



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of San Diego Improves Permitting Times for Residential and Commercial Projects

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT HAS STREAMLINED PERMITTING, MADE SERVICES AVAILABLE ONLINE

SAN DIEGO – In its commitment to addressing San Diego’s housing shortage, the City of San Diego is making it easier than ever to build more housing and lower construction costs. The City’s Development Services Department, which regulates building construction safety and enforcement, has transformed a previously cumbersome process by expediting the permit process and transitioning many services online.

Today, staff from DSD presented an update to the Land Use and Housing Committee on improvements to decrease permit times and streamline development regulations.

“We’ve made hundreds of systemic changes to help the city get permits reviewed quickly,” said Elyse W. Lowe, Director of the City’s Development Services Department. “We have eliminated the permitting backlog, provided more timeframe certainty and increased efficiency with a digital process.”

These improvements helped make [2023 a significant year for housing](#), with 9,700 new homes permitted, an 82% increase over the prior year and the highest number of permits since at least 2005.

Last week, Mayor Todd Gloria announced the launch of the [Complete Communities Now program](#), which requires permit applications that fall under that program to be reviewed, permitted and if possible, issued within 30 days. Complete Communities incentivizes housing near transit, and last year it accounted for 1,000 of the new homes permitted, with 15% of those set aside for low- and moderate-income San Diegans.

Since its launch in December 2020, Complete Communities has led to the creation of 1600 homes, including 280 affordable homes. DSD hopes to enroll qualified existing applicants, as well as attract further participation and incentivize developers to build in San Diego.

Several other programs are also helping San Diegans get projects permitted and built faster.

- [Affordable Housing Permit Now](#) – launched in 2023 in response to an executive order from Mayor Gloria, the program provides a guaranteed review timeline of 30 business days for deed-restricted affordable housing units. Accomplished primarily by dedicated staffing and optimized use of City tools and resources, the program has been a resounding success so far. In its first year, more than 2,000 affordable homes were permitted. DSD has also met the 30-day timeline requirements 100% of the time – averaging just nine days and garnering strong, positive feedback from developers and design professionals.
- [Rapid Review](#) – ensures “minor” projects are expedited. Qualifying projects include structures like carports and retaining walls, right-of-way permits, sign permits, single-story home additions and remodels.
- [Tenant Improvements](#) - Design professionals are now allowed to bypass plan review by certifying that the proposed design meets all codes and standards. As a result, the majority of building permits for an interior office tenant improvement project can be issued within seven days, with many issued the same day. Projects that qualify include existing commercial office buildings under 20,000 sq. feet that are not proposing changes to plumbing fixtures, windows and door openings, stairways, use or occupancy.
- [No Plan Building Permits](#) - new criteria to allow kitchen and bath remodels to be faster by eliminating the need for full building construction plans.
- [Instant Solar Permitting Process](#) – for residential homes, this instant solar permit allows residents to bypass city review of their plans by certifying a project’s compliance with building codes, standards and ordinances, only requiring inspection.
- [Professional Certification for Discretionary Projects](#) – this certification requires participation in an in-person training session. It allows eligible professionals to bypass the initial DSD permit completeness check by certifying that their discretionary project application package meets all submittal guidelines, reducing the intake time by several weeks.

More than 50% of permits are issued on the same day, and [virtual appointments](#) are available to provide staff support to customers through the process. A variety of resources can also be found on DSD’s [Citizen Portal](#), including permit applications and building and land use enforcement information.

These efforts to fast-track permits are part of Mayor Gloria’s [comprehensive strategy](#) to address San Diego’s housing affordability crisis.

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