



**CITY OF RIVERSIDE
BUILDING & SAFETY DIVISION**

Policy-

Effective Date:
Revised Date:
Prepared By:

Approved

Building Plan Check Self-Certification Program

1. Challenge

The traditional building plan review process can be lengthy and complicated, leading to extended turnaround times and review periods that may hinder project schedules and construction commencement while increasing costs for both homeowners and businesses within the community. This inefficiency can deter investment and slow down the city's economic growth and development.

2. Opportunity

By leveraging the expertise of licensed design professionals, the city can streamline the plan review process for qualifying projects, reducing administrative burdens while still ensuring public safety and compliance with applicable building codes and regulations.

3. Solution

Establish a **Building Plan Check Self-Certification Program** allowing California-licensed Architects and Engineers (LDPs) to certify compliance of their plans for qualified projects. The program expedites approvals with limited or no formal plan review involvement by Building & Safety, Planning, and Fire Prevention.

4. Benefits

- **Efficiency:** The self-certification process is designed to reduce and/or bypass plan review, helping to expedite project initiation.
- **Cost Savings:** By decreasing the time and resources spent on plan checks, costs associated with delayed project timelines can be reduced.
- **Professional Accountability:** Licensed design professionals will take on the responsibility of ensuring their designs comply with all relevant codes, fostering heightened professional accountability.
- **Maintained Public Safety:** Includes robust audit and enforcement provisions to ensure continued code compliance.
- **Economic Growth:** A more efficient review process encourages investment in projects, stimulating community growth and development.

5. Scope

This policy applies to building permit applications for projects that meet the criteria outlined in this policy. It specifically pertains to projects requiring reviews by the Building & Safety Division, Planning Division, and Fire Prevention, excluding projects necessitating additional discretionary approvals such as Historic Preservation and Environmental reviews beyond CEQA Ministerial.

6. Definitions

- **Licensed Design Professional (LDP):** An Architect or Engineer licensed by the State of California responsible for project design.
- **Self-Certification:** A process by which an LDP affirms compliance of the submitted plans with applicable codes without undergoing standard plan checks.
- **Program Administrator:** The Building Official is responsible for oversight and administration of the self-certification program.

7. Qualified Projects

Eligible project types include limited residential and commercial alterations that require review solely by the Building & Safety Division, Planning Division, and Fire Prevention. The following types of work may qualify under the Self-Certification Program, subject to Planning and Fire Prevention completeness checks:

Residential Projects (One- and Two-Family Dwellings, Townhomes)

- Interior home remodels
- Single story R-3 room additions under 500 SF
- Detached patio covers and carports under 1,200 SF
- Detached non-habitable accessory structure under 1,200 SF
- Detached private garage under 1,200 SF
- Rebuild: single-family dwellings impacted by a natural disaster

Commercial Projects (B, M, and low-hazard F or S occupancies only)

- Interior tenant improvements less than 5,000 SF
- Patio and shade structures less than 1,500 SF
- Non-habitable accessory structures less than 1,500 SF
- Site Improvements (trash enclosures, lighting standards, parking restriping, and similar work not requiring discretionary review)
- Solar PV systems and their support structures (carports, etc.) on existing rooftops with battery storage

Program Exclusions:

- New buildings or structures not included in the residential and commercial project types approved herein
- R-3 additions exceeding 499 SF
- Group A, H, I, E, or R-2.1/R-4 occupancies

- High Fire and Very High Fire Severity Zones
- Seismic or structural retrofit work
- Changes of occupancy group or use
- Work requiring Public Works, Public Utilities, or outside agency approvals
- Historic properties or projects within historic overlay zones that trigger discretionary review
- Projects requiring environmental reviews beyond ministerial review
- Unusual site conditions that pose a significant risk to health & safety as determined by the Building Official
- Unpermitted construction

Note: All projects remain subject to final determination of eligibility by the Program Administrator and must pass complete verification by Planning and Fire Prevention.

8. Program Framework

8.1 Eligibility Verification:

The LDP submits a Self-Certification Application. The Program Administrator confirms the LDP's license status and project type eligibility.

8.2 Submission Requirements:

Applicants must provide:

1. Completed Self-Cert Permit Application

- Provide all necessary details as outlined in the application form.

2. Project Narrative & Code Checklist

- A detailed description of the project, including relevant code sections and calculations to demonstrate compliance.

3. Professionally Stamped Plans and Specifications

- All plans must be prepared and stamped by a licensed design professional (Architect or Engineer).

4. Professional of Record Statement

- A sworn statement signed by the licensed design professional affirming that the submitted plans meet all applicable codes and regulations.

5. Indemnification Letter

- A document indicating that the property owner agrees to hold the City harmless concerning any issues arising from the self-certification.

6. Additional Documentation (if applicable)

- Any other documents that may be specific to the project type or circumstances, as deemed necessary by the Program Administrator.

7. Owner/Tenant Statement

- A statement signed by the responsible owner or tenant, certifying that they authorized the work, accept responsibility for correcting any misrepresentation or falsification,

understand the project is subject to audit and inspection, and agree to take any remedial measures needed to comply with all applicable codes and regulations.

8.3 Internal Routing:

Upon receipt, staff from Building & Safety, Planning, and Fire Prevention conduct a completeness check without a formal plan review.

8.4 Permit Issuance:

If complete, the permit will be issued within three to five business days with no further comments allowed on the plan check unless a safety issue arises.

8.5 Accountability & Audit:

An independent third-party or in-house audit team will randomly conduct audits on 20% of self-certified projects annually to ensure compliance.

9. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

9.1 Application Intake:

Counter/online intake staff ensure all SCP forms are properly submitted, and LDP credentials are verified.

9.2 Completeness Check:

- **Planning Division:** Verify compliance with zoning, setbacks, parking, and land use; stamp as Planning Complete.
- **Fire Prevention:** Review for necessary fire flows, hydrant locations, access for fire apparatus, and occupancy classification; stamp as Fire Complete.
- **Building & Safety:** Confirm project scope eligibility, stamp completeness only (no technical plan review)
- **9.3 Permit Issuance:** Permits will be released within three to five business days upon obtaining all completeness stamps. The permit will include a notice: This permit is self-certified by a licensed design professional; subject to audit and revocation if non-compliant.

9.4 Inspection Protocol:

Field inspectors will perform standard inspections. Should code violations be noted, the LDP shall be notified and required to rectify the situation through a supplemental permit or field correction submittal.

9.5 Program Audits:

The audit team will randomly select self-certified permits for full compliance review. Findings will be documented, and non-compliance may trigger a suspension of the LDP's certification.

9.6 Record Keeping:

Digital and physical records of all SCP forms, permits, and audits must be maintained for a minimum of ten years. Performance metrics such as permit turnaround times, audit pass rates, and violation counts will be tracked.

10. Roles & Responsibilities:

- **Program Administrator (Building Official):** Responsible for overall program oversight, including policy updates and audit approvals.
- **Licensed Professionals:** Accountable for the accuracy and compliance of submitted plans and must maintain valid license.
- **Planning and Fire Prevention:** Conduct completeness checks and issue approval stamps.
- **Building & Safety Staff:** Intake, completeness verification, permit issuance, field inspections, and audit assistance.
- **Property Owners:** Acknowledge program terms via indemnification; cooperate with audits and corrections as needed.

11. Enforcement & Compliance

- **Non-Compliance Enforcement:**
- Revocation of permits issued under self-certification.
- Suspension or permanent removal of LDP from program participation.
- Referral to California Architects Board or California Board for Professional Engineers for professional discipline if warranted.
- Requirement to submit standard full plan check for future projects.
- **Appeals Process:**
- LDPs may appeal eligibility denials or audit findings through formal appeal to the Program Administrator within 15 calendar days. The Program Administrator will implement a separate policy for the appeals process.