



HVAC PERMIT CHECKLIST

INFORMATION

WHEN DO I NEED A PERMIT?

A building permit is required for the new installation, replacement, alteration, or major repair of any Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system, whether for commercial or residential.

IF YOU ARE REPLACING AN EXISTING UNIT

If your project is a like-for-like HVAC replacement (single-unit residences and duplexes only), you are able to receive a building permit online using the [On-Demand Permit Portal](#) if the project meets the following criteria:

- Replacing HVAC system in same location as the original
- Installation is in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and applicable codes
- Upload State requirement documentation into CHEERS or Cal Certs prior to building inspection
- New HVAC system components are nationally listed
- Simple hand drawn dimensioned site plan showing the location of the new exterior HVAC system uploaded to BLD application one day before requesting a field inspection
- No traffic control in City streets beyond shoulder work or sidewalk closures

IF YOU ARE ADDING A NEW UNIT

New HVAC units for residential projects that do not qualify for OnDemand Permit are eligible for an Express Mechanical Permit, which is issued within 5 business days once accepted for review. New commercial HVAC systems, and systems that require structural calculations, require a full plan review which is issued within 10 business days once accepted for review.

Wanting to switch to a heat pump system? Sustainability and Resilience cover permit fees for upgrading an existing HVAC system to a heat pump system. You are required to select "Yes" in the Mechanical Express Permit online application when asked if you are applying for a heat pump. For rebate opportunities on heat pump HVAC system replacements, visit [Santa Barbara Clean Energy](#).

HOW TO APPLY

After you have completed and gathered all of the required documents, you will need to submit your mechanical permit application and plans electronically through the City's online [Permit Portal](#).

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Before applying for a permit, it is a good idea to review the City's rules and regulations to determine if there are any potential major issues with a project. Applicants are encouraged to contact staff at the Permit Center to determine what kind of permit is needed, how long it will take to process, and what fees are involved.

Counter contact information is available online: [Ask a Counter Question](#).

Building & Safety Counter

(805) 564-5485

CDBuildingCode@SantaBarbaraCA.gov

Planning Counter

(805) 564-5578

PlanningCounter@SantaBarbaraCA.gov

PROJECT GUIDANCE

- **Setbacks.** HVAC units must be set back a minimum of 5 feet from the nearest property line; and if the unit is in the front yard, it must be at least 10 feet from the front lot line (residential). Different setbacks may apply in the Coastal Zone.
- **Screening.** If an HVAC unit is proposed in a location visible from the public right-of-way or nearby properties (such as a front yard or rooftop), screening will be required. You may wish to consult with an architect on the applicant team.
- **Noise.** Equipment must not exceed noise levels of 53 dB at the property line. You will need to provide specification sheets showing the unit's noise levels. For more information, see the City's [Noise Guide](#).
- **Open Yards.** Residential properties have required open yard areas. If the equipment is more than 50 sq. ft., or if your project is an apartment or a condominium, talk to the Planning Counter about how to meet open yard requirements.
 1. **Structural Calculations.** Depending on the location of the HVAC unit (on a roof), you may need to provide structural calculations prepared and signed by a registered California civil or structural engineer.
- **HOA.** Your Homeowners Association may have its own approval process. Review your HOA policies and procedures before proceeding with your plans; and if your property is a condominium, you will need to submit a copy of the approval letter from your HOA.
- **Research.** Zoning regulations, such as setbacks and open yards, can be found in the City's online [Municipal Code](#) (SBMC); and you can look up your property information (APN, Zoning District, Lot Size, etc.) by using the City's [Permit Portal](#). You may also print a simple site plan or perform other research using the Cities [MAPS](#) program.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

FORMS

Building Permit Application Form

Download the fillable PDF [Building Permit \(BLD\) Application](#) from the City's Forms & Applications webpage. Save it to your computer, open it with Adobe Acrobat Reader, complete and e-sign the form, then save it as a PDF using the correct naming rules. Finally, upload the completed, signed PDF to your online application.

PROJECT PLANS

Title Sheet

1. Project Data (Site Address, Owner's Name and Contact Information, Design Professional's Name and Contact Information, APN, Zoning District, Lot Size, Uses on Site).
2. Scope of Work must include a description of the new/existing location, new/existing weight, number of units being added/replaced.
3. Provide a description of screening (parapet, fence, or landscaping) if in a visible location. If proposed on roof, add the following note to the plans:
 - *Rooftop equipment must not exceed the parapet height on flat roofs or be visible from the street on non-flat roofs. If this is unavoidable, a solid, permanent roof-mounted screen must be installed, using materials and colors compatible with the building's architectural style.*
4. Reproduce the following statements on the Title Sheet:
 - *Each unit provides an electrical disconnect within line of sight.*
 - *There is an electrical convenience outlet.*
 - *Rooftop unit is mounted on existing curb/same location.*
 - *Duct type smoke detector required within 5 feet of the supply air.*
 - *MERV 13 filtration is provided on supply and return.*
 - *The outside air inlet is a minimum of 10 feet from exhaust and plumbing vents.*
 - *Equipment located within 6 feet of a drop greater than 30 inches requires fall protection per CMC 303.8.4. (Indicate how this requirement is met e.g., existing 42" parapet, ASSE anchor, new guards installed).*

Site Plan

1. Provide a [Basic Site Plan](#) (Property Lines, Adjacent Streets, Existing and Proposed Structures, Setbacks, Open Yard).
2. Location and Dimensions of A/C Unit.
3. Distances from A/C to Nearest Lot Lines.
4. Electrical disconnect and convenience outlet location.
5. Size of electrical conductors.
6. How the unit is mounted. Provide either a clear description or drawing detail.
7. Smoke detector location that is within 5 feet of the supply air (or provide a verifiable exception).
8. Show what type and size of screening there is for street view.

 Structural Calculations

Structural calculations stamped by a California licensed Civil or Structural Engineer are required if any of the following conditions apply:

1. The proposed unit is heavier than the existing unit and weighs more than 400 pounds.
2. The proposed unit is on a rooftop.
3. Alterations to existing roof openings (verify the roof diaphragm and shear transfer elements).

 Energy Documents

1. Energy documents are attached and accurately filled out (NRCC/CF1R).

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

 Homeowner's Association (HOA) / Condominium Approval Letter

A letter from the HOA or condominium board authorizing the proposed project, if applicable.

 Site Photos

Current color site photographs showing existing buildings and proposed location of A/C unit.

 Noise Specification Sheet

Manufacturer's specification sheet showing the equipment's noise level does not exceed 53 dB at the property line. Use this tool (<http://www.mcsquared.com/dbframe.htm>) to calculate attenuation based on distance. For three or more pieces of equipment, submit a noise engineer's technical report verifying compliance with SBMC §9.16.070.D.