



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT BUILDING DIVISION

411 Main Street, 2nd Floor | P.O. Box 3420, Chico, CA 95927
(530) 879-6700 | www.chicoca.gov

Permit Compliance Program

What is the City's Permit Compliance Program?

The City of Chico Building Division is responsible for issuing permits for property improvements that are required by state adopted regulation and the reference building codes. In most cases, property owners, contractors, and developers apply for and receive the necessary building permits for their proposed improvements; however, in some cases work has been done without the required permits due to a lack of knowledge of the code requirements, or to avoid the permitting process altogether. The result is that property owners may unknowingly purchase an unpermitted home or other improvement and is then faced with having to bring the building into compliance in order to qualify for a home loan or refinance, or to secure permits for new improvements on the property. The City's Permit Compliance Program provides a pathway to complete a permit record and to bring unpermitted structures and improvements into compliance, by applying reasonable standards in an affordable manner, with a focus on essential life-safety concerns.

What improvements need a permit?

Most improvements to a property, including new structures, additions and remodels to existing buildings, and major appliance installation or replacement, require an approved building permit and inspection. The California Building Code specifies that an owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit. If you are unsure whether or not a building permit is needed, a visit to the Permit Counter or a call to the Building Division staff can help you determine if a permit will be required for the work you propose.

You can also visit the Building Standards Commission at www.bsc.ca.gov to access current California Building Standards Codes.

Why is a complete permit record important?

A home or structure is considered a lifelong investment and includes all the improvements on site. A complete permit record will provide some assurance the value of your investment will not be reduced or adversely impacted by unpermitted structures or improvements.

Also, the complete permit record provides the peace of mind that comes from knowing a code official has inspected the work to ensure it meets minimum standards, and to identify potentially unsafe construction that may affect your family, friends, customers, or future owners.

In addition, some insurance carriers may not cover work done without a permit, and some lenders may insist on evidence of permit compliance before approving a loan.

These elements are important to consider when buying or selling, constructing a new building or addition, or seeking a loan or refinancing. With a complete permit record, you may also avoid the undesirable alternative of removing unpermitted work.

What improvements are eligible for the Permit Compliance Program?

Existing unpermitted structures, residential structures and similar improvements are eligible for the Permit Compliance Program. This Program is designed to assist owners with establishing a compliance record for unpermitted dwellings, commercial buildings, accessory structures, room additions, interior/exterior remodel, pool and spas, grading and other site improvements. The Program can also be used to complete the record for construction that may have received building permit but did not receive a final inspection or Certificate of Occupancy.

The goal of this to identify the most reasonable and affordable pathway to compliance; however, participation does not always guarantee compliance can be achieved.

What do the participants receive from the Program?

At the successful completion of the Program, you will have an official permit record that recognizes and certifies that the eligible improvements comply with the Program requirements and applicable codes, and you will receive a final inspection. For some records this will include the required Certificate of Occupancy.

What codes will be applied to my project?

The date of construction will be established by the Building Division with assistance from the property owner or authorized agent using several verification methods. The most common methods are building permit records, sewage disposal and domestic well records, Butte County assessment records, utility company records, historic imagery, and photographs. In some cases, construction methods and materials, or information provided by other agencies may be used.

A project with an established construction date prior to January 1, 1965, may have all or portions of the project exempt from permitting.

A project established after January 1, 1965, and prior to January 1, 2008 will be subject to the 1997 uniform building code (UBC) and may include other rules and regulations consistent with the age of the structure. In comparison to the current code, the 1997 UBC standards are generally less restrictive including, but not limited to, engineering requirements including wall bracing for seismic construction and energy requirements; sprinklers are not required, and wildland urban interface (WUI) requirements do not apply.

A project established after January 1, 2008 will be subject to the adopted code in place at the time of construction.

What documents and drawings are needed?

A checklist will be provided to you based on the established date of the work and the use of the structure. Once the checklist is complete, the document will be used to establish any drawing and permit necessary to complete the Program. The checklist items may be started by you, but some documents may need to be completed by a California licensed contractor, or a California licensed design professional.

When will the Program be available?

The Program is available now and once the permit is issued, the participant will have one year to complete work identified in the checklist, drawings and documents. Permit extensions are also available under Section 105 of the California Building and Residential Code.

For further information, please contact the Building Division at (530) 879-6700.