

The Building Permit Process:

Tips for Business Owners and Real Estate Professionals



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Topics Covered in This Presentation

- An overview of the permit process for businesses
 - Quick review of applicable regulations
 - Knowing when a permit is required
 - The value of obtaining permits and the risks of unpermitted construction and/or use
- Tips for avoiding common mistakes and how to navigate the permit process as effectively as possible.
- Answers to frequently asked questions
- Help and resources available

Permit Activity

In 2016 Building & Safety issued

6,147 permits

and performed

20,323 building inspections

for more than

\$285 million

of new construction in the City of Santa Clarita!

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What is the purpose of the building permit process?

All businesses in the city must comply with regulations that safeguard the public health, safety, and general welfare.

City Building Code

- Structural strength and stability
- Safety to life and property from fire and other hazards
- Safe exit facilities
- Access to persons with disabilities
- Sanitation, adequate lighting and ventilation
- Safety of electrical and mechanical systems
- Energy efficiency and resource conservation
- Safety for emergency responders

City Development Code

- Commercial use requirements
- On-site parking standards
- Exterior signage

Other Regulations

- Food health
- Industrial wastes
- Hazardous materials
- Worker safety

Over 99% of the City Building Code is mandated by the state and enforced throughout California.

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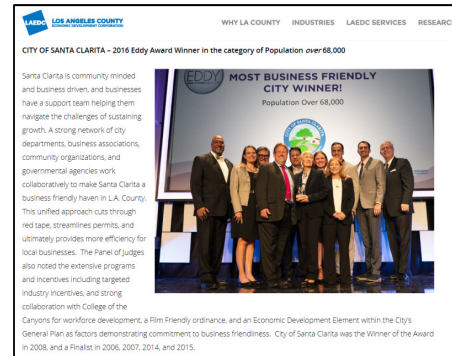
Your success is the city's success!

Thriving local businesses are an essential part of the high quality of life enjoyed by Santa Clarita residents.

One of the city's foremost goals is to bring jobs to Santa Clarita. Local businesses allow citizens to live and work within the city.

Businesses generate sales tax revenue which helps the city pay for the many public services we provide.

Successful local businesses add value to the properties in the city and attract more high-end development.



The Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation has recognized the City of Santa Clarita as the "Most Business-Friendly City" of 2016.

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When is a business required to obtain a building permit?

A permit is required whenever a business moves into a new space, changes the use of an existing space, or alters the inside or outside of the building.

*Some items which are exempt (do not require a permit) include:**

- Fixed or moveable cases, racks, shelving, and partitions not exceeding 6 feet in height. Minimum aisle widths, clearances, and means of egress shall be maintained.
- The installation of decorative moldings, trim, window treatments, wall coverings, painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, hardwood or tile flooring, countertops, and similar interior finish work. Materials and work shall comply with the Building Code for combustibility and fire performance.
- Low-voltage wiring for telephone, data, intercom, sound, and security systems.
- Portable equipment (e.g. heating appliances, ventilation equipment)
- General building maintenance and minor repair work.

** Items which are exempt from a permit must still comply with the codes. When in doubt, contact Building & Safety.*

See Santa Clarita Municipal Code Section 105.2 for more information (available online).

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What does a business receive from the permit process?

- The construction plans are reviewed and approved by qualified engineers.
- The work is inspected on-site by qualified professional Building Inspectors
- Permanent records of the project are maintained by the city (permits, plans, inspection records, etc.).
- A Certificate of Occupancy (“C of O”) is issued to the business space. A C of O is often required by insurance companies, banks, and state agencies before a claim, loan, or license is approved.

Certificate of Occupancy
City of Santa Clarita
Building and Safety Division

Pursuant to Santa Clarita Municipal Code Titles 18, 19, 20 and 21, this certifies that the referenced building or portion thereof has been inspected and found to be in compliance with the requirements of said code and with the ordinances of the City of Santa Clarita regulating building construction and use.

Effective Date: April 18, 2017.

<small>Building Address: 21601 LUCAS COURT</small>	<small>Building Permit Number: BLD16-01177</small>
<small>Primary Use: Residential - Single Family</small>	<small>Building Owner: WH SANTA CLARITA LLC</small>
<small>Occupancy / Type of Const.: R-3 / V-B</small>	<small>Owner Address: 601 CARLSON PARKWAY #200</small>
<small>Total Floor Area (sq.ft.): 4,688</small>	<small>HOPKINS, MN 55305</small>
<small>Fire Sprinklers Required: Yes</small>	

<small>Use:</small>	<small>Area (sq.ft.):</small>	<small>Occupancy Group:</small>	<small>No. of Units:</small>
<small>DWELLING</small>	<small>3,785</small>	<small>R-3</small>	<small>1</small>
<small>GARAGE</small>	<small>903</small>	<small>U</small>	


Robert Feister
Building Inspector


John R. Capranni
City Building Official

*See the “Certificate of Occupancy” page on the Building & Safety website for more information:
www.santa-clarita.com/building*

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What happens if building permits are not obtained?

Unpermitted use or construction is risky:

- The building occupants are exposed to potential code violations.
- The building owner and/or tenant are exposed to potential legal liability.
- Can result in citations, penalties, and business delays or closings.
- Can result in a substandard property declaration (L.A. County Recorder)

Unpermitted use or construction is eventually caught, and someone always pays:

- The business space is lacking a valid Certificate of Occupancy.
- It is always more difficult to correct unpermitted construction later than to build it legally the first time.
- A triple permit fee applies to permits issued to legalize unpermitted construction.



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Overview of the Permit Process



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Due Diligence Phase

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

The due diligence phase is a very important part of the permit process. Unfortunately, businesses are often in such a hurry to move forward with construction that critical issues are not identified until after important decisions have been made or the work has started. Making corrections later in the permit process can increase project costs and create delays.

"Measure twice, cut once."

Time and money spent during the due diligence phase pays off later in the process. City staff is available in the Permit Center at City Hall to answer questions, retrieve documents, and discuss preliminary plans.

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Due Diligence Phase



The more you can tell city staff about your project and business, the more they can help you to navigate the permit process effectively.

Visit the Permit Center Early

Before the construction plans are completed, the city recommends that you visit the Permit Center at City Hall. Staff from the following city divisions are available to assist you:

- Planning
- Engineering Services
- Building & Safety

Permit Center services you may find useful during the due diligence phase include:

- Document research (permits, plans, etc.)
- Parcel and building data research
- Answers to code questions
- Assistance with the permit process
- Estimated timeframes for project review

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Due Diligence Phase

Questions every business should ask during the due diligence phase:

Is the building or space already approved for the proposed use?

Code requirements vary based on use. For example, a retail space has more occupants than an office space. Changing the use of a space may require significant building upgrades. In some cases, a building or space cannot be approved for certain uses.

Is there unpermitted or substandard construction in the space?

Unpermitted construction can expose your business to serious risks. Correcting unpermitted construction can be difficult and costly.

Are there any special conditions or restrictions applicable to the space?

Review all documents governing the use of the space (city land use, CC&Rs, property records, etc.). Contact the regulatory agencies that are applicable to the project.

How much time will I need to complete the permit process?

Provide realistic timeframes which account for plan review rechecks and unforeseen circumstances.

Do the lease documents adequately address the existing conditions which may impact the project and the time needed to complete the permit process?

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Due Diligence Phase

Determine the extent of required disabled access upgrades.

Federal ADA Obligations

Title III of the ADA requires all businesses to remove barriers to accessibility when “readily achievable.” This is not tied to new construction. The ADA is not enforced by local governments.

California Building Code (CBC) Requirements

The CBC requires businesses to upgrade the “path of travel” to a space when it is altered by new construction. This includes the entrance, route, restrooms, parking, signage, telephones, drinking fountains, storage, and alarms.

20% of the construction cost (for smaller projects) or more shall be spent on upgrades, as required.

(CBC Section 11B-202.4)



A business in violation of construction-related accessibility standards is liable for up to three times the actual damage, but not less than \$4,000 per violation, plus attorney’s fees. (CA Civil Code Section 52a)

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Due Diligence Phase

Identify the agency clearances that will be required for your project

Before Building & Safety can issue a building permit for your project, the necessary clearances from city divisions and outside agencies must be obtained.

All commercial construction projects require plan review and approval from the following agencies:

- City Planning
- City Building & Safety
- L.A. County Fire Prevention

Additional clearances may be required from the following agencies:

- City Engineering Services
- City Environmental Services
- City Urban Forestry
- City Landscape Maintenance District (LMD)
- L.A. County Industrial Waste
- L.A. County Sanitation District
- L.A. County Fire Petroleum/Chemical Unit
- L.A. County Environmental Health Services
- L.A. County Radiation Management
- Water Agency
- School Districts
- Air Quality Management Division (AQMD)
- CAL / OSHA
- Southern California Edison

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Demolition Permits



Building & Safety can issue a separate permit for interior non-structural demolition work. A professionally prepared demolition plan will be required which clearly indicates the extent of the demolition work and the elements to be protected in place. Review and approval of demolition plans can typically be done over-the-counter at the Permit Center.

Demolition permits are often sought by businesses as a way to speed up a project. When managed properly, a demolition permit can be effective. However, beginning the work too soon can be detrimental. Consider the added costs and scheduling challenges created by pulling a construction crew off of a project and bringing them back on later.

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Construction Plans Phase

What type of plans are required for my project?

California Building Code Section 107.2.1 states:
“Construction documents shall be of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature and extent of the work proposed and show in detail that it will conform to the provisions of this code and relevant laws, ordinances, rules and regulations, as determined by the building official.”

Most project types require plans prepared by a licensed Architect and/or Professional Engineer(s). Simple office, mercantile, or storage projects which do not involve structural alterations may not require a licensed professional, at the discretion of the building official.

For more specific information regarding plan requirements, or for assistance in determining when a licensed professional is required, please visit the City Permit Center or access the “Plan Review Information” page on the Building & Safety website:

www.santa-clarita.com/building

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Construction Plans Phase

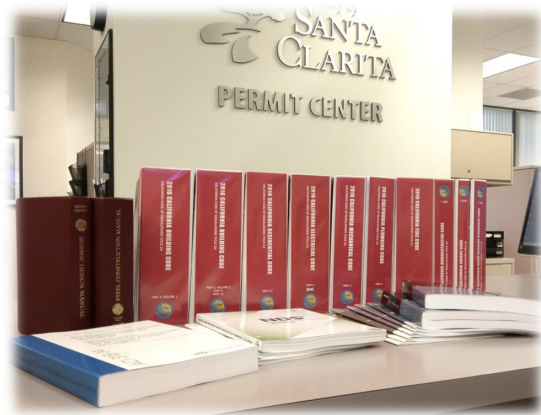
Work with qualified and experienced professionals.

The scope and complexity of the Building Codes and other regulations have increased substantially over the years. Designing and building a business space which complies with all of the applicable regulations requires a thorough knowledge of the following:

- The needs and operations of the business
- The existing site conditions
- Construction means and methods
- The applicable codes and other regulations

Experience Counts

Experienced designers and contractors should be able to identify and resolve problems early.



The California Building Standards Code consists of twelve major codes and hundreds of reference standards.

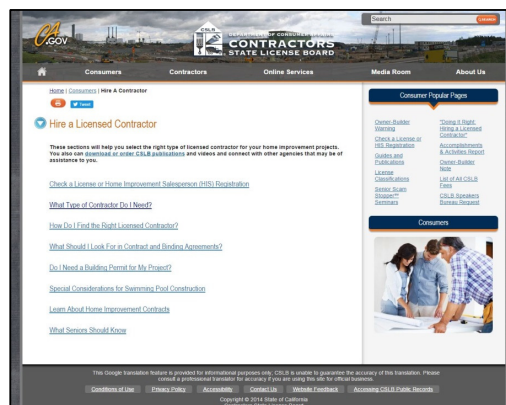
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Construction Plans Phase

Helpful resources when hiring qualified designers and contractors



The California Architects Board provides a "Consumer's Guide to Hiring an Architect"

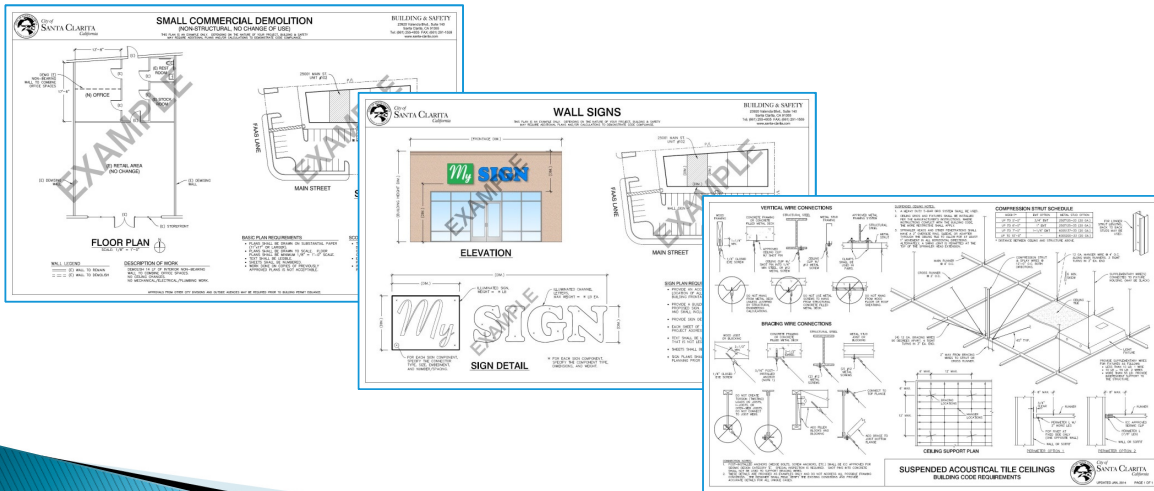


*The California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) provides a website to assist you in hiring a licensed contractor:
<http://www.cslb.ca.gov>*

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Construction Plans Phase

The city provides useful examples, standard details, and information bulletins.



Construction Plans Phase

Additional Tips

You wouldn't trust an unqualified or inexperienced person to perform dental work on your teeth. Any mistakes could be costly and painful. Likewise, hiring an unqualified or inexperienced designer and/or contractor can be costly and painful to your business.

Trying to save money on design services often results in poorly prepared plans that will lead to problems later in the permit process or during construction.

The city cannot recommend designers or contractors. However, permits and plans are public record.

State law requires designers and contractors to have a written agreement with their clients.

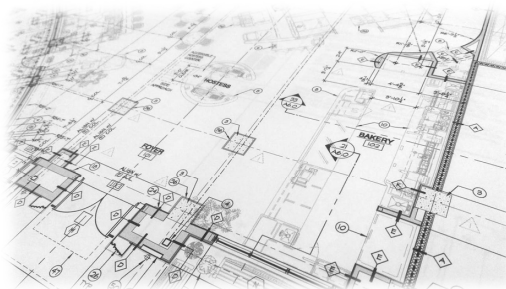
State law requires a licensed Architect or Professional Engineer to seal and sign his or her plans. A licensed professional may prepare the plans directly or oversee their preparation. Unfortunately, some licensed professionals do not uphold a high standard of care. You may want to find out who will actually be drawing your plans. Are they located in the United States? Are they able to communicate effectively with city staff?

The city does not provide legal advice or mediate disputes between business owners, designers, contractors, or landlords.

Plan Review and Approval Phase

Once the construction plans are complete, it is time to submit them for plan review to the city and any outside agencies. Building & Safety accepts paper or electronic plans.

Plan review fees must be paid before the review work can begin. Building & Safety offers expedited plan review for an additional 50% of the plan review fee.



All projects are prescreened for general completeness before being accepted for plan review. Upon acceptance you will receive an estimated plan review completion date. Plan review timeframes vary depending on the project scope and construction activity.

In 2016 Building & Safety issued an average of 24.5 permits per day!

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Plan Review and Approval Phase

Avoid submitting plans that are missing important items, or contain major code violations.

Incomplete and/or incorrect plans must be revised and rechecked multiple times. This can delay the permit process for your project. Some of the common mistakes on commercial plans are:

- Incorrect project info and code criteria (use and occupancy, Type of Construction, fire sprinklers, etc.). Often times the plans were copied from another project.
- The scope of work is unclear. The project description and plans are vague. Existing conditions are not shown accurately. Deferred submittal items are not identified.
- Notes and details are not updated to the current codes. New codes are adopted every three years.
- Engineered details and calculations are needed for an item, but were not provided (e.g. structural supports and connections for a heavy piece of equipment).
- Wall and ceiling details are incomplete, insufficient, and/or not coordinated with existing conditions.
- The full “path of travel” for disabled accessibility is not shown. Disabled access upgrades are not specifically labeled or detailed.

All of these mistakes are avoidable!

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Plan Review and Approval Phase

Rechecks during the plan review process

The plan review fees collected by Building & Safety cover one plan review and two rechecks. Further plan reviews will incur additional fees.

When proper due diligence is performed and complete plans are submitted, the plan review process goes very smoothly. Typically one plan review and an over-the-counter recheck (same-day) is needed.

Be sure to address all of the plan review comments. Resubmitting the project without addressing all of the comments guarantees another round of plan review and delays the project.

If you need clarification regarding a plan review comment, please don't hesitate to contact your reviewer.

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Plan Review and Approval Phase

Additional Tips

City planners and engineers review plans for compliance with the codes and identify the areas where the codes are not met. City staff cannot provide design services.

Does your designer receive payment when the plans are submitted to the city? Does he/she receive additional fees to address project scope changes or change orders? If so, what incentive does he/she have to submit complete plans for the first plan review?

The final plan approvals must be coordinated between the various regulatory agencies. If possible, try to submit your plans to the agencies simultaneously.

For projects involving substantial disabled access code deficiencies, you may want to hire a Certified Access Specialist (CASp). Obtaining a CASp report grants businesses certain legal benefits. For more information, please visit the DSA website:

*<http://www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/>
(search for "CASp")*

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Permit and Inspection Phase

Obtaining a building permit

Once the construction plans have been approved by the applicable city divisions and outside agencies, and all required fees have been paid, Building & Safety can issue a building permit.

Two printed sets of plans are required with "wet-stamped" agency approvals.

A building permit can only be issued to a licensed contractor or the building owner. Building & Safety cannot issue a permit to a tenant (unless the tenant is also a licensed contractor or is authorized by the building owner).

The image shows a detailed permit form from the City of Santa Clarita. It includes sections for:

- BUILDING PERMIT:** Project name, address (2420 TOWN CENTER DRIVE #10), owner (WESTBELL), and architect (ARCHITECTURE DESIGN CONSULTING).
- WORKERS' COMPENSATION DECLARATION:** A section where the contractor certifies compliance with state laws regarding workers' compensation.
- PERMIT INFO:** Permit number (BLD16-01325), date of issue (MAY 24 2016), and expiration date (OCT 2016).
- PROJECT DETAILS:** Description of work (TERRACE IMPROVEMENTS), construction type (D.B.), and various fees.
- APPROVALS:** Signatures and stamps from the City Engineer and other relevant departments.

Building permits are maintained by the city as permanent public records.

Permit and Inspection Phase

Scheduling Building Inspections



In 2016 City Building Inspectors completed an average of 81 inspections per day!

The city provides next-day building inspections if the inspection is scheduled before 2:30 pm. A morning or afternoon inspection can also be requested.

Building Inspectors inspect construction for compliance with the approved plans. For small revisions or clarifications, the inspector may accept a detail or letter from the designer. For larger revisions, the plans must be updated and approved by the city plan review staff. Depending on the scope of the revisions, up to two weeks may be required for review. Additional plan review fees will apply.

The city recommends a pre-construction meeting on-site with the Building Inspector for larger and more complex projects.

Permit and Inspection Phase

Additional Tips

Be sure to schedule inspections in a timely manner, but not too early. Consistently scheduling building inspections before the work is ready can incur re-inspection fees.

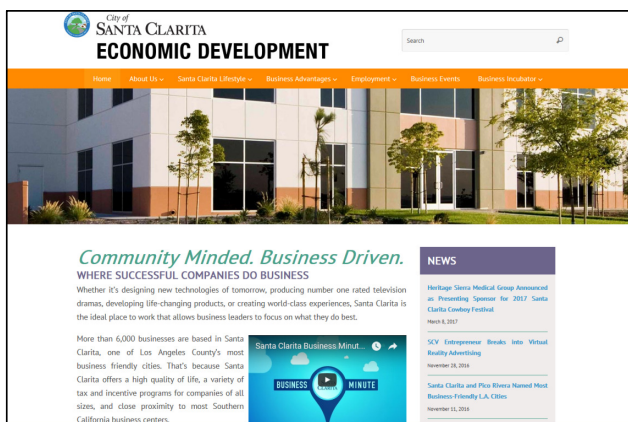
Make the Building Inspector aware of any field discrepancies or forthcoming revisions as early as possible. Our Building Inspectors have assisted thousands of projects through the process, and they can provide valuable feedback.

Final inspections from all applicable agencies (Fire Prevention, Health Dept., etc.) shall be completed prior to the final building inspection. It is important to schedule the various inspections in the correct order.

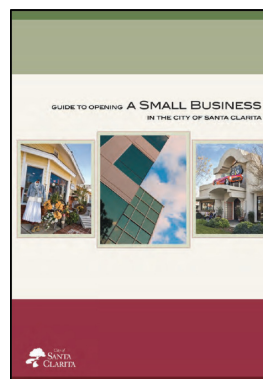


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Resources Available



www.thinksantaclarita.com



The city provides a helpful Guide to Opening a Small Business in Santa Clarita.

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Thank You!

Permit Center at City Hall
23920 Valencia Blvd.
Suite 140
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

Planning: (661) 255-4330
Building & Safety: (661) 255-4935
Economic Development: (661) 255-4347

*The information provided in this presentation shall not be construed as legal advice.
For matters requiring legal expertise, please consult a qualified attorney.*