time. During each inspection appointment, which takes about 20 minutes, customers are on site at the project location and use Microsoft Teams to show the completed work. Virtual inspections that can't be undertaken adequately due to technology availability or for other reasons are done in person.

By conducting inspections virtually, City inspectors avoided driving more than 3,000 miles in August alone. These savings helped reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions, supporting the [2022 Climate Action Plan community-wide goal of net-zero emissions by 2035](#).

Residential virtual inspections can currently be conducted on projects that are installing or constructing a variety of elements, including:

- Electrical vehicle charging stations.
- Drywall.
- Exterior siding.
- Foundation retrofits, including mobile homes.
- Gas air tests.
- Light standard footings.
- Minor framing/shear.
- Re-roofs.
- Retaining wall footings.
- Rooftop and ground-mount solar photovoltaic systems.
- Slab grades.
- Window and door replacements.
- Shower pans and tubs.
- Simple heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) change-outs.
- Water services and re-pipes.
- Water heaters.

"I am thrilled that the virtual inspections program our team developed as part of our conversion to #DigitalDSD has been such a tremendous success," said Development Services Director Elyse W. Lowe. "Digital innovations, such as our inspection by virtual meetings with cameras, help us serve more customers, reduce emissions from driving and speed up the process. It's a win-win for both our customers and the City."

Virtual inspections are an integral part of #DigitalDSD, an initiative to modernize all DSD workplace systems and cost-effectively leverage technology to increase productivity and improve service delivery to customers. #DigitalDSD includes the [rollout of an online permitting system](#) for all new development projects, virtual meetings with customers, a new [Zoning and Parcel Information Portal](#), the [online Small Cell Supplemental GIS Tool](#) and the digitization of more than eight million records.

The City's Development Services Department reviews, approves, permits and inspects all private development and is on track to approve more than 70,000 projects this year. These efforts help customers create new housing units and job centers, increase access to the internet, facilitate expansion and replacement of water, sewer and telecommunications systems and protect San Diego's natural resources. For more information about programs and services, visit sandiego.gov/DSD.

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