



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **FROM:** Christopher Burton

SUBJECT: See Below **DATE:** April 8, 2026

Approved:  Date: 4/16/2026

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

SUBJECT: From Ideation to Occupancy: A Guide to Building in San José, Permitting, Timelines, and Coordination

PURPOSE

This Study Session is intended to provide City Council a clear foundation for how the permitting system works today and the factors that influence variability in timelines and outcomes.

OUTCOME

Staff will provide an overview of development services responsibilities and the volume of activity across partner departments, then use multifamily new construction as a primary example to illustrate the coordinated and interdependent nature of the permitting continuum.

BACKGROUND

San José’s development services system, encompassing the Planning and Building Divisions of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, as well as the Development Services Division of the Public Works Department, and the Bureau of Fire Prevention in the Fire Department, supports a broad range of customers and project types, from simple homeowner permits through complex commercial and housing development. The process requires coordination across multiple City departments and external partners to ensure projects are safe, code-compliant, and aligned with adopted requirements.

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In recent years, the development environment has become more complex due to evolving state law requirements, updated codes and technical standards, and increasing expectations for coordination and customer transparency. This Study Session is intended to provide the City Council with a clear foundation for how the system works today and the factors that influence variability in timelines and outcomes.

ANALYSIS

Staff will provide an overview of development services responsibilities and the volume of activity across partner departments, then use multifamily new construction as a primary example to illustrate the coordinated and interdependent nature of the permitting continuum.

The Study Session presentation will cover the following topics:

1. Development Services at a Glance
2. The Development Permitting Continuum: City Perspective and Development Community Perspective
3. Case Study: Enhanced Coordination on Priority Affordable Housing
4. What Drives Time to Completion: Where Time is Added and Where Time is Reduced
5. Fees and Requirements: Understanding Cost Recovery and Project Obligations
6. Tools and Technology Supporting the Work
7. Continuous Improvement: What's Underway and What's Next

COORDINATION

The preparation of this memorandum has been coordinated with the Fire Department and Public Works Department.

/s/
Christopher Burton
Director, Planning, Building, and Code
Enforcement Department

For questions, please contact Alex Powell, Program Manager, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department, at Alex.Powell@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 535-1258.