

BUILDING DIVISION REQUIREMENTS

Building permits shall be obtained from the City's Building Safety Division before erection, construction, reconstruction, installation, moving, or alteration of any building or structure. However, the following projects do not require building permits. An exception from requiring a permit does not grant authorization for any work to be done in violation of the provisions of the building codes or other laws and ordinances. (2025 California Building Code section 105.2 and the Sunnyvale Municipal Code)

This list is NOT all-inclusive. Additional exemptions for building, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical work apply per each relevant construction code. Contact the Building Safety Division for additional information. 408-730-7444

1. Cosmetic work such as painting, papering, cosmetic tiling, replacing floor coverings, trim work, cabinets mounted less than 5' 9" in residential installations, countertops, etc.
Note: Approval from the Planning Division may be required for exterior painting depending on the zoning district of the property. Contact a planner at the One-Stop Permit Center or (408) 730-7444 for more information.
2. One-story detached accessory structures (e.g., tool and storage sheds) that do not exceed 120 square feet of floor area and do not have any utilities connected.
Note: Approval from the Planning Division may be required depending on the location and height of the accessory structure. Use the following link for more information. ([Planning Accessory Structure Handout](#))
3. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to a detached one- or two-family dwelling.
4. Window replacements where the new window is the same configuration as the previous window and the existing manufactured window frame remains unchanged. This is commonly referred to as retrofit window replacement.
5. Replacement or repair of 100 square feet or less of an existing roof material within any 12-month period.
6. Fences not over 7 feet high (except swimming pool barriers).
Note: Approval from the Planning Division may be required depending on the location of the fence. Use the following link for more information. ([Planning Fencing Requirements](#))
7. Retaining walls not over 4 feet high when no other structure (including fencing) is attached to the retaining wall (height is measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall).
8. Shade cloth structures/window awnings attached to single-family homes and duplexes that are supported by an exterior wall, do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall, and do not require additional support.

9. Walks and driveways not over a basement or story below, less than 30 inches above the adjacent grade, and not part of a disabled accessible route.
Note: Repair or replacement of public sidewalks or driveway curb cuts requires review and approval by the Public Works Department. Contact an engineer at (408) 730-7415 for more information.
Note: Review and approval by the Planning Division may be required. Contact a planner at the One-Stop Permit Center or (408) 730-7444 for more information.
10. Non-fixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters, and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches high.
11. Prefabricated swimming pools at a single-family house or duplex meeting all the following criteria:
 - Installed on a single family or duplex property,
 - Is less than 24 inches deep,
 - Is entirely above ground, and
 - Does not exceed 5,000 gallons.*Note: If the water level is over 18 inches in depth, a protective barrier is required. Please refer to the Swimming Pool and Spa Installation handout or contact the Building Division at the One-Stop Permit Center or (408) 730-7444 for more information.*
12. Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.
13. Repairs and maintenance: Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
14. Radio and television transmitting stations: The provisions of this code shall not apply to electrical equipment used for radio and television transmissions but do apply to equipment and wiring for a power supply and the installations of towers and antennas.
15. Temporary testing systems: A permit shall not be required for the installation of any temporary system required for the testing or servicing of electrical equipment or apparatus.
16. Replacement of existing electrical receptacles, switches, and lights (in existing boxes) in the same location and where no change to the outlet or switch type is made.
17. Electrical wiring and devices operating at less than 25 volts and not capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy.
18. Portable equipment and appliances with listed cord and plug connections.
19. Replacement of overcurrent devices such as circuit breakers and fuses.
Exception: Replacement of a main disconnect does require a permit.
20. Temporary decorative lighting for a dwelling installed for not more than 90 days (such as seasonal Christmas lights).
21. Portable appliances such as heating appliances, ventilating equipment, cooking equipment, cooling units, self-contained refrigeration system containing 10 pounds or less of refrigerant and actuated by motors of 1 horsepower or less, and evaporator coolers where no changes to the existing electrical (receptacles, switches, etc.) or plumbing (gas line, water line, etc.) systems are made.
22. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe, provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drainpipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes

necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a permit shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.

23. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures and the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided that such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures

24. Repair or replacement of existing toilets, faucets, sinks in the same location.