Building Plan Check Self-Certification Program

Community & Economic Development Department

September 16, 2025

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PURPOSE

Economic Opportunity: Deliver programs that accelerate the permit process in a predictable, transparent manner

Emergency Response: Implement tools and resources that expedite the disaster recovery process

SELF CERTIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM

DISASTER RECOVERY

STREAMLINE RIVERSIDE

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OBJECTIVES

- Educate and Inform Council
- Review Program Guidelines and Process
- Discuss Programs "Phased Approach"
- Discuss Residential/Commercial Project Types
- Consideration Items (Pros and Cons)
- Discuss steps to Program Implementation

BUILDING PLAN CHECK SELF-CERTIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM
- Opportunity to streamline and enhance the permitting process for qualifying projects
- Licensed architects and engineers in California may certify plans for code compliance
- Applicants bypass standard review, shortening time from submittal to issuance

NATIONWIDE ADOPTION
- Programs developed to expedite plan reviews while still ensuring public safety

PROGRAM BENEFITS
- Improves customer service and shortens permit approval times
- Helps resolve permitting backlogs and promote economic growth
- Maintains safety through inspections and auditing

EMERGENCY RESPONSE
- When activated, will expedite permitting for reconstruction after disasters

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WHAT IS SELF-CERTIFICATION?

Licensed Engineers

Approved Licensed Design Professionals certify plans comply with adopted codes and bypass the building plan check process - expediting permitting review and approvals

Licensed Architects

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SELF-CERTIFICATION HISTORY

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PROGRAM ACCEPTANCE & ELIGIBILITY

Program Acceptance:

CA Licensed architects and engineers with five years of experience may apply. Upon approval by the Building Official, they can submit eligible projects.

Eligible Project Types:

Staff will verify eligibility during pre-screening and identify required approvals which must be obtained before permit issuance.

City staff will verify Self-Certification eligibility during pre-screening

And identify any required departmental approvals, which must be obtained before permit issuance.

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INSURANCE & INDEMNIFICATION

Self-Certified Professionals must:

1. Provide professional liability and Errors and Omission's insurance; and

2. Submit Indemnification Letter holding the City harmless for project-related claims or non-compliance.

$500,000/ $1,000,000

INSURANCE AND INDEMNIFICATION REQUIRED

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ELIGIBILE PROJECTS

PROJECT TYPES

Residential

Residential Interior Remodels
Residential 1 Story Room Additions < 500 SF
Residential Detached Accessory Structures < 1200 SF
Residential Patio Covers and Carports < 1200 SF
Residential Detached Garages < 1200 SF
Rebuild of Single-Family Homes Impacted by a Natural Disaster

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ELIGIBILE PROJECTS

PROJECT TYPES

Commercial

Commercial Tenant Improvements < 5,000 SF
Commercial Patio Covers/Shade Structures < 1,500SF
Commercial Accessory Structures < 1,500 SF
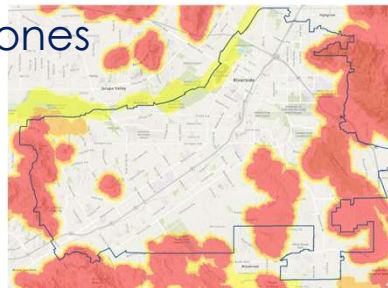Rooftop Solar PV Carports and PV Systems
Site Improvements

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KEY EXCLUSIONS

Projects that include any of the following:

- Historic Preservation
- Environmental Review
- Very High and High Fire Severity Zones
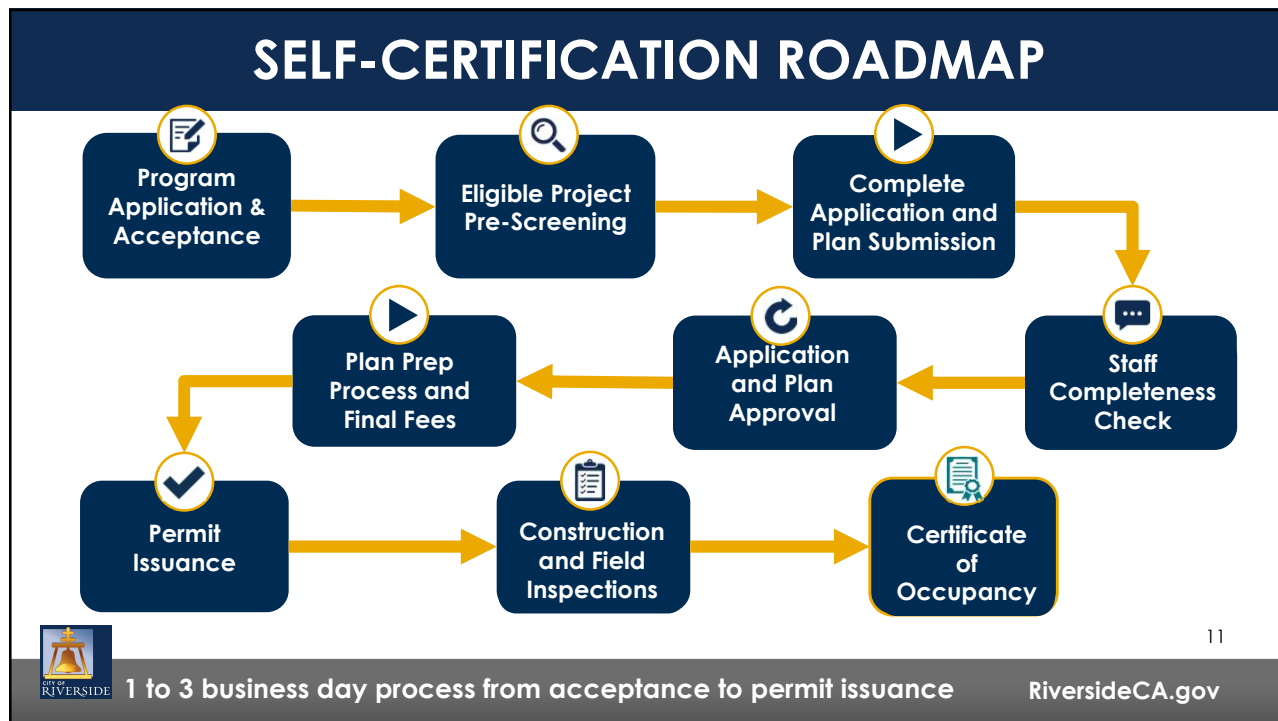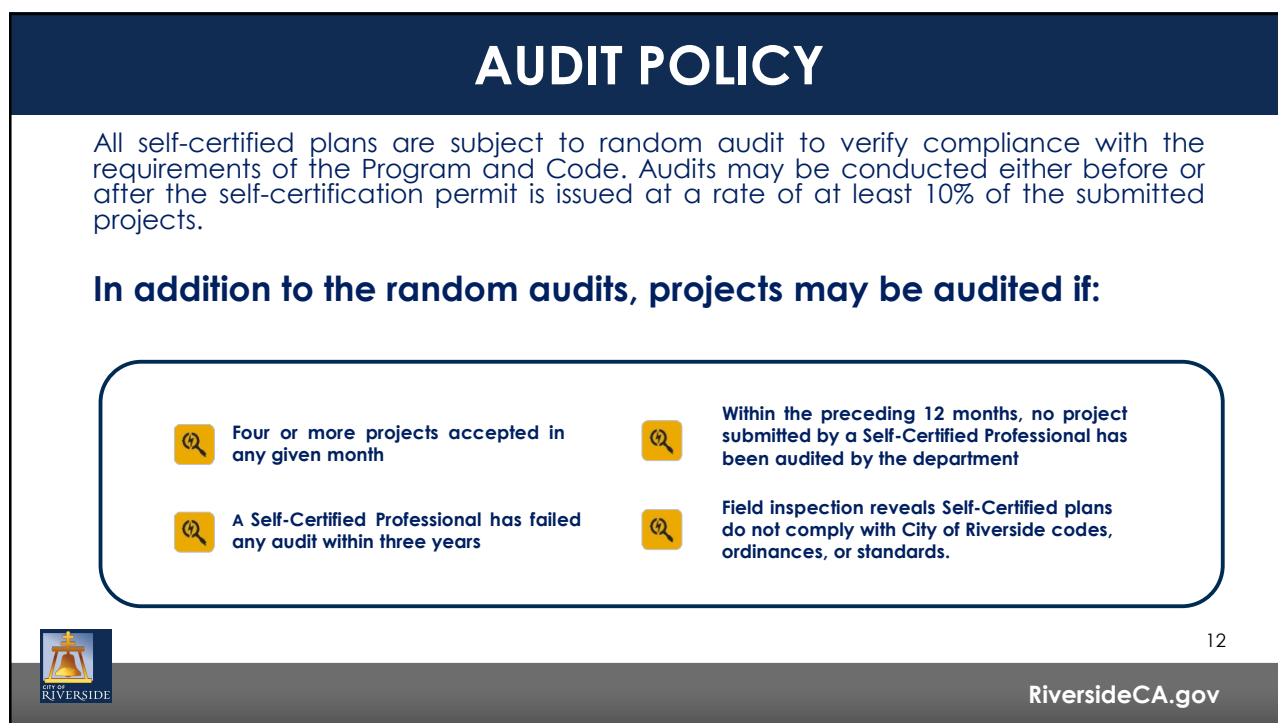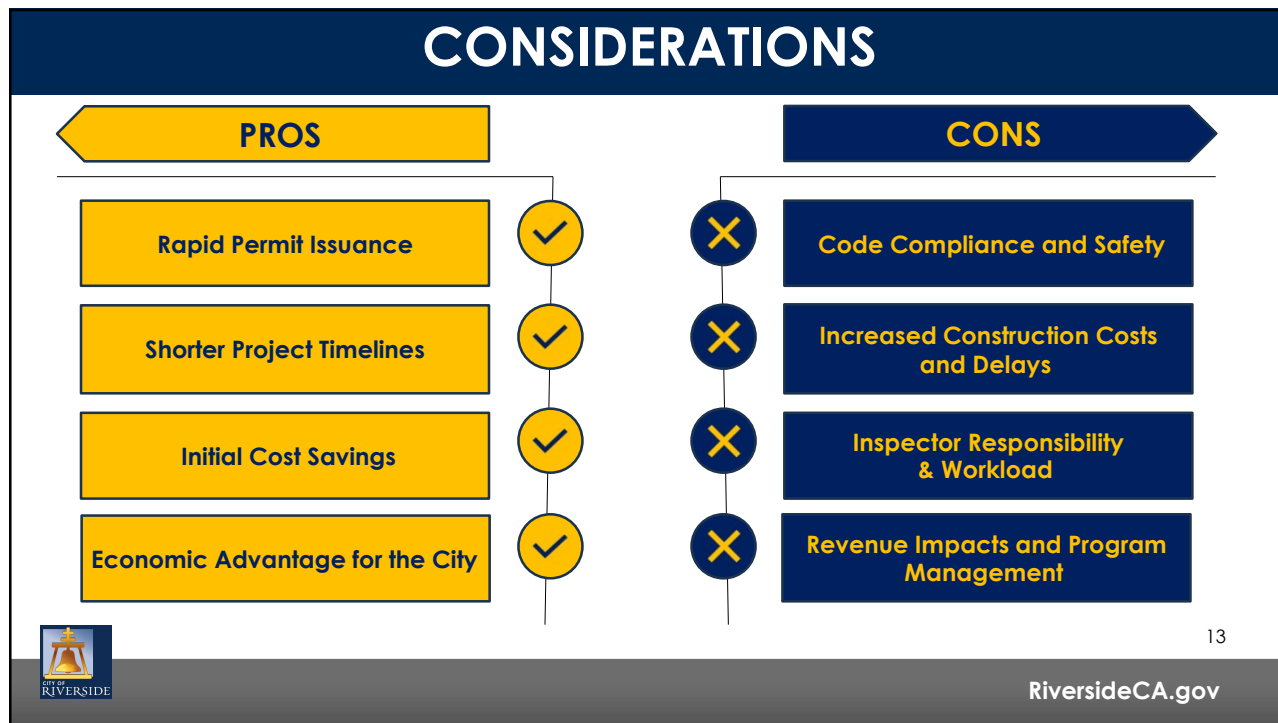- High Hazardous Uses
- New Buildings

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SELF-CERTIFICATION ROADMAP

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Program Application & Acceptance → Eligible Project Pre-Screening → Complete Application and Plan Submission
                                                                              ↓
Permit Issuance ← Plan Prep Process and Final Fees ← Application and Plan Approval ← Staff Completeness Check
      ↓
Permit Issuance → Construction and Field Inspections → Certificate of Occupancy
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1 to 3 business day process from acceptance to permit issuance   RiversideCA.gov

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AUDIT POLICY

All self-certified plans are subject to random audit to verify compliance with the requirements of the Program and Code. Audits may be conducted either before or after the self-certification permit is issued at a rate of at least 10% of the submitted projects.

In addition to the random audits, projects may be audited if:

Four or more projects accepted in any given month

Within the preceding 12 months, no project submitted by a Self-Certified Professional has been audited by the department

A Self-Certified Professional has failed any audit within three years

Field inspection reveals Self-Certified plans do not comply with City of Riverside codes, ordinances, or standards.

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CONSIDERATIONS

PROS

- Rapid Permit Issuance ✓
- Shorter Project Timelines ✓
- Initial Cost Savings ✓
- Economic Advantage for the City ✓

CONS

- ✗ Code Compliance and Safety
- ✗ Increased Construction Costs and Delays
- ✗ Inspector Responsibility & Workload
- ✗ Revenue Impacts and Program Management

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PROGRAM IMPACTS

Fees and Cost Recovery Considerations

- **Project Application Fee:** right size fees to actual time spent on program

- **Program Application Fees:** fee for registration, entry and maintenance of Program

- **Program Renewal Fee:** confirm professional qualifications and track approval status
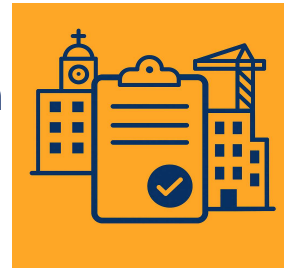
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NEXT STEPS

- Implement Program Resolution and Ordinance
- Execute Fee Schedule Update and Resolution
- Execute Program Guidelines and Policy
- Program Supporting Documents
- Software Update to support the Program
- Staff Training and Resources

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council:

1. Introduce and subsequently adopt an Ordinance establishing a Building Plan Check Self-Certification Pilot Program; and

2. Adopt a Resolution adopting the Building Plan Check Self-Certification Pilot Program Guidelines;

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RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Conduct a public hearing to amend the City of Riverside's Fiscal Year 2025/26 Master Fees and Charges Schedule for the addition of three (3) Building Plan Check Self Certification Fees; and

4. Adopt a resolution amending the City's Fees and Charges Schedule to add three (3) Building Plan Check Self Certification fees: (1) Design Professional Program Application Fees, (2) Design Professional Program Renewal Fee and (3) Total Project Application Fee.

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