

Do I Need A Building Permit?

Thinking of doing some home improvements this summer? Don't forget that you must apply for and receive a building permit from the City before you construct, enlarge, alter, move, replace, repair, improve, convert, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure on your property!

Common projects that require a building permit include:

- Bathroom and kitchen remodel projects
- Window and patio door replacements
- New accessory structures with habitable space (any size, whether or not it includes electrical, mechanical, or plumbing)
- Patio covers
- Termite and dry rot repair
- Roofing projects
- Solar panel installation
- Most deck repairs
- Installing or replacing sinks, toilets, irrigation, water heaters furnaces, garage door openers, air conditioners, etc. (generally, any mechanical, structural, plumbing, or electrical work)



A building permit is not required for some work, such as new one-story detached accessory structures that are **not habitable** (e.g. sheds and playhouses) and are less than 120 square feet, fences less than 7 ft., and retaining walls under 4 ft. in height (when measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall).

For a complete list of work exempt from permit requirements, refer to California Residential Code Section R105 and California Building Code Section 105.

If you are in doubt as to whether a permit is required for your project, please call the Community Development Department at (415) 508-2120 or email us at building@brisbaneca.org before starting work! To apply for a permit, estimate permit fees, check what permits have been issued for your home or in your neighborhood, or submit a code enforcement complaint for unpermitted work, visit the online Permit Information Center at brisbaneca.org/pic.

Why Do I Need a Building Permit?

Permits are required to ensure buildings and other structures in the City are safe for human occupation and do not pose a hazard to residents, customers, or employees. Other important factors include compliance with energy efficiency and sustainability regulations at both the State and local level. Remember, building permits ensure safety and add value to your property; they certify that all work in your home or business is done properly, and will save you time and money when you sell your home or commercial property.

Do I Need a Permit for Tree Removal and Landscaping?

It depends...

TREES. When it comes to trees, two tree maintenance activities require City approval before starting work. These activities apply to both **living** and **dead** trees:

- **Severe trimming or removal** of any mature tree. "Severe trimming" means removal of more than 50% of the tree's crown or more than 30% of the tree's height.
- **Severe trimming or removal** of any protected juvenile tree.

The City's Code (BMC Chapter 12.12) defines mature trees as any tree having a trunk circumference of 30 inches or more

measured from 24 inches above the ground. Juvenile trees are any tree having a trunk circumference of less than 30 inches.

Protected trees are defined as:

- Any mature California Bay, Coast Live Oak, or California Buckeye
- Any tree designated as protected by the City Council
- Any tree of any size required by the City to be planted as a condition for the granting of a permit, license, or other approval, or any tree that existed at the time of the granting of such permit, license, or other approval and required by the City to be preserved as part of such approval.
- Three or more mature trees of any non-invasive species that are proposed to be removed from the same property or from adjacent property under common ownership.

Refer to these two charts below to determine if your tree-related activity requires City approval:



The forms for a 7-day Notice or Tree Removal Application are available online at brisbaneca.org/tree-removal-landscaping. **Note:** trees on all commercial properties and areas maintained by an HOA are considered as permit protected, since such properties have design permit requirements. Filing forms for such properties must be signed by an officer of the company that owns the land or HOA board member.

LANDSCAPING. Any landscaping projects – **including single-family homes** – that involve either new irrigated landscape area of 500 square feet, or replacement irrigated landscape area of 1,000 square feet are subject to the City’s Water Conservation in Landscaping Ordinance, BMC Chapter 15.70. To avoid triggering this ordinance, consider your design carefully and use as many native or climate-adapted (low water use) plant species as possible to minimize the area of irrigated landscape on your property.

New landscaping and replacement landscaping of **any size** for **commercial** and **multi-family residential** properties requires staff approval to verify that the plant species are appropriate to the context, non-invasive, and are drought tolerant.

Why Do I Need Permits to Trim or Remove Trees or Install Landscaping on My Property?

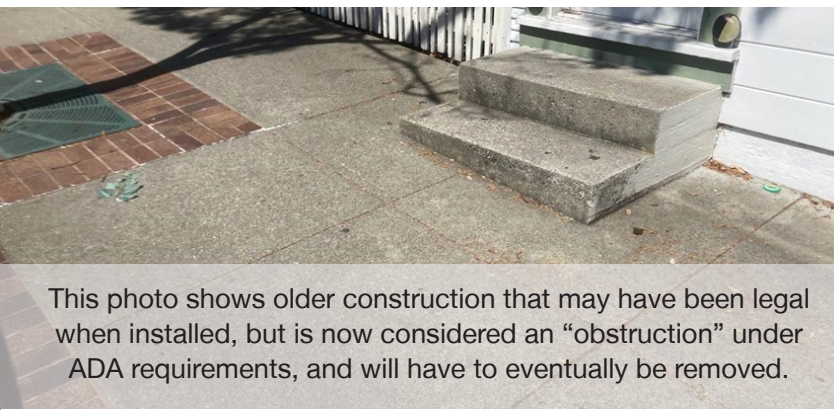
The City’s permit requirements respect property owner rights to maintain their private properties in balance with the greater impacts those actions may have on the community at large. Tree trimming or removal should not cause a nuisance to neighbors, and when protected trees are removed, planting of appropriate replacement trees is important to maintain the City’s urban tree canopy. Landscape permits, when required, ensure that invasive species do not proliferate so close to San Bruno Mountain, which is home to many sensitive and native, endemic (only found here!) species, and that we (continued on next page)

remain a drought-resilient community by choosing plant species that are fire-safe and have adapted to our local climate.

Why Do I Need Permits to Modify/Replace the Sidewalk or Driveway in Front of My House?



This photo shows a new curb cut and sidewalk remodel that meets City and ADA standards, including widening to a required width and accommodations for utilities.



This photo shows older construction that may have been legal when installed, but is now considered an “obstruction” under ADA requirements, and will have to eventually be removed.

Sidewalks and the “curb cuts” for driveways are located in the public right-of-way, and fall under different regulatory requirements than private improvements (e.g., only an “A” license contractor may work in the public ROW). Perhaps more important than the regulatory control issue, is that sidewalks are an essential component of the urban environment and serve as key corridors for people, goods, and commerce. The design and location of sidewalks and driveway openings should respect that purpose. An additional concern for both of these improvements is that they must be completed in accordance with accessibility guidelines required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. If not, the homeowner can be cited with a Code Enforcement Violation.

If you have a project that includes a voluntary upgrade to your driveway and/or if the project triggers a requirement to improve the frontage of your residence, the applicable standards can be found on the city’s web page under Departments > Public Works > City Standard Details or brisbaneca.org/city-standard-details. If you have any questions about improvements in the public right-of-way, please reach out to Public Works at (415) 508-2130 and we will be happy to assist!



CITY OF BRISBANE
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