



**COUNCILMEMBER CHRIS CATE  
CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
SIXTH DISTRICT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**DATE:** October 4, 2018

**TO:** Elyse Lowe, Director, Development Services Department  
Tracy McCraner, Director, Department of Finance

**FROM:** Councilmember Chris Cate 

**SUBJECT:** Building Permit Fee Reduction Pilot Program for Disabled Veterans

San Diego has a long, proud history of supporting the United States military, and is called home by over 100,000 active duty military personnel and nearly 240,000 veterans. Many of these brave men and women have made sacrifices to keep our nation safe. Some of nearly 35,000 disabled veterans in San Diego now require accessibility improvements in their homes, such as wheel chair ramps, plumbing and electrical modifications, chair lifts, and hallway and door widening.

To help ease the burden of securing building permits for these accessibility improvements, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 330 (Berryhill) into law, allowing local governments to waive or reduce all building permit fees for home improvements related to veterans' service-connected disabilities. Given that disabled veterans in San Diego only receive an average monthly payout of approximately \$1,300 from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), this state legislation seeks to incentivize individuals to obtain otherwise costly building permits, ensuring these accessibility projects are both safe and up to code. Permitting costs for accessibility improvements vary significantly, starting from about \$500 up to thousands of dollars, depending on the project scope.

In light of SB 330, the City should consider implementing a local pilot program that includes the following provisions:

- Reducing a portion of building permit fees for ministerial home improvement projects meant to accommodate a disability connected to a veteran's military service;
- Limiting the program scope to accessibility retrofits or modifications for single-family and multi-family units;
- Requiring project applicants to produce valid VA documentation verifying the residents' or tenants' service-connected disability;
- Identifying \$50,000 in the next Mid-Year Budget Monitoring Report to support a one-year pilot program; and
- Instituting a fee reduction cap on a per project basis of \$1,000.

I look forward to working with City staff to introduce this item for discussion at a Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee meeting before the end of this calendar year.

CC:ic/jeh

cc: Andrea Tevlin, Independent Budget Analyst  
Jessica Lawrence, Director of Council Affairs and Budget Policy, Office of the Mayor