



# PLANNING DIRECTOR BULLETIN NO. 2

## Planning Department Priority Application Processing Guidelines

This Bulletin provides guidelines to ensure that no preferential treatment is given to applications excepting those that have been identified as advancing specific policy goals of the City as described herein.

First Issued:  
May 2006

Revised:  
September 2024

References:  
Board of Supervisors Ordinance 115-04  
Campaign and Government Conduct Code Section 3.400  
Executive Directives 13-01 & 17-02

This Bulletin relates to the assignment and review of all applications, including revisions, addenda and corrections submitted subsequent to initial applications. In general, the various divisions of the Planning Department will process applications of all types in the chronological order received. However, under the guidelines provided herein, some applications may be prioritized in order to advance identified policy goals of the City or to remedy procedural error(s). Officers and employees of the City shall use reasonable judgment in the application of these guidelines, and shall consult with their supervisors when questions arise. These guidelines have been established in accordance with the requirements of San Francisco Campaign and Government Conduct Code Section 3.400 and with the Permit Processing Code of Conduct adopted by the San Francisco Ethics Commission.

*This Bulletin was updated in September 2020 to terminate priority processing for green buildings and replace it with priority processing for clean construction projects.*

### PRIORITY TYPOLOGIES, REQUIREMENTS AND CRITERIA:

All applications received by the Planning Department shall be assigned, reviewed, and completed in the order received, except for the following types of Priority Projects:

#### **Type 1: Applications for 100 Percent Affordable Housing Projects**

Type 1 Applications are those for housing projects where all of the on-site dwelling units with the exception of any manager's unit are affordable units. For Type 1 projects, "affordable units" are those defined either in Planning Code Sections 315 or 406(b).

Type 1 Applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written findings prepared by the applicant. The application for priority processing should be filed prior to the submittal of the associated permit and/or entitlement application(s).

### **Type 1A: Applications for HOME-SF Projects and Market-Rate Housing Projects that Exceed Affordability Requirements**

Type 1A Applications are those for housing projects (1) which are seeking approval under the HOME-SF program, as provided for in Planning Code Section 206.3 or (2) where at least 30 percent but less than 100 percent of the total number of on-site dwelling units are affordable for a term of no less than 55-years to households with an income no higher than for middle-income households, as defined in Planning Code Section 401.

Type 1A Applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written findings prepared by the applicant. The application for priority processing should be filed prior to the submittal of the associated permit and/or entitlement application(s).

### **Type 1B: Applications for Student Housing Projects**

Type 1B Applications are those for projects (1) for which no less than two-thirds of the floor area within the project scope would be devoted to new Student Housing units or rooms, (2) located within the area bounded by Van Ness Avenue, Market Street, 13th Street/Duboce Avenue, Division Street, and King Street.

Type 1B Applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written findings prepared by the applicant. The application for priority processing should be filed prior to the submittal of the associated permit and/or entitlement application(s).

### **Type 2: Applications for City Projects**

Type 2 Applications are those made by City Departments for (1) physical work on City owned or leased properties or (2) non-physical plans, programs or policies of the City and County of San Francisco. Type 2 Applications may also include projects that are public-private partnerships or projects located on publicly-owned sites.

The Director of Planning shall take into account the capacity of the Priority Application Processing program when considering any Type 2 Application. Specifically, on an as-needed basis but no less than half-yearly, the Director of each City Agency sponsoring a Type 2 Application shall provide the Director of Planning with a rank-ordering of the relative priority of all projects from that Agency that have been filed or will be filed in the near future.

### **Type 3: Applications for Clean Construction Projects**

Type 3 Applications are those for certain construction projects that need to use diesel construction equipment, but elect to use the lowest-emission equipment available. Currently, such equipment meets or exceeds Environmental Protection Agency Tier 4 Emissions Standards.

Type 3 Applications may only be submitted for projects that involve diesel construction equipment anticipated to operate for more than 20 total hours over the duration of construction and either (1) create at least 2 dwelling units or (2) add or alter at least 10,000 square feet of space.

Type 3 Applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written findings prepared by the applicant, as well as a [Supplemental Application for Type 3 Priority Projects](#). Both application forms should be filed prior to the submittal of the associated permit and/or entitlement application(s).

Type 3 Applications are subject to a two-part review process:

- **Initial review** is required before the project can be enrolled in the Priority Application Processing Program and consists of the Department's acceptance of a project sponsor's binding commitment to comply with the requirements for Type 3 Priority Application Processing projects, as set forth in this Bulletin and the Supplemental Application for Type 3 Priority Projects. Initial review does not include any evaluation of specific compliance measures such as equipment types, engine specifications, or construction phasing.
- **Final review** is required prior to the commencement of any construction activity (as defined in the Supplemental Application) and consists of the Director's approval of a Clean Construction Plan prepared by the project sponsor. As discussed in the Supplemental Application for Type 3 Priority Projects, the Clean Construction Plan must articulate specific and detailed compliance measures consistent with the requirements for Type 3 Priority Application Processing projects.

#### **Type 4: Applications for Projects Consisting Solely of Seismic Retrofit Work**

Type 4 Applications are those for work on existing structures performed solely for the purpose of enhanced seismic safety. Work performed as part of a Type 4 Application may be undertaken on either a voluntary basis or a mandatory basis (e.g. in response to the City's Mandatory Soft Story Retrofit Ordinance). No Type 4 Application shall be accepted into the program if it involves work beyond that which is essential for seismic strengthening (e.g. building expansions, changes of use, façade improvements).

Applications for priority processing as Type 4 Applications should be filed prior to the submittal of the associated permit and/or entitlement application(s). Type 4 Applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written findings prepared by the applicant.

#### **Type 5: Applications for Certain Medical Projects Subject to the HCSMP**

Type 5 Applications are those for medical projects that have been reviewed under the

Health Care Services Master Plan (HCSMP) and recommended for incentives by the San Francisco Health Commission. Review under the HCSMP is required only for (1) new medical projects of at least 10,000 gross square feet or (2) expansions of existing medical projects by at least 5,000 gross square feet.

Applications for priority processing as Type 5 Applications should be filed prior to the submittal of the associated permit and/or entitlement application(s). Type 5 Applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written findings prepared by the applicant; they also must be accompanied by official documentation that the project has been recommended for incentives by the Health Commission.

### **Type 6: Other Applications**

Type 6 Applications are those involving any of the following:

- a. 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.
- b. Work consisting solely of disabled access improvements.
- c. 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.
- d. Work consisting solely of the installation of on-site renewable energy systems, such as solar photovoltaic, solar hot water, cogeneration, wind turbine generators or other renewable energy features.
- e. Applications for which the entire scope was previously delayed due to procedural errors by a City agency.
- f. 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.
- g. Revisions and corrections that are minor in nature and would not require more than one staff-hour to review and process.
- h. Submittals of applications, revisions and addenda pursuant to decisions of the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, the Board of Supervisors, or other similar review or appeals body that are minor in nature.
- i. Applications for other projects for which, in the sole judgment of the Director of Planning, urgent or extraordinary circumstances exist such that priority review of the application would lead to a significant public benefit, when requested in writing and accompanied by written findings.

Some Type 6 Applications may be reviewed and approved at the Planning Counter at the Permit Center, and in those instances no special procedures are required. In other instances, applications for priority processing as Type 6 applications shall be made using a standard form provided by the Planning Department that includes written

findings prepared by the applicant.

### BENEFITS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR QUALIFYING APPLICATIONS:

For **Type 1, Type 1A, and Type 1B** Applications, there shall be a target timeline of one week for application assignment<sup>1</sup> and two weeks for application review<sup>2</sup>. Subsequent review of Type 1 Applications (e.g. revisions, technical studies, addenda) shall be prioritized ahead of all other applications, including other types of Priority Applications. Subsequent review of Type 1A Applications shall be prioritized ahead of all other applications, excepting Type 1 Applications, based on the percentage by which the applicable affordable housing requirements have been exceeded and the absolute number of affordable units. Subsequent review of Type 1B Applications shall be prioritized ahead of all other applications, excepting Type 1 and Type 1A Applications. The project's obligations with respect to affordable housing or student housing shall be memorialized as deemed appropriate by the Director of Planning, and may include the recordation of a Notice of Special Restrictions with the County Recorder's Office.

For **Type 4, 5 and 6** Applications, there shall be a target timeline of two weeks for application assignment<sup>1</sup> and a target timeline of three weeks for initial review<sup>2</sup>. Subsequent review (e.g. revisions, technical studies, addenda) shall be processed with as little delay as possible, based on staff availability.

**Type 2 and 3** Applications shall be processed as proscribed for Type 4, 5 and 6 Applications except that owing to their potential for complexity, Type 2 and 3 applications shall not be subject to the three-week initial review<sup>2</sup> timeline and rather shall have an initial review occur as quickly as feasible given the nature of the particular application.

Every project is expected to meet all obligations for construction and/or installation of any features and/or uses associated with its Priority status. Failure of the project to do so will be addressed pursuant to Article 1.7 of the Planning Code and/or other parts of the Municipal Code and may result in (1) prohibition of approval and/or issuance of the entitlements, building permits, or addenda for the project if such entitlements, building permits, or addenda have not yet been approved or issued, (2) suspension or revocation of the building permits for the project if such permit has been approved and/or issued but the project is not yet complete, (3) temporary or permanent stoppage of work if work is ongoing, and/or (4) suspension or revocation of the Certificate of Occupancy for the project if work has been completed.

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1 "Assignment" time is the time between the arrival of a complete permit or entitlement application that has been enrolled in the Priority Application Processing Program and its assignment to a Planner.

2 "Initial review" is the time between assignment and the Planner's first substantive review of the application.

Prior to any approval, issuance or reinstatement of such entitlement, permit, addenda or Certificate of Occupancy, the construction, feature or use in question or an alternate feature or use that – in the sole judgment of the Director of Planning - satisfies the intent of the Project's priority status may be required. Additionally, the City reserves the right to withhold any such approval, issuance or reinstatement for a length of time equal to that which was saved through enrollment in the Priority Application Processing program. In any such situation, the project sponsor shall be responsible for all administrative costs incurred by the City along with any penalties assessed under Article 1.7 of the Planning Code and/or elsewhere in the Municipal Code.

For all types of applications, if the volume of qualified Priority Applications and the level of the Department's staffing preclude meeting the proscribed time limits for assignment, initial review and/or subsequent review, the applicant will be informed that the Priority Application Program has reached its capacity and will have the option to proceed with review under normal timelines, or to not proceed with the project until staff becomes available for Priority Application processing.

#### QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES:

The timing and priority of assignment and processing of applications shall be subject to ongoing review 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:



Rich Hillis  
Director of Planning



**San Francisco  
Planning**

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact the San Francisco Planning Department

**Central Reception**  
49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400  
San Francisco, CA 94103

TEL: **628.652.7600**  
WEB: **www.sfplanning.org**

**Planning counter at the Permit Center**  
49 South Van Ness Avenue, 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103

EMAIL: **pic@sfgov.org**  
TEL: **628.652.7300**



# Application for Priority Application Processing

This form is to be used for requests for Priority Application Processing as set forth in Director's Bulletin No. 2. Please submit completed applications to the Office of the Planning Director.

## For Staff Use Only

Case and/or Permit Application Nos.

Date Received

Time Received

PROPERTY ADDRESS:		BLOCK(S) & LOT(S):
ZONING:	HEIGHT/BULK DISTRICT:	SUD/HISTORIC DISTRICT (if any)
DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK (ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY):		

## Basis for Priority Application Review

### Check Type:

- ☐ **1** 100% affordable housing    ☐ **1A** HOME-SF & <100% aff. hsng.    ☐ **1B** Student housing projects    ☐ **3** clean construction  
☐ **4** seismic retrofit    ☐ **5** HCSMP    ☐ **6** other

Findings of consistency with Director's Bulletin No. 2 (attach additional pages if necessary). For Type 3 Applications, you must also submit the [Supplemental Application](#).

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## 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 No. 2 for the particular type of application indicated above. I understand that failure to do so may lead to suspension of permits, stoppage of construction, assessment of penalties and/or other remedies articulated in the Municipal Code.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

DATE

NAME OF APPLICANT AND RELATIONSHIP TO PROJECT (PRINT)

PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS

## For Staff Use Only

Check One: ☐ **ACCEPTED**    ☐ **REJECTED**

Signature and Printed Name of Staff [Director's Office staff only]

Date