



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of San Diego Recognized for Digitizing Building Permit Process During COVID-19 Pandemic

STATEWIDE INDUSTRY GROUP HIGHLIGHTS CITY'S ABILITY TO MODERNIZE, STREAMLINE AND CONTINUE OFFERING SERVICES

SAN DIEGO – In recognition of its work to ensure building code compliance and adapt to virtual operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of San Diego received the Building Department of the Year award from the California Building Officials (CALBO) industry group. The City's Development Services Department (DSD) accepted the honor during CALBO's 60th annual business meeting in Rancho Mirage.

The recognition acknowledges DSD's accelerated implementation over the past two years of technology and cloud-based tools to enforce building codes and standards, and its work with state and national code developers to ensure public health and safety requirements are met.

"Despite COVID-19-related challenges to our operations, we still needed to keep up with the permitting needs of the second-largest city in California," said Development Services Department Director Elyse W. Lowe. "DSD issues thousands of approvals annually, and through resourcefulness and good governance, we leveraged technology to seamlessly process, review, permit, and inspect projects throughout the City. We are now the largest municipality in California to have 100% digital permitting."

CALBO, an organization of California building officials who have the authority to enforce building codes within their local jurisdictions, recognized how virtual inspections helped City staff adhere to physical distancing protocols and conduct more inspections each day. Additionally, going virtual helped employees avoid lost time in traffic driving to inspection sites, saving the City on fuel and mileage costs. These changes also support the City's [Climate Action Plan](#), which calls for slashing half of all greenhouse gas emissions in the City by 2035.

The technological innovations are part of #DigitalDSD, a department initiative to modernize all DSD workplace systems, increase productivity and improve service delivery to customers. Additional enhancements include:

- Free [virtual over-the-counter online appointments](#) with DSD staff.
- A new [Zoning and Parcel Information Portal](#), making it easier to research zoning and property information.
- An [online portal](#) to assist local businesses with temporary outdoor permits. These permits aim to balance reduced indoor capacity as businesses recover from mandatory closures and economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The free [Ask a CASp](#) program that provides customers with technical assistance about construction-related accessibility design standards.

This year, permitting activity in San Diego has increased by 17%. To keep up with the increased demand for expedited permitting services, DSD has contracted with support teams to assist with permit review and processing. In addition, the City continues recruitment efforts to fill approximately 100 existing vacancies in DSD alone.

“Local Building Officials enforce state building codes, and our staff ensures the construction complies with all safety standards and regulations, primarily outside of the public’s eye,” said Deputy Director and City of San Diego Chief Building Official Kelly Charles. “This recognition from our colleagues at CALBO is significant and greatly appreciated by the team.”

DSD staff review, approve, permit and inspect more than 60,000 projects annually that help customers build new housing units and improvements, provide communities with 5G wireless, facilitate engineering for utilities and protect San Diego’s natural resources. For more information about programs and services, visit sandiego.gov/DSD.

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