

Review and Processing of Projects Requiring Accessibility

PURPOSE

To provide a process to accurately review, process and issue building permit applications for development subject to accessibility accommodations in the most expeditious manner possible.

GENERAL

PRMD's goal is to review and issue permits where accessible features are required in the most expeditious manner possible. When accessible features conflict with fire and life safety features, compliance with fire and life safety requirements shall take priority.

Projects limited to barrier removal or work that is exempt from accessibility upgrades as identified in the applicable building standards may be plan checked at the front counter. Projects where accessibility upgrades are required should be reviewed commensurate to the proposed scope of work.

In order to meet our goal of reviewing and issuing permits for projects requiring accessibility review in the most expeditious manner possible, three services will be provided: 1) Accessibility Consultation, 2) Accessibility Review - Under Threshold (Under Threshold Review) and 3) Accessibility Review - Over Threshold (Over Threshold Review). The threshold referenced in both reviews is the valuation threshold amount for unreasonable hardship determinations established annually by the Division of State Architects Office.

To determine compliance with state accessibility regulations, we must have a clear understanding of the scope of work proposed, the value of that work and accessible features related to the proposed work. Applications missing any one of these elements should not be accepted for review. Additionally, if the applicant is seeking relief from full accessibility compliance, a *Hardship Exemption* and possibly an *Equivalent Facilitation* determination may be required as well.

Permit applicants often believe their property is in "full compliance" with accessibility regulations and therefore detailing those features is unnecessary. However, given the ever changing and conflicting accessibility regulations, PRMD's policy is to confirm compliance in existing structures. Applicants may substantiate compliance by obtaining an *Accessibility Consultation*.

The *Accessibility Consultation* is a service PRMD may provide for a fee. The *Accessibility Consultation* includes a meeting on-site with a California Accessibility Specialist program (CASp) certified inspector to discuss a specific project or proposal. The use and application of the *Accessibility Consultation* should be flexible to accommodate a multitude of issues. One

example is to confirm the property's accessibility features are compliant with current requirements and/or commensurate with the proposed project. Another use would be to provide clients the opportunity to meet with a CASp-certified inspector to receive information and guidance needed to prepare a complete permit application or resolve a design issue. The *Accessibility Consultation* is a verbal consultation and does not include a written report. However, staff conducting the consultation will provide information to plan check and in Permits Plus. The fee for *Accessibility Consultation* provides a maximum of 2 hours of inspector time.

Prior to submitting a plan check application, an applicant may obtain the *Accessibility Consultation* or the *Over Threshold Review* as a separate application to determine non-compliant features. The *Over Threshold Review* provides a detailed written report that identifies all non-compliant accessibility features. The scope of this report is necessary for projects that exceed the threshold valuation or when a permit application is missing required information and the applicant has limited ability to provide the required information. Both services shall be initialized as a SEV activity and the *Accessibility Consultation* under the subtype of "RACC" and the *Over Threshold Review* under the subtype "VAOT".

The *Under Threshold Review* provides a means to field verify that the information provided on the plan check application accurately reflects site conditions and sufficiently addresses required accessibility upgrades. It is used to determine whether the accessibility component of a permit application can be approved.

Either review may be required separately or in addition to a site review. If a site review is required, the accessibility review should be done concurrently. Even if a site review is not required, staff should research the site review information to be cognizant of flood zone and other site considerations.

PROCEDURE

- A. **Determine if the permit application requires accessible features.** The permit technician shall determine if the application under review includes any of the follow type of projects requiring accessibility features:
 - a. New non-residential facilities.
 - b. Alterations, structural repairs or additions to existing non-residential facilities.
 - c. New covered multifamily dwellings consisting of triplex or more units, 4 or more condominiums or 3 or more apartments.
 - d. Alterations, structural repairs or additions to public or common areas of covered dwellings.

- B. **Determine the scope of work.** The permit technician shall make a preliminary determination whether or not the proposed work is above or below the threshold amount.
 - a. If the project is below the threshold amount, PRMD form BPC-015 is the

- applicable Hardship Exemption Form.
- b. If the project appears to be above the threshold amount, BPC-032 is the applicable Hardship Exemption Form.
- C. Determine if the permit application is complete.** The permit technician shall determine whether or not the application contains all elements for a complete application consisting of:
- a. Clear description and/or detailing of the proposed work
 - b. Value of the proposed work
 - c. Adequately detailed drawing that identify accessibility features related to proposed work
 - d. A completed hardship exemption form BPC-015 or BPC-032, if necessary
 - e. If the application is determined incomplete, the application shall not be accepted for review.
- D. Processing permits that do not trigger accessible compliance or upgrades.** Applications submitted that do not require an accessibility report as noted in the matrix may be issued if all the required clearances are given, a site review is not required and the plans examiner approves the application.
- E. Processing of permits that trigger accessible compliance.** The permit technician shall apply the appropriate fee for Under or Over Threshold Review as applicable. The fee shall be applied independently from the determination whether or not the project requires a site review. The permit application package (manila folder) shall be identified in black marker if an Over or Under Threshold Review is required and routed to the site review shelf.
- F. Determine the level of accessibility review is required.** The following chart shall be used to determine when a permit will not require accessibility review or what level of review is required:

PROJECT	Under Threshold Review	Over Threshold Review	N/R
Under threshold TI (see BPC-015 for threshold amt)	✓		
Over threshold TI (see BPC-32 to threshold amt)		✓	
New structure, under threshold- undeveloped property			✓
New structure, over threshold- undeveloped property		✓	
New structure, under threshold- developed property	✓		
New structure, over threshold- developed property		✓	
Barrier removal permit- without other work			✓
Barrier removal permit under threshold with other work	✓		
Barrier removal permit, over threshold with other work		✓	
Commercial projects which consist only of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, reroofing, electrical work not involving placement of switches and receptacles, painting, equipment not considered to be part of the architecture of the building such as computer terminals and office equipment.			✓

G. The reviews shall be completed by the following staff:

- a. Over Valuation Reviews shall be completed by qualified staff that has sufficient knowledge of accessibility regulations. A site review shall be completed concurrently.
- b. Under Valuation Reviews shall be completed within 7 working days by qualified staff that has sufficient knowledge of accessibility regulations. If the time limit is exceeded, the application shall be reassigned by a Senior Building Inspector overseeing the site inspection shelf.

H. The scope of an Over Valuation Review shall address project under review commencing at the parking area and include the path of travel to, and include the proposed work area. The scope may be expanded to include the entire structure or common areas if applicable to the proposed project. The report shall identify non-compliant features in a written report and a copy of the report sent to the applicant.

- a. The site review shall be completed concurrently with the report.
- b. Once the accessibility report is complete, a copy shall be placed in the application package and forwarded to plan check for review.
- c. An electronic copy of the written report shall be saved on the S:\BLDG-INSP directory under the applicable year in the Accessibility Review folder.
- d. The plans examiner shall verify non-compliant accessibility features identified in an

Over Threshold Review are addressed in the plans. If the applicant is seeking relief from addressing all identified deficient features, the plans examiner shall be responsible for reviewing and processing the Hardship Exemption form or if applicable, move forward with an Equivalent Facilitation determination.

- I. **The Under Threshold Review shall consist of** a site inspection to verify the information provided on the plan check application accurately reflects the site conditions and sufficiently addresses required accessibility upgrades. Staff shall be mindful of the priority list identified in Section 1134B.2.1 of the California Building Code. However, flexibility shall be given to the applicant in selecting the required upgrades.
 - a. The reviewer shall accept or reject the accessibility portion of the project. Reasons for rejecting the accessibility portion of the project are:
 - i. If the valuation inaccurately reflects the scope of work
 - ii. The existing accessibility features are misrepresented
 - iii. The proposed upgrades are not in reasonable compliance with Section 1134B.2.1 of the California Building Code.
 - b. The deficient items shall be noted on BPC-0015 form and the reason for rejection noted. It is critical that the following process be completed as quickly as possible and when possible to use e-mail, fax or verbal communications to expedite this approval and clearly communicate deficient items.
 - i. The package shall be given to the office assistant in charge of site reviews who will notify both the applicant and property owner of the rejection and the plan check package will be held on the site review hold shelf awaiting a revised BPC-0015 form and revised plans if necessary.
 - ii. Once the revisions are received, the office assistant will pull the package to return it to the staff person who completed the review.
 - iii. This sub process should repeat until acceptable accessible upgrades are proposed.
 - c. When the work value, site conditions and proposed accessibility upgrades are reasonable, the Hardship Exemption shall be signed by the reviewer and the package forwarded to Plan Check. The office assistant will update Permits Plus under Approval item 500 for the activity number and queue the package for plan review.

- J. The plans examiner shall verify the accuracy of the information and when compliant, approve the permit for issuance. The plans examiner shall verify:
 - a. The scope of work is accurately documented and reflected on the plans
 - b. The valuation of the work is calculated in conformance with our annual adopted fee schedule.
 - c. Accessibility features are detailed as required and/or Hardship Exemptions are signed.

ATTACHMENT

A. Accessibility Review Flowchart

Approved by:

/s/ Pete Parkinson

Pete Parkinson, Director

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