

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
**PRESERVATION BULLETIN NO. 2**

**REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR THE EXTERIOR  
ALTERATION AND DEMOLITION  
OF CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT'S JURISDICTION**

The purpose of this Preservation Bulletin is to summarize the review processes for permit applications involving exterior alteration and/or demolition of cultural resources. Please note that Building Permit applications must be filed with the Department of Building Inspection (DBI). The application may then be routed to the Planning Department for review. Environmental Evaluation may precede Planning Department review and approval. Projects must also be in conformance with the other provisions of the Planning Code. The Planning Code may require additional Planning Department review and/or submittal of planning applications.

To determine if a resource is "historic" and to understand its level of significance or to obtain Planning Department application forms discussed in this Preservation Bulletin, contact the Planning Information Center counter (PIC) on the first floor, 1660 Mission Street, or call (415) 558-6377 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Building Permit Applications may be obtained and applied for at the DBI Permit Center Counter first floor, 1660 Mission Street, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. For DBI general information or application status, call (415) 558-6088.

**ALTERATION PERMITS**

Article 10 of the Planning Code details review procedures when a Certificate of Appropriateness (C of A) is required. *For more information on the Certificate of Appropriateness process, please refer to Preservation Bulletin No. 4.* Generally, a C of A is required for any construction, exterior alterations including removal or demolition of a structure, or any work involving a sign, awning, marquee, canopy or other appendage for which a City permit is required on a designated landmark or in a historic district. Ordinary maintenance and repairs such as painting, reroofing and any work to correct deterioration, decay or damage, including repair of damage caused by fire or other disaster, may be approved administratively without a C of A. C of A's approved by the Landmarks Board are issued by the Planning Department following a Landmarks Board hearing. C of A's that are disapproved by the Landmarks Board are referred to the Planning Commission for review and approval or disapproval.

Article 11 defines the Permit to Alter requirements. In general, a Permit to Alter is required for the "Major" exterior alteration of a building for which a permit is required pursuant to the Building Code unless the proposed work is deemed "Minor" because it does not substantially change, obscure or destroy exterior character-defining spaces, materials, features or finishes. Minor alterations are approved administratively by the Planning Department by issuance of a letter signed by the Zoning Administrator titled "Notice of Determination of Minor Alteration." This results in an administrative approval of a Building Permit by the Planning Department as required by the Building Code. Typically,

signage and the exterior alteration of ground floor display areas within the architectural frame (pier and lintels) of the building to meet the needs of first-floor commercial uses qualify as minor alterations provided original historic finishes, features and materials of the structure are not altered or removed.

## **DEMOLITION PERMITS**

Article 10, Section 1006.6 of the Planning Code authorizes the Planning Commission to delay the demolition of designated landmarks up to 180 days or up to 90 days for buildings located within historic districts. The Board of Supervisor's may extend the 90-day demolition delay period up-to another 90 days.

Section 311(e) of the Planning Code details residential permit review procedures when demolition of historic or architecturally important buildings is proposed in RH and RM districts. This section states that unless the building is determined to pose a serious and imminent hazard as defined in the Building Code, an application authorizing demolition in any R District of an historic or architecturally important building or of a dwelling shall not be approved and issued until the City has granted final approval of a building permit for construction of the replacement building. The Board of Appeals has final jurisdiction over building permits. In districts other than residential, it is a policy of the Planning Commission to require that demolition requests must accompany a Site Permit or Building Permit for a replacement building.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION**

An Environmental Evaluation application is required to determine the level of environmental review necessary for demolition projects or for substantial exterior alterations to designated historic structures. If the project utilizes federal funds, review and consultation between the Planning Department, the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation is required pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. This review and consultation is undertaken to determine whether the proposed work would have a negative effect on historic structures.

*January 2003*