



SAN FRANCISCO  
PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT

# PLANNING DIRECTOR BULLETIN NO. 2

## Planning Department Priority Application Processing Guidelines

This Bulletin provides guidelines to ensure that no appearance of or actual preferential treatment is given, except to applications identified in this bulletin, which advance policy goals of the City, in accord with legislation adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Date:  
MAY 2006

Reprinted:  
NOVEMBER 2009

References:  
Board of Supervisors Ordinance 115-04  
Campaign and Government Conduct Code Section 3.400

Formerly known as: Director's Bulletin No. 2006-02a

The guidelines established herein are meant to ensure that all project applicants received equitable treatment, and that Planning Department reviews applications in the order received, except for certain designated priority applications described below. This is in accordance with requirements of San Francisco Campaign and Government Conduct Code Section 3.400, effective December 14, 2004, and with the Permit Processing Code of conduct adopted by the Ethics Commission on January 10, 2005.

This Bulletin is issued in conjunction with similar Bulletins from the Department of Public Works and the Department of Building Inspection. It is the intent of the Departments which implement this policy that the review of applications be conducted in an orderly, fair and efficient manner, yet provide flexibility to allow the resolution of problems that may occur, and that enable the City to advance projects that promote its Policy goals.

### DISCUSSION:

These policies and procedures relate to assignment, initial processing, review and analysis of all project applications, and to revisions, addenda and corrections submitted subsequent to initial applications. In general, the Planning Department will process applications of all types in the chronological order received. (Applications that were filed consecutively may have different processing times because the Department's organizational structure utilizes geographic sections that have different workloads and staffing levels, and because of variations in application complexity.) However, under the guidelines provided herein, some applications may be expedited in order to advance identified policy goals of the City, or to remedy procedural error

Employees shall use reasonable judgment in the application of these guidelines, and must consult with their supervisors when questions arise.

## PRIORITY CRITERIA

All applications received by the Planning Department shall be assigned, reviewed, and completed in the order received, except in the following cases:

### **Type 1: Applications for Green Buildings**

Applications for building construction resulting in structures that will meet or exceed a Gold Rating plus fifteen percent<sup>1</sup> using the LEED Building Rating System® adopted under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program of the U.S. Green Building Council (or that achieve equivalent high sustainability standards under other "green building" rating systems approved by the Director) qualify as Type 1 Applications.

### **Type 2: Applications for Certain Affordable Housing Projects**

Applications for projects that provide new affordable housing in 100 percent of the on-site dwelling units (where such units are rented or sold at the economic levels defined in Planning Code Section 315 and in the Procedures Manual adopted by the Mayor's Office of Housing) qualify as Type 2 Applications.

### **Type 3a: Applications for Renewable Energy Systems**

Work consisting solely of hospital projects mandated to comply with the State's seismic retrofit requirements in accord with AB1953.

### **Type 3b: Applications for Certain Grocery Stores<sup>2</sup>**

Applications to construct or otherwise establish retail grocery facilities with gross floor areas of 10,000 square feet or larger qualify as Type 3b Applications.

### **Type 4: Other Applications**

Type 4 Applications are those requiring review for:

1. Necessary emergency work to secure the health or safety of building users or the public, either on private property or on the public right-of-way, as determined by the Director.
2. Work consisting solely of disabled access improvements.
3. Work consisting solely of maintenance or repair of designated historic buildings and/or sites that are subject to the requirements of Article 10, or defined as Category I or II buildings in Article 11, of the Planning Code.
4. Applications of the entire scope of which is to install on-site renewable energy systems, such as solar photovoltaic, solar hot water, cogeneration, wind turbine generators or other renewable energy features qualify as Type 3 Applications.

<sup>1</sup> Projects must attain sufficient points to surpass a Gold rating by a margin of at least 15% of the points required for Gold. For example, a project utilizing the LEED-NC 2.2 system would need to achieve 39 points plus 15% (=6 points) for a total of 45 points.

<sup>2</sup> Added November 5, 2009 by Zoning Administrator memo to the Planning Commission.

5. Work consisting solely of applications previously delayed due to procedural errors by a City agency in processing the application.
6. Work solely to comply with official Department of Public Works, Planning Department, or Department of Building Inspection actions to abate public nuisances as identified by those Departments.
7. Work on City owned or leased properties when such priority application review is specified in a written agreement between the Planning Department and such other City agencies.
8. Revisions and corrections that are minor in nature and would not require more than one staff-hour to review and process.
9. Submittals of applications, revisions and addenda pursuant to decisions of the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, the Board of Supervisors, or other review or appeals body that are minor in nature and would not require more than one staff-hour to review and process.
10. Applications for other projects, whether administrative or discretionary, for which, in the judgment of the Director, urgent or extraordinary circumstances exist such that review of the application could lead to a significant public benefit or necessity, when such circumstances are documented in written findings.

### PROCEDURES FOR TYPES 1, 2 AND 3:

#### **Documentation of Findings for Priority Application Processing**

All applications of Types 1, 2 and 3 that qualify for priority application processing shall be documented using a standard form developed by the Planning Department (see Attachment A) that includes written findings of conformity with one of the Types described above. This document shall be prepared and submitted by the applicant.

A copy of the documentation of priority processing shall remain with the Planning application, and the original shall be maintained in a chronological file under the supervision of the Zoning Administrator's Office and shall be available for review at the Public Information Counter at any time during normal Department working hours.

Applications approved for priority processing shall be designated in the Department's case editing and permit tracking system(s).

The applicant's obligations to provide the proposed use or features described in the application shall be memorialized as Conditions of Approval, and shall be recorded as Notices of Special Restrictions with the County Recorder's Office, in a form approved by the Zoning Administrator.

### **Performance Assurance for Green Buildings**

Type 1 building construction projects are those that meet or exceed a Gold Rating plus 15% using the LEED Building Rating System®, or other approved rating system. The initial application for such projects must be accompanied by an agreement, in a form prepared and executed by the Department of the Environment. The agreement shall be accompanied by the LEED® checklist, to specify the elements of the project required to obtain the required LEED® Rating or equivalent, and shall include a processing fee as required by the Department of the Environment. Prior to the Department's determination of acceptance or rejection of the project for Priority Processing, the applicant shall meet with the SF Green Team, comprising technical staff from the agencies reviewing the application, to describe the project.

The applicant's obligations for construction, installation and maintenance of the required sustainability features under this agreement shall be memorialized as Conditions of Approval, and shall be recorded as Notices of Special Restrictions with the County Recorder's Office, in a form approved by the Zoning Administrator. Those conditions shall require that the project's site permit application be accompanied by a Design Phase Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, and that Final LEED® Certification or other third-party verification be obtained at the required level within six months of issuance of the first Certificate of Occupancy, Certificate of Final Completion, or permit sign-off signifying completion, if such certificates are not issued.

### **Assignment and Initial Review Times**

For Priority Application Processing of Types 1, 2 and 3, target timelines of two weeks shall be established for assignment (the elapsed time between arrival of an application at the Department and its assignment to and receipt by a Planner). Target timelines of two weeks shall be established for initial review, the elapsed time between assignment and the planner's' first review of the application for project scope and application completeness.

If the volume of qualified applications approved for priority processing and the level of the Department's staffing preclude meeting the required time limits for assignment and/or review, then the Applicant will be informed that the expedited review program has reached its capacity, and will have the option to apply for review under normal timelines, or to have the application placed on a priority review waiting list, until staff becomes available for assignment to a priority application.

Applicants with projects approved for priority processing, who have submitted incomplete applications, shall be notified in writing following initial review. Priority applications, once complete, shall be processed efficiently, with as little delay as possible, based on staff availability for assignment.

#### PROCEDURES FOR TYPE 4:

Some Type 4 applications may be approved at the Planning Information Counter, and in those instances, no special procedures would be employed. In instances where more detailed review is required, Planners may process Type 4 applications out of order when the project scope is minor in nature and would not require more than one hour to review and process, or where the project is in clear conformity with other standards for priority processing.

When questions arise whether a specific project qualifies for the applicability of those standards to, Planners should refer the priority-processing request to their supervisors for a determination.

#### QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES:

The assignment of applications for review by the Planning Department shall be subject to periodic review, not less than quarterly, by senior staff as designated by the Planning Director. The Director shall review these procedures on an annual basis, to confirm that the intent of this policy is fulfilled, and to make changes as necessary to optimize the efficient and fair review of applications submitted to the Department.

Approved:



John Rahaim  
Director of Planning



SAN FRANCISCO  
PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call or visit the San Francisco Planning Department

**Central Reception**  
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6378**  
FAX: **415 558-6409**  
WEB: **<http://www.sfplanning.org>**

**Planning Information Center (PIC)**  
1660 Mission Street, First Floor  
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6377**  
*Planning staff are available by phone and at the PIC counter.  
No appointment is necessary.*



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## Documentation of Findings for Priority Application Processing

This form shall accompany all requests for Priority Application Processing. (NOTE: **Boldface** items to be completed by the Applicant.) A copy shall be maintained at the Planning Department's Planning Information Counter as part of the permanent records of the findings for priority application processing.

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

Received: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Case &/or Permit Application Nos. \_\_\_\_\_

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Block(s) & Lot(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Zoning: \_\_\_\_\_ Height & Bulk District: \_\_\_\_\_

Bldg Code Occupancy Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Proposed Use: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Proposed Work \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICANT'S DECLARATION:** I hereby declare that the information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I intend to complete the project described herein in compliance with the requirements for Priority Processing of Applications described in Director's Bulletin 2006-02.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME OF APPLICANT PHONE NUMBER

\_\_\_\_\_  
COMPANY NAME CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS

Findings/Basis for Priority Application Review (conformity with Director's Bulletin 2006-02)

Circle Type: 1 2 3 4 Other \_\_\_\_\_

Item # & Description \_\_\_\_\_

Findings: \_\_\_\_\_

(Circle one:) Accepted Rejected by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Sanchez SIGNATURE OF PLANNER

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME OF PLANNER DATE  
Planner 415 / 558-6326

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT TITLE OF PLANNER PHONE NUMBER

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLANNER(S) ASSIGNED TO APPLICATION(S) DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PLANNER(S) ASSIGNED TO APPLICATION(S) DATE