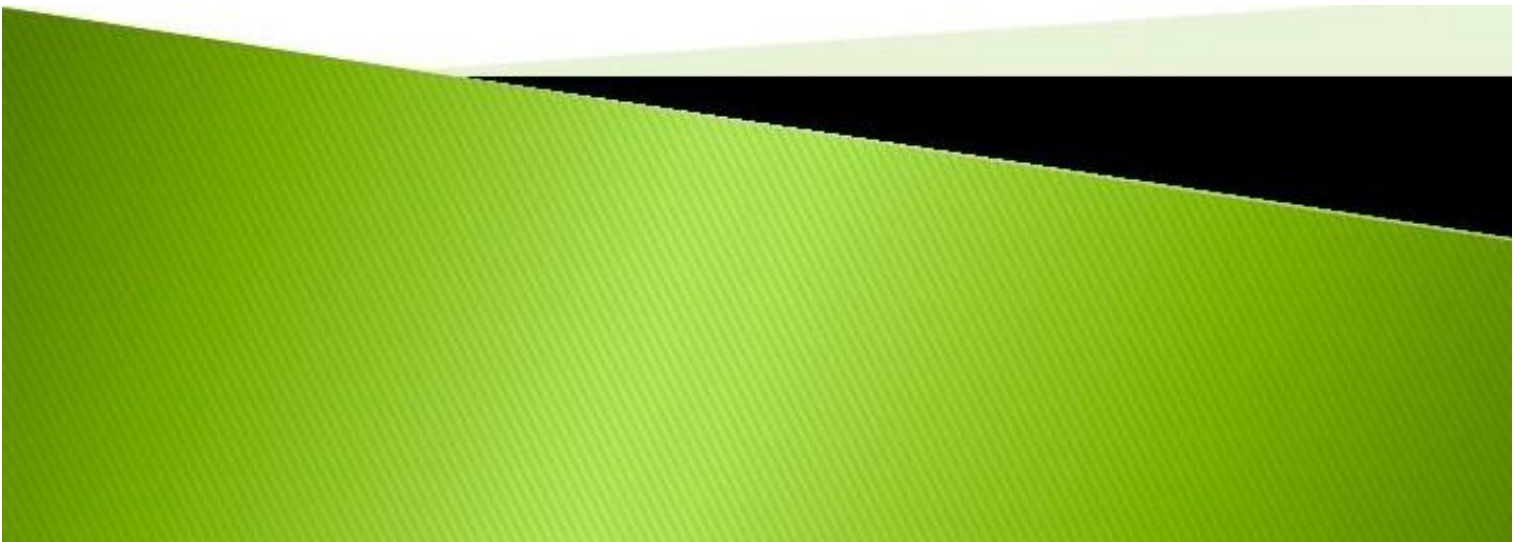




City of Palo Alto
Development Services
285 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301
650-329-2496

How to Apply for a Commercial Building Permit

**A guide to the submittal and
permit processing
requirements for
commercial projects**



In compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, this document may be provided in other accessible formats. Contact the City's ADA Coordinator at (650) 329-2550 or ada@cityofpalalto.org.

COMMERCIAL PROJECT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

This handout is intended as an aid to applicants for the processing of commercial projects through the building permit process. It is applicable to both new and remodeled buildings including tenant improvements. It does **not** include requirements of other departments or public agencies.

SUBMITTAL PROCEDURES:

PRE-SUBMITTAL:

PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

A pre-submittal meeting may be helpful in explaining the project and some of the particulars surrounding it. If so, contact a Project Coordinator (329-2496 for Building Division) to arrange such a meeting. Representatives from other departments may be invited as necessary.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD (ARB) APPROVAL

If the proposed work requires approval from the Architectural Review Board, then a submittal to and approval by the ARB is required prior to submittal to the Building Division. This is usually required when any exterior work above grade is done or when parking spaces and landscaping would be impacted. Contact the Planner on Duty (650-617-3117 or Planner@CityofPaloAlto.org) for further information.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT APPROVAL

If the project involved food-handling facilities, then approval by the Santa Clara County Health Department is required. The Health Department will stamp and sign the plans as evidence of their approval. Evidence of Health Department approval is required prior to permit issuance.

PLAN SUBMITTAL:

COUNTER HOURS

The Building Inspection Counter is open Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

PLANS

Submit the working plans and related documents to the building counter. Note that separate “design/build” applications are not allowed. In other words, the architectural, structural, plumbing, mechanical and electrical plans must be submitted as one complete package. The plans must be “wet-signed” by the Architect, Civil or Structural Engineer responsible for the design at the time of submittal.

PROJECT COORDINATION AND PLAN ROUTING

Each project is assigned a Project Coordinator to be the single point-of-contact through the duration of the project. The plans are routed to each applicable Department within the City for plan review. Applicants will receive plan check comments directly from each Department and can work with their Project Coordinator on resubmittal of plans. When each Department approves the plans, the permit can be issued.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Agencies outside the City should be **contacted directly** by the applicant. Separate plan and submittal requirements may be required by each different agency. Agencies that may be involved are listed under PERMIT ISSUANCE. Counter staff will identify which of the agencies will have to review and approve the project at the time of submittal.

ITEMS REQUIRED FOR SUBMITTAL:

The following items are required for application submittal:

1. One (1) completed [Permit Application Form](#).
2. Plans. Plan size shall be 18" x 24" minimum and 24" x 36" maximum. The number of plan sets required is based on the number of agencies that must review the project. Plans shall be signed and stamped and include site, architectural, structural, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, elevations, details, foundation, floor plans, framing plans, disabled access, etc.
3. Two (2) sets of signed and stamped structural calculations.
4. Two (2) sets of complete signed energy calculations.
5. Three (3) sets of soils and geotechnical reports for all new commercial buildings, building additions or modifications that involve substantial foundation design and buildings that include a basement.
6. Two (2) copies of Utilities Service applications for Electrical and Water/Gas Wastewater Utilities.
7. Architectural Review approval letter shall be printed on the first page of the plans submitted for building permit.

PLAN CHECK PROCESSING:

BUILDING DIVISION PLAN REVIEW:

PLAN CHECK TIMES

Some commercial plans may be plan checked over the counter if the review requires no more than 20 minutes to complete. Otherwise, the plan review time is subject to the current turn-around times. The Building Division staff makes the determination of which projects can be done over the counter and what the current turn-around times are.

CURRENT CODES

The codes currently enforced by the City of Palo Alto include the 2019 California Building Code, 2019 California Mechanical Code, 2019 California Plumbing Code, 2019 California Electric Code and 2016 California Energy Code. All work must comply with these applicable code requirements.

DISABLED ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

California State Title 24 regulations for disabled access impact most commercial projects. The requirements will involve as a minimum, remodeled areas, primary entrances, paths of travel to remodeled areas, sanitary facilities, telephones and drinking fountains for existing buildings. Upgrades of these facilities are almost always required. Submitted plans must show how compliance with the disabled access regulations is to be achieved.

Do not overlook these important requirements.

CHANGES IN USE

When the use of an existing commercial building or space is changed to a different occupancy classification or to a different division of an occupancy classification, then the building must meet all current code requirements for the new use or occupancy. These new code requirements can often be quite severe and must be addressed in the proposed design. Not anticipating these required code upgrades in advance can considerably increase the cost of the project when they are unexpectedly required later during the plan check process.

PLUMBING, MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL REVIEWS

The plumbing, mechanical and electrical plans need to be reviewed by the plumbing and electrical specialists. For food service businesses, a grease interceptor will be required. See the Uniform Plumbing Code, Appendix H for design criteria. Also contact the Water Quality Control Plant for additional requirements.

Load sheets for electric and water/gas/wastewater must be completed and submitted with the plans if utility changes are proposed. Not providing the load sheets at plan submittal will prevent the plans from being accepted for review.

For commercial buildings, electrical wiring must be contained in an approved conduit or raceway. Also, drain, waste and vent piping must be cast iron or other approved metal. Unlisted appliances cannot be used unless they are approved by a recognized testing agency acceptable to the Building Division. Approval may require testing of the appliance prior to acceptance.

SUSPENDED CEILING AND FIXTURE BRACING

Existing suspended ceilings are required to be braced within the area of alteration or repair. The bracing must include a compression strut every 12 feet each way and 45-degree angle tie wires at points of support, in accordance with current standards. Duct registers must also be tied to framing members.

ENERGY DOCUMENTATION

Title 24 energy forms must be included with the plans. These forms are required for any work affecting energy usage in a heated or cooled building including changes in lighting, heating, ventilation, air conditioning or the building envelope. The completed forms must be printed on the plan sheets themselves.

PLAN CHECK STATUS

Plan check status is available online at: <https://aca.accela.com/paloalto>. You can search by either permit number or project address. If plan corrections are required, a correction list will be sent to the applicant. If you have any further questions regarding the status of your plan check, call the Building Department at (650) 329-2496.

GREEN BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

The City's Green Building Ordinance requires a level of green building performance for non-residential and residential projects based on their size and/or valuation. The Palo Alto Green Building website includes helpful information on what level of performance a project is subject to, what the submittal requirements are, and how projects are reviewed. You can learn more about the City's Green Building Program and download copies of the forms and policies at http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/ds/green_building/default.asp

PERMIT ISSUANCE:

Before the permit can be issued, the plans must be approved by all of the other agencies having regulatory authority over the project, both inside and outside the City. A list of the agencies is provided below together with the telephone numbers.

REFERENCE LIST FOR DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES WITHIN THE CITY:

Building Inspection	329-2496
Planning Division	329-2441
Planner on Duty	617-3117
Green Building	329-2179
Fire Department	329-2184
Fire Inspectors	329-2194
HAZ-MAT	329-2198
Water Quality Control Plant	329-2598
Manager	329-2421
Program Assistant	329-2292
Public Works Department	329-2151
Engineering	329-2209 or 329-2564
Utilities Department	
Water/Gas/Wastewater	617-3106
Engineering	566-4501
Electric	566-4500

REFERENCE LIST FOR AGENCIES **OUTSIDE THE CITY:**

Santa Clara Valley Water District	(408) 265-2600
Bay Area Air Quality Management District	(415) 771-6000
Santa Clara County Health Dept.	(408) 299-6060
DOSH permit from the State of CA.	(408) 452-7288

FORMS AND APPROVALS FOR PERMIT ISSUANCE:

FORMS AND SIGN-OFFS

Some forms may need to be completed prior to permit issuance. These could include the special inspection form, unreasonable hardship for disabled access forms, and others. Forms identified during the submittal or plan review process will need to be completed prior to permit issuance.

AGENCY APPROVALS

Approval from all agencies with regulatory authority over the project, both internal and outside the City, is required prior to building permit issuance. It is the applicant's responsibility to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of each agency required for permit issuance.

CONTRACTORS LICENSES, WORKER'S COMPENSATION AND OWNER/BUILDERS

The building permit and all of the sub-permits can be issued to the General Contractor under their license. Evidence of current Worker's Compensation Insurance is also required at the time of permit issuance. The property owner may also take out the permit by certifying that they will contract to have all of the work done by licensed and insured contractors. Agents, such as "runners", must have written authorization from the property owner or contractor to obtain permits on their behalf.

NOTE: Physical presentation of the contractor's license and a copy of Worker's Compensation Insurance policy are required in order for the permit to be issued.

SUB-PERMITS

Sub-permits for electrical, plumbing, and mechanical must be issued at the same time as the building permit to the General Contractor. Sub-permits will **not** be issued separately to sub-contractors unless the work consists of electrical/plumbing/mechanical work only and no building permit is required.

DECONSTRUCTION PERMITS

Deconstruction permits can be issued in advance of the actual building permit subject to the conditions listed below. The applicant is responsible for notifying the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and evidence of notification is required before a

deconstruction permit is issued. For interior deconstruction only (no exterior work being done), plans are required showing the deconstruction work to be done. The plans should show the remaining structural support and the maintenance of required exiting.

Whenever utility disconnection is required for the requested deconstruction, the applicant shall first submit a request for utility disconnection at the Utilities Business Office. When the utilities are disconnected, the utilities office will inform the Building Department that a deconstruction permit can be issued. Then the applicant can apply for a demo permit at the Inspection Services Division.

If the building is being completely deconstructed, the final Architectural Review Board approval, evidence of contact with Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Utility Department clearances for the utility disconnects (water, gas, wastewater and electric), Planning Division clearance for protected tree issues, and Public Works clearance for work to be done in the public right-of-way or for pedestrian protection is required prior to deconstruction permit issuance.

Deconstruction permits for historical buildings are subject to different processes involving the Architectural Review Board and the Historical Review Board. Contact the Planning Division for further information.

FEES

Fees for permits are due at the time of permit issuance. Fees may be paid by check or credit card. Fees may include charges from other departments or divisions within the City and will also include a microfilm fee and State fees for earthquake instrumentation.

INSPECTION:

SCHEDULING INSPECTIONS

Inspections can be scheduled on our automated system by calling the (650) 329-2496 or online at <https://aca.accela.com/paloalto>. When scheduling inspections, you'll need the job address, permit number, and type of inspection requested. Inspections can be scheduled for the morning or the afternoon, usually within 24 – 48 hours of the request.

INSPECTION HOURS

Inspections are made between 8:00 a.m. and 12 noon and 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. To contact an inspector, call the office between the hours of 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. Monday through Friday.

INSPECTION PROBLEM

Questions or problems involving field inspections should be referred to the Inspection Supervisor at (650) 329-2663. If unusual field situations require a change in the normal inspection procedures, such as after hour's inspections, contact the Inspection Supervisor at the above number and pay the additional inspection fee in advance.

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

The items included in this handout are those most usually encountered in processing commercial projects. However, as each project is unique and may have special circumstances related to it, additional requirements not shown here may be required. This list is intended as a processing guide only and should not be mistaken for a plan check correction list or other approval list. Complete dependence on this guide list will not ensure nor is intended to ensure project approval.

SUBMITTAL GUIDELINES: COMMERCIAL PLANS

EFFECTIVE: Jan 1, 2020

CODES ENFORCED: 2019 CBC, CRC, CPC, CMC, CEC, CALGreen, CEnC, and PAMC

The information provided in this document is general and intended as a guide only. Each project is unique and additional requirements may be enforced as deemed appropriate.

GENERAL

Building plans and permits are required for new construction, additions, and remodeling work. Separate permits are required for plumbing, mechanical and electrical work associated with new construction, additions, and remodeling work. In order to provide an expeditious review of your plans, only complete plans will be accepted for review. The following information is required for submittal with the plan check applications for new construction, additions, and remodeling work projects. A California licensed architect, civil, or structural engineer must prepare the plans.

Note: Specific plan requirements depend largely upon the extent, nature, and complexity of the proposed work. Each project is unique and may have additional requirements

1. PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Construction and remodeling projects require submittal of plans. Specific plan requirements depend largely upon the extent, nature and complexity of the proposed works. The following are guidelines for preparation and submittal of plans.

PLAN SIZE

- The minimum sheet size for non-residential plans is 18 x 24 inches.

DIMENSIONS AND SCALE

- Plot Plans, Floor Plans and other plan drawings shall be fully dimensioned according to the scale below. Show north arrow on plot plan.
- All drawings shall be drawn to an adequate scale with the scale indicated.
 - Plot Plans: 1/8"=1', 1"=10' or 1"=20'
 - Floor and Roof Framing: 1/4" = 1'-0" or 1/8" = 1'-0"
 - Floor Plans: 1/4" = 1'-0" or 1/8" = 1'-0"
 - Building Cross Sections: 1/4" = 1'-0" or 1/2" = 1'-0"
 - Foundation Plans: 1/4" = 1'-0" or 1/8" = 1'-0"
 - Exterior Elevations: 1/8" = 1'-0" or 1/4" = 1'-0"
 - Construction Details: 3/4" = 1'-0"

SET OF PLANS AND CALCULATIONS

- Complete plan set requirements for number of plan sets to submit.
- Submit "wet signed" or electronic signature by the appropriate engineer of structural calculations and soils report.

CLARITY

- All plans shall be prepared to be sufficiently readable and clear for a digital or microfilm record. Minimum font size shall be 10.

COMPLETENESS

- Very important: Please remember, the more complete and accurate the drawings and submittal documents, the sooner a building permit can be issued.

2. PROJECT INFORMATION

On the first sheet of the plans, provide the following information:

NAME OF DESIGNER, ARCHITECT, OR ENGINEER

- The printed name, address, telephone number and signature of the person who prepared the plans. Plans prepared by architects and engineers must be stamped (with a state approved stamp) and wet-signed or electronic signature.

ADDRESS AND OWNER

- The street address of the property and the name of the legal owner.

SCOPE OF WORK

- State the complete scope of work.

ABBREVIATION/SYMBOL/LEGEND

- Specify all abbreviation/symbol/legend used.

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Provide the following information:
 - Applicable codes
 - Number of stories
 - State the floor area of the building (or areas of buildings for multiple buildings) and area per story
 - Include an allowable building area or analysis which identifies floor area increases due to frontage, fire sprinklers, etc.
 - If the building is fire-sprinklered
 - The occupancy group or groups and type of construction
 - The occupant load of each floor and whether or not the building is or will be sprinkled.

DRAWING INDEX

- List each sheet and sheet number in the plans with a Sheet Index or Index of the Drawings.

DEFERRED SUBMITTALS

- If any, provide a list of the proposed deferred items on the front sheet. All deferred items shall be submitted and approved by the Building Division prior to installation.

3. ARCHITECTURAL PLANS

The following are minimum plan requirements for most projects. Additional plans, calculations or documentation may be required for complex projects or components.

SITE PLAN (OR PLOT PLAN)

- The Site Plan must include or show all of the following information:
 - A scale and north arrow.
 - Grading, utility, and site improvement.
 - Adjacent streets or alleys and dimensioned location of the existing building or buildings on the site.
 - Front, side and rear yard setback dimensions, dimensions to easements, and dimensions

between buildings if there is more than one building on the site.

- Fire services and devices (FDC/PIV, Hydrants)
- All parking to include regular and van accessible parking spaces. Disabled accessible route or path of travel from the public way and accessible parking to building entrances and exits, routes of travel between buildings on the same property and all other site accessible features including signage.

FLOOR PLANS

Floor Plans must be complete and indicate or show the following information:

- Function of each room and space. For example: Office, Storage, Manufacturing, Toilet, etc.
- The Occupancy Group of each room or space when there are multiple occupancies or uses.
- Door and window sizes and hardware schedules for all doors.
- The exiting system (or an exiting diagram) including rated corridors and relationship of corridor walls to roof structure, ceilings and floor exit doors, exit stairways, etc. Indicate the occupant load and required exit from each space or room.
- Alterations to existing buildings:
- Identify and label all new (N) and existing (E) construction.
- Identify the specific area or areas within the building where proposed work occurs.
- Define and label areas for demolition (if applicable) with dotted lines.

ROOF PLANS

Roof Plan must be complete and indicate or show the following information:

- Roof material.
- Rooftop mechanical units, access ladder, parapet, skylights, etc.
- Roof slope and direction. Show location and details of scupper, downspout, & flashing.

ELEVATIONS

Exterior elevations of all 4 sides are required for new buildings. For existing buildings, provide elevations where exterior work is to be performed. Note that additional elevations may be required for clarity.

BUILDING CROSS SECTIONS

EXISTING BUILDINGS

Provide cross section views as required at walls, floors or ceilings to fully depict the new construction and how it relates to existing construction. Where new or replacement roof-mounted mechanical equipment is proposed, a cross section through the roof area showing parapet walls and/or equipment roof screening is required.

NEW BUILDINGS

Provide at least one cross section view. Provide additional sections or partial sections as necessary to explain all construction and the relationship of foundations, floors and roof to walls, ceilings and other construction. Be sure to indicate cross section cut lines on the Floor Plans.

TITLE 24 CCR ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Indicate in detail how the new or altered building complies with all required disabled access features and standards. See also Site Plan requirements above (e.g., path or travel to area of work, accessible restrooms, drinking fountains, etc.).

REFLECTED CEILING PLANS

- A ceiling plan is required for new buildings and for alterations and renovations when the existing ceiling is being modified.

DETAILS AND NOTES

- Include all construction details such as changes in floor elevations and floor transitions from concrete to wood, if any, and details of how new additions are connected to existing buildings.

LANDSCAPE AND IRRIGATION PLANS

- If landscape and irrigation plans are required, all submittals must comply with City of Palo Alto Planning Division requirements.

4. STRUCTURAL PLANS/CALCULATIONS

STRUCTURAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Indicate all structural materials, special inspection items and frequencies of inspection, design loading criteria, & soil report information.

ROOF FRAMING PLAN

- Indicate size and spacing of roof framing members and details of the roof diaphragm. For existing buildings, indicate any required modifications of the existing roof plan.

FLOOR FRAMING PLAN

- For framed floors, provide framing member sizes and spacing, type and length of shear walls, details of floor diaphragms, hold-downs (if any) and supports.

FOUNDATION PLAN

- Provide a complete plan and details of the new foundation system. For existing buildings, indicate existing and new foundations, type of foundation, size and depth of footings or piers, grade beams and slab details.

SECTIONS AND DETAILS

- For engineered designs, provide shear transfer details and construction connections from roof diaphragm to vertical lateral system and to foundation.

STRUCTURAL DESIGN CALCULATIONS

- Provide complete structural calculations for vertical load carrying members and for the lateral force resisting system. Calculation sheets must be numbered. Calculations must be stamped and “wet” signed by the architect or engineer who prepared them.

5. MECHANICAL, PLUMBING, AND ELECTRICAL PLANS

MECHANICAL PLANS AND CALCULATIONS

- Provide the following:
 - Duct layout plan with size, material and insulation of all ductwork and methods of support and bracing.
 - An equipment schedule. Include a description and the weight of each piece of equipment, and the required fresh outside makeup air for each system based on

- Occupant load determined from the CBC.
- For roof-mounted equipment, a roof plan, location and size of openings for ductwork or equipment, details of required roof access, details of equipment anchorage, and a profile section through the roof and parapets or screen enclosure showing how equipment is screened.
- Specify and note how condensate is routed to the sanitary drainage system or other acceptable methods.
- California Energy Calculations with required heat loss/gain, shell building and glazing calculations reproduced on the plans at full size.
- Indicate supply and return air for enclosed rooms and spaces.

PLUMBING PLANS

- Provide the following.
 - Water, sewer and gas line plan or isometric layout with sizes and materials noted. Include gas demands in CFH, developed lengths of gas piping and gas pipe sizing calculations for large projects and/or where medium pressure piping is to be used.
 - Calculations of sanitary sewer lines and water lines for large buildings.
 - Site sanitary waste and water line plans at new buildings and at existing buildings where needed. Indicate existing size and required size of sanitary lines at existing buildings.
 - Plumbing fixture count calculation.

ELECTRICAL PLANS AND CALCULATIONS

- Provide the following:
 - A single-line power distribution plan. Label all distribution panels and/or other equipment such as transformers. Show the operating weight of the new transformers.
 - Panel schedules and load calculations.
 - Electrical power and lighting plans. Show location of electrical rooms and panels.
 - California Energy Calculations with required lighting forms reproduced on the plans at full size.

6. OTHER CALCULATIONS, FORMS, AND COUNTY AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

- CCR Title 24 Energy Calculations.
 - Energy calculations apply to new buildings and alterations or changes to existing buildings.
 - Energy compliance requirements include applicable reports, Mandatory Measures, required Compliance Statements, specifications, and reproduction of state forms on the plans at full size. Incorporate all energy conservation measures into the plans.
- Hazardous Materials: Provide a general layout of all areas and an inventory statement or list of types and quantities of all hazardous materials to be used or stored on the site with a key location map. On the statement or list, be sure to use classifications found in the CBC, Tables 307.1(1) and 307.1(2). This requirement also applies to existing buildings.
- Other City Department requirements
 - If property is located in the special flood hazard area, contact Public Works Department at (650) 329-2151 prior to beginning any plan preparation.

- Santa Clara County Approval Requirements
 - Prior approval of the Santa Clara County Health Department is required for all food facilities and for public swimming pools and spas.

NOTES

1. Plan sheets prepared by a licensed architect or registered engineer must be stamped and “wet” signed or electronic signature by the appropriate designer for each sheet he or she has prepared in accordance with the California Business and Professions Code prior to or at the time of permit issuance.
2. If one or more of the required items mentioned above are omitted from the submittal plans, the application may be considered as incomplete and may not be accepted for City review.
3. A Building Permit may be issued only to a State of California Licensed Contractor or a property owner meeting the requirements of Section 7044 of the State Business and Professions Code. An Owner may authorize an agent to take out a permit in his or her name by providing a specific letter for a specific property authorizing that individual to take out the permit or permits. Such a letter should be typewritten and dated, contain the Owners name, property address, the person who will be taking out the permit and a general description of the work to be done.