Fee proposal and improved services under consideration

Details of report available on web page

The Development Services Department has proposed a new fee schedule, changing the previous valuation-based fee model to a square-footage-based calculation. The Land Use and Housing Committee of the City Council met on March 19 and forwarded the proposal to the full City Council for consideration. This action is expected in mid-May.

If the fee proposal passes, the new fees will go into effect late summer. A new service that will be added is long-term permit monitoring, and a new optional service is improved express plan check service, including additional resources to meet demand. Other new optional services will include 100 percent next day inspections, the Affordable/Infill Housing Expedite team and the self-certification program. Benefits of the new fee structure include improved service levels, improved inspection response times and reductions in plan review times.

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Your small business is a big deal
City working with community to better assist small business customers

New services are on the way to assist customers starting small businesses. The permitting process can be intimidating for small business owners, who are often brand new to the process. In an effort to help navigate through these requirements, the Development Services Department is in the process of creating a new Small Business Guide and checklist, and revamping our Small Business Owners section of the web page.

Development Services is developing a partnership with the Small Business Advisory Board. Management and senior staff are working closely with small business representatives to gather input and troubleshoot issues in an effort to better serve the small business community.

If you are a small business owner looking for early assistance in starting the permitting process, please contact Deputy Director Terry Marshall at (619) 533-3089. If you are already in the process of obtaining permits and inspections and need additional assistance, please contact Development Services Manager Ed Oliva at (619) 446-5395. Look for more details on the web page.

Local review and inspection now available to medical clinics

New service greatly reduces review time for minor improvements

As part of continued efforts to improve existing service and provide new ones, the Development Services Department has implemented a new provision for medical clinic operators. These industries can now submit medical clinic improvement projects to the City of San Diego for review and inspection rather than submitting to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development Department (OSHPD).

The former procedure could take up to six months for review of relatively minor improvement projects. This new service will reduce this review time to under a month, allowing hospital operators to quickly put in place much needed medical services to citizens, and reduce crowded conditions in hospitals and emergency rooms.

The program was developed and implemented through cooperative efforts with staff and industry. These ongoing partnerships aim to develop innovative and practical solutions to difficult development process issues.

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Development and private industry. The objective is to make Chapter 11A more user friendly and to ensure it meets the Fair Housing Act. These changes are scheduled to be adopted into the 2004 edition of California Building Code.

Reaching Out:
The Development Services Department participated in the Spring Home/Garden Show at the Del Mar Fairgrounds on February 28, March 1 and 2. Six building inspectors operated an informational booth at the event, providing detailed information on the permitting process, safety issues, remodeling tips and general inspection procedures. More than 40,000 people attended the event.

Earthquake Focus:
Development Services Geologist Rob Hawk recently appeared on KPBS-TV’s Full Focus, in an education piece about earthquakes. Hawk explained the City’s work to make buildings better able to withstand earthquakes and protect public safety. He detailed the state’s new earthquake fault mapping project, which identifies new active fault lines in downtown San Diego and the City of Coronado, and how City staff are utilizing this information to ensure safe, and stable development.

Tire Tacking:
The Solid Waste Local Enforcement Agency, part of Development Services, has received a $235,900 Waste Tire Enforcement Grant to continue their waste tire enforcement and surveillance program. Part of an overall clean-up project in the Tijuana River Valley, the grant will also be used to create a training program, produce bilingual educational materials, and research and identify the sources and destinations of used and waste tires to more effectively prevent illegal disposal and enhance recycling efforts.

Holidays Closure:
All City departments will be closed Monday, May 26, in observance of Memorial Day.
New streamlined appeal process for Building Development Review

Revisions govern requests for use of alternate methods, materials or designs

As part of ongoing efforts to improve the development review process, the Building Development Review division has implemented substantial revisions to the process of submitting appeals and requests for the use of alternate methods, materials or designs to those permitted or recognized in the adopted codes. The streamlined process primarily implements the following changes:

- All requests for the use of alternate methods, designs and materials of construction will be initially reviewed at the senior staff level.
- The review process will be decentralized with requests handled by all senior staff members from the appropriate review discipline rather than by the research engineer alone.
- The Board of Building Appeals and Advisors will be primarily used by the applicant to appeal a denial of a request by the Building Official or when the Building Official requests the Board’s input on an issue.
- All applications must be signed by the building owner and the required code analysis and justification must be prepared by a California registered design professional.

Section 129.0109 "Use of Alternate Materials, Design, or Construction Methods" of the San Diego Municipal Code authorizes the Building Official to approve on a case by case basis the use of any alternate material, design, or construction method not specifically prescribed by the Building, Electrical, Plumbing or Mechanical Regulations. The Building Official may approve requests for alternates pursuant to Section 129.0109 if the Building Official finds that the proposed alternate material, design, or construction method is at least equivalent to the standards prescribed in the applicable regulation in terms of suitability, quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability, safety and sanitation.

Requests for alternates must be first initiated by completing form DS-104 (now available on the department web page). The new form must be submitted in conjunction with a complete code analysis and data substantiating any claims made of the alternative being proposed. The application and associated documents will be reviewed by a senior staff engineer and a written response will be returned to the applicant within four weeks from the date of submittal for most projects. The Building Official will make the final decision as to whether the request should be approved. Building Newsletter 1-4A is in the final stages of development and will be published to aid in the completion of form DS-104. A fee will be required to initiate the review process.

Applicants whose requests for the use of alternate methods, designs and materials have been denied may appeal the Building Official’s decision to the Board of Building Appeals and Advisors. Form DS-104A, which replaces the existing form, must be used to request action by the Board of Building Appeals and Advisors. Building Newsletter (BNL) 1-4B will be published to replace BNL 1-4 and can be used to aid in the completion of form DS-104A.

Items requiring input from the Fire Marshal, or which involve an issue for which the Fire Marshal holds the primary responsibility, will be forwarded to Fire and Life Safety Services for their review and consideration. Submittals may be made via the senior staff member associated with the project or directly to the Senior Research Engineer. For more information please contact Ali Fattah, Senior Research Engineer, at (619) 446-5092.

Project tracking computer system moves forward

The Development Services Department is moving into the next stage of implementation for the Project Tracking System (PTS). This phase of PTS replaces paper files and disjointed permit tracking systems inherited from eight other departments. PTS was created to provide staff and customers with one integrated project tracking system for their project, beginning to end.

Once fully implemented, customers will no longer have to go to separate sources for information on planning, engineering, building or fire permits. In this phase of PTS, the current building permit tracking system (BPIS) will be replaced. In PTS, projects are tracked geographically and the system is accessible by all staff. PTS provides a common set of tools to track all project steps, plan rout-
I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief summary of the Department’s policy for the design and construction of multiple townhouse dwelling units, when built in a row at or near property line or assumed property line, under Group R, Division 3, Dwelling occupancy classification.

Under this occupancy classification, terms townhomes and row homes are considered to be synonymous and are referred to as townhouse or townhouses hereinafter.

Under the policy, row homes are single-family dwelling units constructed in a row consisting of either a single townhouse or a pair of attached townhouses forming a duplex unit.

For comprehensive and detailed requirements for design and construction of row homes, refer to Building Newsletter Row Homes Requirements for Occupancy Classification as Group R, Division 3.

II. DEFINITION

TOWNHOUSE is a single-family dwelling unit constructed as single unit which extends from foundation to roof. Furthermore, each townhouse shall have open space on at least two sides.

III. CONDITIONS FOR OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AS GROUP R, DIVISION 3

In order for multiple individual townhouses to be classified as Group R, Division 3, Occupancy, when built in a row at or near property line or assumed property line, the following conditions are required to be satisfied:

A. Each townhouse is required to be in compliance with the applicable provisions of the Building Code related to Group R, Division 3, occupancy classification.

B. Each single townhouse or a duplex shall be considered a separate and independent building.

C. Each individual townhouse must be located on a parcel of land either bounded by established and recorded legal property lines or assumed property lines or both. The site plan shall clearly show the legal property lines [lot lines] or the assumed property lines with a description of legal address for each individual townhouse and duplex.

D. Each single townhouse building or duplex building shall be separated from adjoining dwelling unit by property line walls. Attached dwelling units in a duplex may be separated by a party wall, constructed as defined in the newsletter.

E. Townhouses shall not to be stacked with one constructed on top of the other. Each townhouse must extend from foundation to roof.

F. Underground and aboveground plumbing, conduits, wiring and other utilities shall comply with the requirements set forth in the newsletter.

G. Each separate and independent building must be structurally independent in resisting both vertical gravity loads and lateral (seismic and wind) loads.

H. Each individual townhouse or duplex must have a separate means of egress.

IV. COMMERCIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Commercial uses may be established in one- and two-story townhouses without triggering compliance with Building Code provisions associated with commercial use and occupancy group. For comprehensive and detailed requirements refer to newsletter.

V. PERMIT ISSUANCE

A. Townhouse. A separate Combination Permit will be issued for each individual townhouse when all building and zoning regulations of the City of San Diego are satisfied and complied with.

B. Duplex. A separate Combination Permit will be issued for each dwelling unit of a duplex when all building and zoning regulations of the City of San Diego are satisfied and complied with. A duplex unit will be reviewed as a duplex.

VI. ALTERNATE MATERIALS, DESIGN AND METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION

The applicant may submit to the Building Official, requesting for review and approval of an alternate design and method of construction for property line walls and means of egress system. For comprehensive and detailed requirements refer to newsletter.

For questions regarding this policy please contact Mehdi Shadyab, P.E., Senior Engineer, at 619-446-5400.

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The new fee schedule and related fee increases are needed to more accurately reflect the cost of service, keep up with the increasing workload and labor costs, and hire staff for vacant positions to improve service levels. Increased costs are also associated with regulatory requirements including additions to the Uniform Building Code, energy conservation, storm water pollution prevention, disabled access and environmental monitoring. Some fees, such as those for single family tract homes, will decrease.

A complete copy of the City Manager’s Report detailing the fee proposal and the related attachments is available on the internet at www.sandiego.gov, select “Development Services” from the “Business” heading, then select “News and Updates.”
New package added to Whole House Energy Retrofit Program
Investment payback can be realized in less than 18 months

The Whole House Energy Retrofit Program was established in October 2002 to help homeowners reduce their energy bills while conserving energy in the City of San Diego. The program provides cash rebates for installation of energy-efficient technologies in family residences built prior to 1978. Administered by the City’s Development Services and Environmental Services departments, the program is funded by a grant from the California Public Utilities Commission.

The program has just added a new package, which will appeal to homeowners because it is more affordable, with a quicker pay-back period and lower initial capital cost. The entire project will cost an average consumer approximately $1,300 and will pay itself back in less than 18 months. Any of the three packages are estimated to give the customer a reduction of $30 per month off their SDG&E energy bills. The following is a breakdown of each package requirement and their rebate range.

**Package 1 - Rebates of $200-$600 depending on income** - To qualify the homeowner must complete all of the following: Do all in Package 1 and install a new high-efficient furnace with AFUE rating of 90% or higher.

**Package 2 - Rebates of $400 to $800 depending on income** - To qualify the homeowner must complete all of the following: Do all in Package 1 and insulate the attic with R-30 insulation, wrap water heaters where appropriate.

**Package 3 - Rebates of $300-$500 depending on income** - To qualify the homeowner must complete all of the following: Install low-e window film on all windows, insulate the attic with R-30 insulation, wrap the water heater, and replace 10 standard light bulbs or 50% of light bulbs with Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs.

An application form and final inspection are required. For information call the City at (858) 492-6004. Brochures and applications are available at the Development Services Department, 1222 First Ave.; the Ridgehaven facility, 9601 Ridgehaven Court; and Community Service Centers. Information can also be found on the web at: http://genesis.sandiego.gov/infospc/templates/esd/residential_programs.jsp

New Storm water permit requirements
Mandate drops permit threshold from 5 acres to 1 acre

Under Federal mandate (40CFR Parts 9, 122, 123 and 124), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has made revisions to the State General Construction Permit, Order No. 99-08-DWO. In effect since March 10, 2003, the threshold for this permit drops from 5 acres to 1 acre. No exceptions were written into the modifications.

If your site is under construction and has 1 acre or more of soil being disturbed, it falls under the permit requirements and you must: 1) File a Notice of Intent with SWRCB; 2) Pay an annual fee of $700 to the SWRCB (in most cases); 3) Have a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan implemented on site.

The permit is applicable to all sites under construction; there is no grandfather clause. The Development Services Department will not be reviewing any Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans for projects with either an active permit or a valid Notice to Proceed for Subdivision Improvement Agreement, however, the document must still be prepared, implemented, and kept on site to satisfy SWRCB requirements. The permit, frequently asked questions and forms are available on the State’s website at: www.swrcb.ca.gov/stormwtr/construction.html.

Since Dec. 2, 2002, new development and significant redevelopment projects that fall under certain criteria must incorporate water quality improvements. Refer to the Storm Water Standards Manual (located on the web at www.sandiego.gov, select “Development Services” from the “Business” heading, then “News and Updates”) for complete details of storm water requirements, and to determine if your project requires water quality improvements. For further questions, contact the Development Services Department at (619) 446-5152.
Now here...

Get no-plan permits online!
See our website...http://www.sandiego.gov/development-services