

Article 9: Construction Permits

Division 2: Building Permit Procedures

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0201 Purpose of Building Permit Procedures

The purpose of these procedures is to establish the process for review of Building Permit applications for compliance with the minimum standards necessary to safeguard life or limb, public health, property, and welfare. The intent of these procedures is to review the proposed design, construction methods, and type and quality of materials used for new construction or for construction involving existing *structures*.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0202 When a Building Permit Is Required

- (a) No *structure* regulated by the Land Development Code shall be erected, constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, improved, converted, permanently relocated or partially demolished unless a Building Permit has first been obtained from the Building Official, except as exempted in Sections 129.0202(b) and 129.0203.
- (b) Separate Building Permits are not required for a dwelling and associated *accessory structures* located on the same property and described in the Building Permit application, plot plan, and other drawings.
- (c) The placement of factory-built housing, meaning one or more factory-assembled components comprising a single *structure* suitable for human occupancy that is brought to the job site for connection to a foundation or a site built *structure*, or *manufactured homes*, requires a Building Permit in accordance with this division.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 6-18-2013 by O-20261 N.S.; effective 7-19-2013.)

(Amended 5-8-2023 by O-21642 N.S.; effective 6-7-2023.)

§129.0203 Exemptions from a Building Permit

- (a) A Building Permit is not required for the following *structures* and activities, except when the *development* would involve alterations, repairs, or improvements to a *historical resource* as described in Section 143.0220; when *development* on a *premises* containing *environmentally sensitive lands* requires a *development permit* in accordance with Section 143.0110; or when a building is constructed with unreinforced masonry bearing walls or exterior wall parapets:
- (1) One-story detached accessory buildings supported on the ground and used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses, or similar uses provided the projected roof area is 120 square feet or less and the *structure* will not be utilized for any separately regulated use subject to Land Development Code Chapter 14, Article 1.
 - (2) Fences, other than swimming pool barriers, that are 7 feet in height or less.
 - (3) Oil derricks.
 - (4) Non-fixed and movable fixtures; cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches in height.
 - (5) *Retaining walls* that are 3 feet in height or less, measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall unless supporting a surcharge or impounding flammable liquids.
 - (6) Water tanks supported directly upon *grade* if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed two to one.
 - (7) Sidewalks and driveways that are 30 inches or less above adjacent *grade*, are not over any *basement* or *story*, and are not part of an accessible route in accordance with the California Building Code.
 - (8) Painting, papering, and similar finish work.
 - (9) Temporary motion picture, television, and theater stage sets and scenery.
 - (10) Window awnings supported by an exterior wall of Group R, Division 3, and Group U Occupancies that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.

- (11) Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R, Division 3 Occupancy when the pool is supported directly upon grade, the pool walls are entirely above the adjacent *grade*, and the capacity of the pool does not exceed 5,000 gallons.
- (12) Patio cover *structures* attached to or detached from *single dwelling units* in the RS and RX zones in the following circumstances, except in the *appealable area* of the Coastal Overlay Zone or in Planned Developments:
 - (A) The patio cover *structure* has 300 square feet or less of projected roof area.
 - (B) The patio cover *structure* does not encroach into any *yard*.
 - (C) The patio cover *structure* is 12 feet or less above *grade*.
- (13) Antennas supported on the roof.
- (14) Electroliner standards, flag poles, and antennas that are 30 feet or less in height above finish *grade* when fully extended.
- (15) Decks accessory to buildings within the scope of the California Residential Code that do not exceed 200 square feet (18.58 m²) in area, that are not more than 30 inches (762 mm) above *grade* at any point, that are not attached to a dwelling, and that do not serve the exit door required by the California Residential Code.
- (16) Renewal of roof coverings on any building permitted by the California Building Code and the California Residential Code, where the existing roof structure, including roof diaphragm, is not altered.
- (17) Repairs that involve only the replacement of components or existing work with similar materials for the purpose of maintenance, that do not have an aggregate valuation of over \$1,000.00, and that do not affect any electrical or mechanical installations. Repairs exempt from permit requirements shall not include any addition, change, or modification in construction, exit facilities, or permanent fixtures or equipment. The following repairs are exempt from permit requirements without limit to valuation:

- (A) Painting and decorating;
 - (B) Installation of floor covering;
 - (C) Cabinet work; and
 - (D) Outside paving.
- (18) Structures placed in public streets, alleys and sidewalks, except those regulated by Chapter 32 of the California Building Code.
- (19) Work done by employees of the City on City-owned or leased buildings.
- (20) A temporary shed, office or storage building and other *structure* incidental to and for work authorized by a valid Grading or Building Permit. Such *structures* must be removed upon expiration of the permit or completion of work covered by the Grading or Building Permit.
- (21) Installing replacement exterior windows and exterior doors in existing window and door openings where all of the following conditions apply:
- (A) The exterior windows and doors are replaced in detached one and two-family dwellings or townhouses as defined in the California Residential Code.
 - (B) The proposed exterior window and door replacement shall not require any modifications to the weather resistive exterior wall envelope protecting the *structure* or the interior of the *structure*.
 - (C) The existing exterior windows and doors to be replaced are not required to be fire resistive.
 - (D) The proposed work shall not require modifications to the existing rough openings.
- (22) New permanent parking and vehicular use areas for less than four vehicles, including access to the spaces, but excluding parking for *single dwelling unit* uses on a single lot in Residential-Single Unit Zones.

- (23) Any portable metal hanger less than 2,000 square feet in size, located on a City-owned airport used only for parking aircraft and bearing evidence of approval by the California Department of Motor Vehicles for movement on any highway. Such *structures* shall, as an integral part of basic construction, be equipped with a hitch or coupling device for towing. It shall accommodate, without further major structural change, wheel and axle assemblies which will provide this *structure* with a safe means of transport. No water or sanitary facilities installations shall be allowed in the *structure*, and it shall be equipped with permanent ventilation as required for any Group S-2 occupancy.
- (24) A sidewalk cafe that complies with Section 141.0621, unless one of the following applies:
 - (A) The sidewalk cafe would alter or modify the existing building, building façade, or any means of building egress; or
 - (B) The sidewalk cafe would be located on a raised platform or in a sunken area.
- (25) Specific *structures* as determined by the Building Official for a particular and justifiable reason.
- (26) Monitored Perimeter Security Fence Systems in accordance with Section 142.0390(d)(2).
- (b) The exemptions in Section 129.0203(a) are not exemptions from the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permit requirements. Unless the proposed work is exempt under another section of the Land Development Code, separate electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits may be required.
- (c) Exemption from the permit requirements of the Building Regulations does not authorize any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of the Building Regulations or any other applicable local or state regulations.

(Amended 9-24-2002 by O-19102 N.S.)

(Amended 8-4-2011 by O-20081 N.S.; effective 10-6-2011.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

(Amended 6-18-2013 by O-20261 N.S.; effective 7-19-2013.)

(Amended 4-5-2016 by O-20634 N.S.; effective 5-5-2016.)

(Amended 4-6-2016 by O-20624 N.S.; effective 5-6-2016.)

(Amended 1-18-2018 by O-20897 N.S.; effective 2-17-2018.)

(Amended 4-9-2020 by O-21181 N.S.; effective 5-9-2020.)

(Amended 5-8-2023 by O-21642 N.S.; effective 6-7-2023.)
(Amended 7-22-2024 by O-21836 N.S.; effective 10-5-2024.)
(Amended 3-3-2026 by O-22080 N.S.; effective 4-22-2026.)
(Amended 6-15-2026 by O-22109 N.S.; effective 7-15-2026.)

[Editors Note: Amendments as adopted by O-22109 N.S. will not apply within the Coastal Overlay Zone until the California Coastal Commission certifies it as a Local Coastal Program Amendment.

Click the link to view the Strikeout Ordinance highlighting changes to prior language http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode_strikeout_ord/O-22109-SO.pdf]

§129.0204 How to Apply for a Building Permit

- (a) An application for a Building Permit shall be submitted in accordance with Sections 112.0102 and 129.0105.
- (b) Every application shall include the following information:
 - (1) A description of the work for which the application is submitted;
 - (2) A legal description and a *street* address or similar description that will definitively locate the proposed building or work;
 - (3) An indication of the proposed use or occupancy;
 - (4) The valuation for any addition, improvement, or alteration to an existing *structure* or the valuation of any new *structure* proposed.
- (c) Submittal documents including plans, specifications, diagrams and computations, inspection requirements, and other data may be required. The submittal documents for an application shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Land Development Manual.
- (d) Plans and specifications shall be drawn to scale and shall be of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature, and extent of the work proposed and to show in detail that it will comply with the provisions of the Building Regulations and all applicable laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations.

- (e) An application for permanent relocation of a *structure* on a new site shall include a request for a pre-relocation examination, unless the *structure* is to be placed at a storage site that is an approved use as a storage site in accordance with the Land Development Code.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0205 Deferred Submittals of Required Building Permit Application Materials

Before issuing a Building Permit, the Building Official may allow deferral of submittal documents relating to a specific portion of the design.

- (a) The Building Official shall specify a maximum time period for submittal of the deferred documents. The Building Permit for the non-deferred portions may be issued and construction may start on the non-deferred portions of the work, before the deferred submittals are submitted.
- (b) The registered and responsible design professional shall list the deferred submittals on the construction documents for review by the Building Official.
- (c) The registered and responsible design professional shall review the deferred submittal documents and submit them to the Building Official, with annotation indicating that the deferred submittal documents have been reviewed and found to be in general conformance to the design of the building.
- (d) The deferred submittal items shall not be installed until their design and submittal documents have been approved by the Building Official.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 4-6-2016 by O-20624 N.S.; effective 5-6-2016.)

§129.0206 Who May Prepare Plans for Building Permits

If plans or other material submitted are not prepared by an architect or engineer licensed by the State of California, the Building Official may require the *applicant* to demonstrate that state law does not require the material to be prepared by a licensed architect or engineer. The Building Official may require plans, computations, and specifications to be prepared by an architect or engineer licensed by the State of California, in circumstances where preparation by a licensed professional is not required by state law.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0207 Preparation of Plans, Reports, Calculations and other Documents by Licensed and Registered Design Professionals

- (a) When the preparation of plans, reports, calculations and other documents by a registered design professional is required by state law, or the Building Official, they shall be prepared by an architect licensed by the State of California or an engineer registered by the State of California in the relevant discipline of engineering.
- (b) The architect or engineer of record shall be designated on the plans in the manner required by state law.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Retitled to "Preparation of Plans, Reports, Calculations and other Documents by Licensed and Registered Design Professionals" and amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

§129.0208 Coordination Responsibilities of Architect or Engineer of Record

- (a) The architect or engineer of record shall be responsible for reviewing and coordinating all submittal documents, including documents for partial building permits and deferred submittal items, prepared by others for compatibility with the design of the building.
- (b) If the building or work authorized by a Building Permit has not received final inspection approval by the permit expiration date, all work shall stop until a new permit is issued or an extension of time is approved in accordance with Section 129.0219. All Electrical, Plumbing/Mechanical, Public Right-of-Way, and Grading Permits associated with a Building Permit shall expire concurrently with the Building Permit.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 8-4-2011 by O-20081 N.S.; effective 10-6-2011.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

§129.0209 Change of Architect or Engineer of Record

If the circumstances require and in accordance with state law, the *applicant* or *permit holder* may designate a substitute architect or engineer of record licensed by the State of California who shall perform all of the duties required of the original architect or engineer of record. The Building Official shall be notified in writing by the *applicant* or *permit holder* if the architect or engineer of record is changed or is unable to continue to perform the duties.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

§129.0210 Plan Review Procedures

The application, plans, specifications, and other data filed by an *applicant* for a Building Permit shall be reviewed by the Building Official. The plans may be reviewed by other departments of the City to verify compliance with any other applicable provisions of the Municipal Code.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0211 Closing of Building Permit Application

- (a) If two years have elapsed since the date a Building Permit application is *deemed complete* and the *applicant* has not requested that a Building Permit be issued, the application file shall be closed. Plans and other data submitted for review may be returned to the *applicant* or destroyed by the Building Official. To reapply, the *applicant* shall submit a new Building Permit application with required submittal materials and shall be subject to all applicable fees and regulations in effect on the date the new application is filed.
- (b) The application file for City projects and for residential master planned *developments* shall be closed after two years have elapsed since the date the Building Permit application is *deemed complete*. For the purposes of this section, residential master planned *developments* are residential *developments* submitted with one or more building types constructed in phases on one or multiple *lots*.
- (c) The Building Official may extend a Building Permit application for a period not exceeding 180 calendar days from the date the Building Permit application was *deemed complete* if the Building Official determines that circumstances beyond the control of the *applicant* prevented issuance of the Building Permit.
- (d) The Building Official may extend a Building Permit application for one additional period not exceeding 180 calendar days if the Building Official determines that the building standards effective at the time that the Building Permit application was submitted are sufficient to protect public health and safety or the project complies with significant life and safety building standards effective at the time that the Building Permit application was submitted and:
 - (1) The additional application extension is in the public interest; or
 - (2) Circumstances beyond the control of the *applicant* prevented the issuance of the Building Permit.

- (e) A Building Permit application shall not be extended more than 360 calendar days from the date the Building Permit application was *deemed complete*.
- (f) If a request to extend the closing date of a Building Permit application has been filed in accordance with this section, the existing Building Permit application shall be automatically extended until the Building Official has made a decision on the request for an extension.
- (g) The application for all Electrical, Plumbing, Mechanical, or Fire Permits associated with a Building Permit shall expire concurrently with the Building Permit.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)
(Amended 3-1-2006 by O-19468 N.S.; effective 4-1-2006.)
(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)
(Amended 1-18-2018 by O-20897 N.S.; effective 2-17-2018.)
(Amended 4-9-2020 by O-21181 N.S.; effective 5-9-2020.)
(Amended 3-11-2022 by O-21439 N.S.; effective 4-10-2022.)
(Amended 9-18-2023 by O-21725 N.S.; effective 10-18-2023.)
(Amended 8-5-2024 by O-21859 N.S.; effective 9-4-2024.)

§129.0212 Decision Process for a Building Permit

A decision on an application for a Building Permit shall be made by the Building Official in accordance with Process One. The Building Permit shall be approved if the Building Official finds that the work described in the permit application, plans, specifications, and other data comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations, other applicable laws and ordinances, and any applicable *development permit*.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0213 Issuance of a Building Permit

- (a) The Building Permit may be issued after all approvals have been obtained and the required fees have been paid. In addition to plan check approvals, other documentation may be required before the permit is issued, in conformance with the requirements of the Land Development Code or the laws or requirements of other applicable local, state, or federal jurisdictions.
- (b) A Building Permit shall not be issued for a *development* that requires a *development permit* until the *development permit* has been issued.
- (c) Any security required by the Land Development Code for relocation of a *structure* shall be deposited with the City before the Building Permit is issued.

- (d) If a pre-relocation examination finds that a residential *structure* is substandard, no Building Permit shall be issued until the plans are revised to include additional work that will eliminate the substandard condition.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

§129.0214 Requirements for Approved Plans

- (a) Plans and specifications that are approved as part of the application for a Building Permit shall be signed and stamped “APPROVED” by the Building Official and shall be filed as an attachment to the Building Permit. Approved plans and specifications shall not be changed, modified, or altered without authorization of the Building Official.
- (b) Except as required by Sections 19850 and 19851 of the Health and Safety Code, the Building Official shall retain one set of approved plans, specification and computations for the life of the building for which a Building Permit has been issued. Copies shall be retained as a part of the permanent files of the Development Services Department.

(Amended 9-24-2002 by O-19102 N.S.)

(Amended 11-28-2005 by O-19444 N.S.; effective 2-9-2006.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

§129.0215 Issuance of a Building Permit for a Part of a Structure

The Building Official may issue a permit, and work may begin, for the construction of part of a *structure* before the plans and specifications for the entire *structure* have been submitted or approved, if adequate information and detailed statements have been submitted complying with all applicable requirements of the Building Code. As a condition of issuance, the *permit holder* shall agree that he or she proceeds at his or her own risk without assurance that the Building Permit for the entire *structure* will be issued. The partial construction shall comply with the Building Regulations and any other regulation in effect on the date the complete permit application for the scope of work under the partial permit is submitted to, and is accepted by, the Building Official.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; amended 12-6-1999 by O-18728 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

§129.0216 Initial Utilization of a Building Permit

A Building Permit shall become void if work authorized by the permit is suspended, the *structure* is abandoned, or substantial work authorized by the permit has not been completed and validated by an inspection within 12 months of the date of permit issuance unless an extension has been granted pursuant to Section 129.0219.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

(Amended 4-9-2020 by O-21181 N.S.; effective 5-9-2020.)

§129.0217 Maintaining Utilization of a Building Permit

A Building Permit shall become void if, after initial utilization of a permit pursuant to Section 129.0216, work authorized by the permit is suspended or the *structure* is abandoned for a period of 180 calendar days, unless an extension has been granted per Section 129.0219.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

§129.0218 Expiration of a Building Permit

- (a) A Building Permit for detached one- and two-family dwellings or townhouses, as defined in the California Residential Code, and their *accessory structures*, and for the relocation of *structures* shall expire three years after the date of permit issuance. A Building Permit for all other projects shall expire four years after the date of permit issuance.
- (b) If the building or work authorized by a Building Permit has not received final inspection approval by the permit expiration date, all work shall stop until a new permit is issued. All Electrical, Plumbing, Mechanical, or Fire Permits associated with a Building Permit shall expire concurrently with the Building Permit.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 3-1-2006 by O-19468 N.S.; effective 4-1-2006.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

(Amended 4-9-2020 by O-21181 N.S.; effective 5-9-2020.)

(Amended 8-5-2024 by O-21859 N.S.; effective 9-4-2024.)

§129.0219 Extension of Time for the Utilization of a Building Permit

- (a) Except for the relocation of *structures*, a *permit holder* may submit to the Building Official an application for an extension of time to utilize the Building Permit. The application shall be filed no later than one month in advance of the end of the utilization period in Sections 129.0216 or 129.0217. The Building Official may extend the time in which the *permit holder* may utilize the Building Permit one time, for a period not exceeding 180 calendar days from the end of the utilization period in Sections 129.0216 or 129.0217, if the Building Official determines that circumstances beyond the control of the *permit holder* prevented completion of the work. All Electrical, Plumbing, or Mechanical Permits associated with a Building Permit shall be extended concurrently with the utilization period of the Building Permit.
- (b) If an application for an extension of time has been filed for the utilization of a Building Permit in accordance with Section 129.0219(a), the existing Building Permit shall automatically be extended until the Building Official has made a decision on the application for an extension of the utilization period.
- (c) If the Building Permit has expired before an application is submitted for an extension of time for the utilization of a Building Permit, no extension shall be granted. If the previous *permit holder* or any other *applicant* wants to proceed with the same *development*, a new application is required and the application is treated in all respects as a new application.
- (d) If an extension of time for the utilization of a Building Permit has been previously approved in accordance with Section 129.0219(a), the Building Official may extend the time for the utilization of the Building Permit one additional time, for a period not exceeding 180 calendar days, if the Building Official finds the following:
 - (1) There has not been a significant change in the regulations applicable to the site since the date the permit was issued;
 - (2) The additional extension is in the public interest; and
 - (3) Circumstances beyond the control of the *applicant* prevented the authorized work from proceeding.

- (e) If no extension is granted, and the Building Permit has become void pursuant to Section 129.0217, the property owner, *permit holder* or *applicant* shall, within 90 calendar days from the date of a written notice from the City, obtain a new Building Permit to complete the work and diligently pursue the work to completion, or remove or demolish the building or *structure* within 180 calendar days from the date of the written notice. A violation of Section 129.0219 may be prosecuted administratively or judicially pursuant to San Diego Municipal Code Section 121.0311. This Section in no way limits any separate enforcement authority of the City under California Health and Safety Code Section 17980.9 to impose stricter rehabilitation time frames for vacant single family dwellings.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 3-1-2006 by O-19468 N.S.; effective 4-1-2006.)

(Retitled to "Extension of Time for the Utilization of a Building Permit" and amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

(Amended 1-18-2018 by O-20897 N.S.; effective 2-17-2018.)

(Amended 5-8-2023 by O-21642 N.S.; effective 6-7-2023.)

129.0220 Required Inspections for a Building Permit

All construction work and equipment authorized by a Building Permit shall be inspected by the Building Official in accordance with Section 129.0111.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 7-31-2012 by O-20187 N.S.; effective 8-30-2012.)

(Retitled from "Issuance of a Building Permit for Relocation of a Structure" to "Required Inspections for a Building Permit" and amended 1-18-2018 by O-20897 N.S.; effective 2-17-2018.)

§129.0221 Expiration of a Building Permit for Relocation of a Structure

A Building Permit for the relocation of a *structure* shall not be extended. A Building Permit for the relocation of a *structure* expires in accordance with the provisions of Sections 129.0216 and 129.0217, the extension provisions of Section 129.0219 shall not apply.

(Added 12-9-1997 by O-18451 N.S.; effective 1-1-2000.)

(Amended 1-18-2018 by O-20897 N.S.; effective 2-17-2018.)