Permit Streamlining

SITE PERMIT REFORM PROJECT

Joint Hearing: Building Inspection Commission & Planning Commission

San Francisco Planning

SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTION

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SF Permit Center

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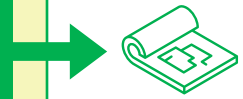
Current State / What is a Site Permit?

Appealable

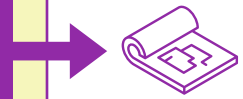
Not Appealable

FULL PERMIT



Complete Plan Set

SITE PERMIT



Architectural Plan Set

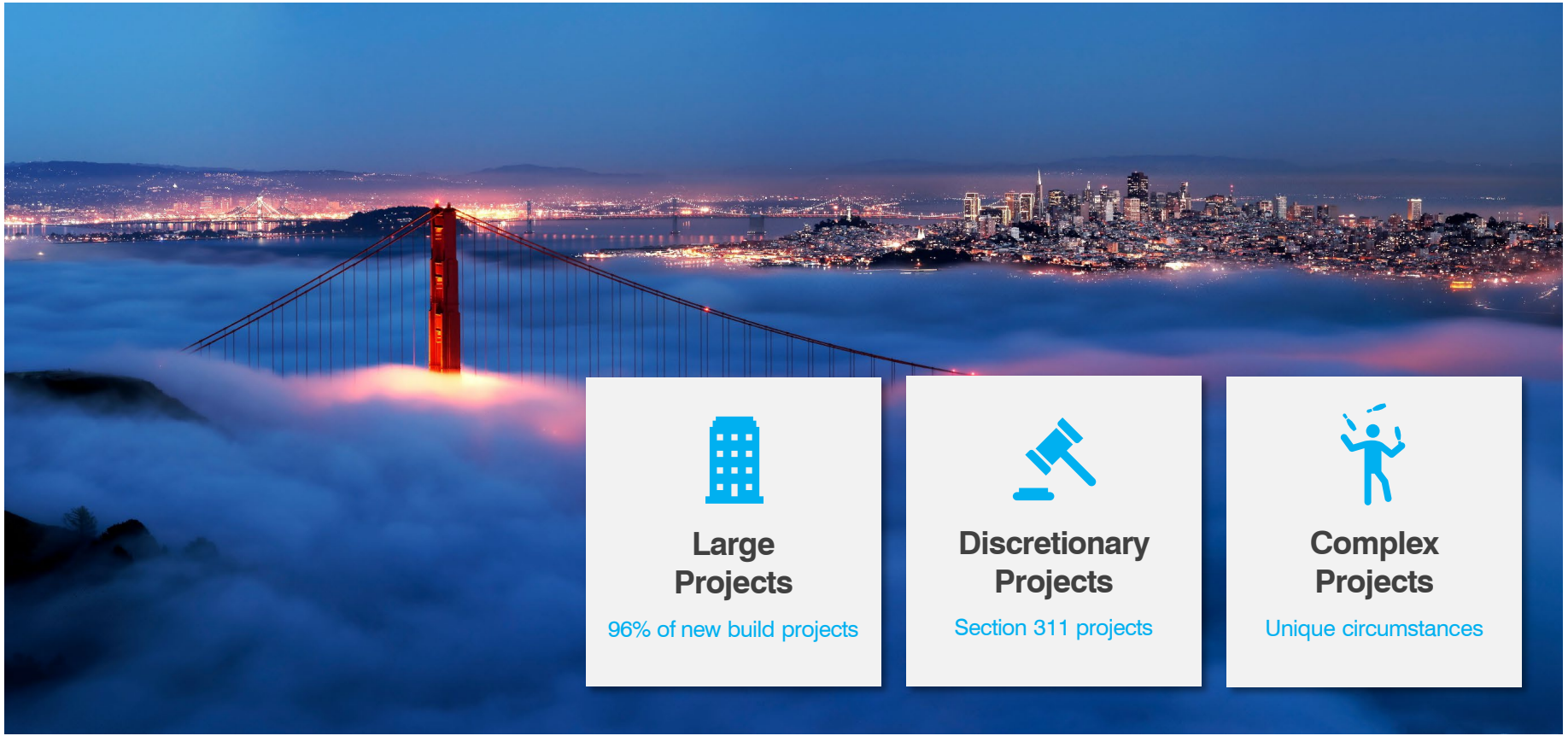
Foundation Addenda

Superstructure Addenda

Architectural Addenda

Etc.

Current State: Site Permits Today



Large Projects

96% of new build projects

Discretionary Projects

Section 311 projects

Complex Projects

Unique circumstances

Current State: Areas for Improvement

It's a long process

San Francisco's permit process is one of the longest in California.

It's uncoordinated.

Plans get to the agencies who need to see them, but City staff don't coordinate on timelines or responses. Applicants get responses from each agency separately.

Next steps are unclear.

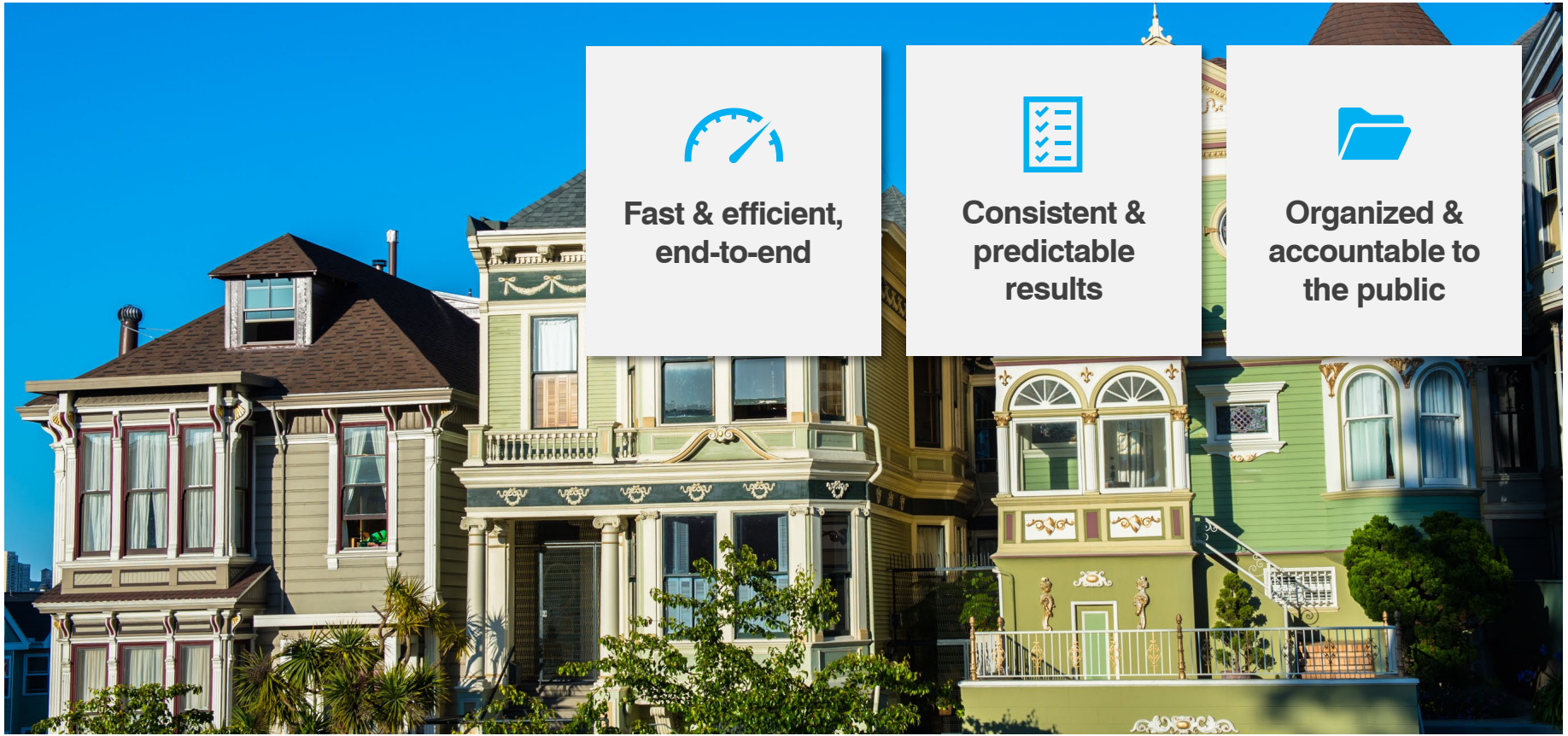
The next steps for an applicant after a Site Permit is issued are not defined, and the applicant is left to figure it out themselves.

A project could need dozens of permits to build.

We use old tools.

Permits and workflows are tracked in an aging system that does not enable staff to be proactive.

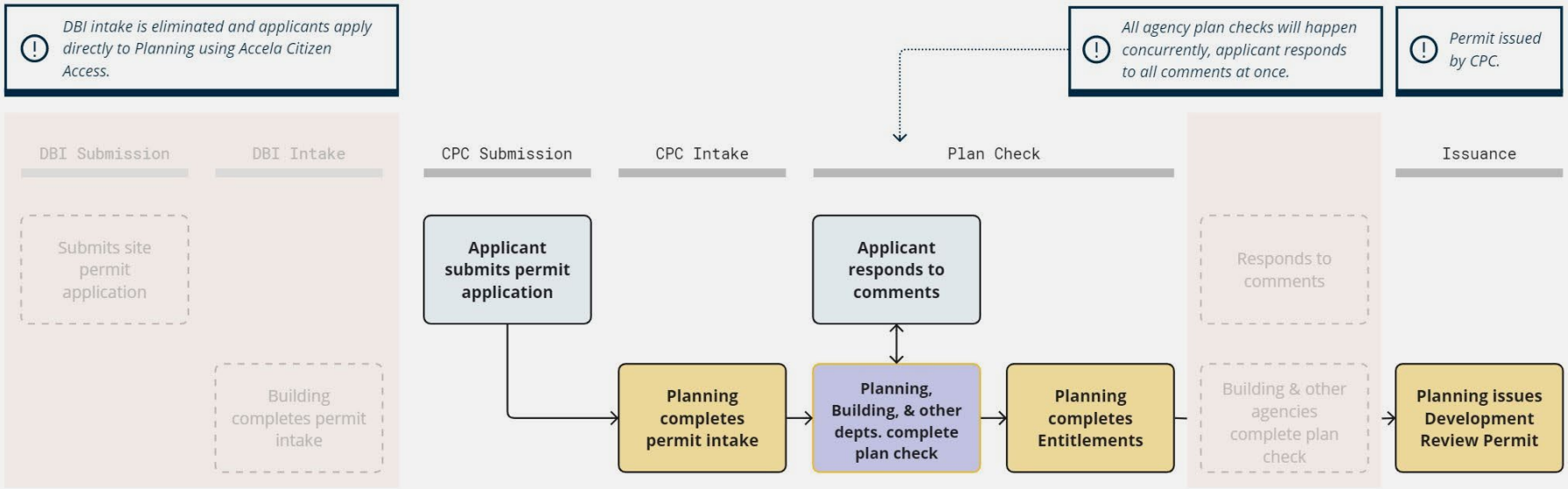
Project Goals



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PERMITS
Photo: Jason O'Rear

Development Review Permits

Development Review Permits



Applying for a permit

Accela Citizen Access

File Online

Submit your application online from work or home without needing to visit the Permit Center.

Submit Payments

Pay review fees online through the same application portal.

Track Status and Comments

Track the progress of your permit through the portal or the Property Information Map and have access to review results in real-time.

Submit Revisions

If corrections are needed, submit revisions and respond to comments online.

Applying for a permit

	How to Apply	Getting "Accepted"	Keeping Track
TODAY	Apply in-person or via email with attachments.	Intake by Building, then again by Planning.	Permit statuses and City review comments are difficult to track.
FUTURE	Apply online through an application portal.	One intake with Planning.	Permits tracked in a modern system, creating accountability, oversight, and automation.

Getting plan check comments

One Combined Plan Check Letter

Submit your application online from work or home without needing to visit the Permit Center.

Comprehensive Plan Check by Planning

Planning Code compliance, Design Review, and Environmental Review are checked.

Preliminary Plan Check by Building, Public Works, and Fire

Checklists guide the review, so you know what will and will not be checked.

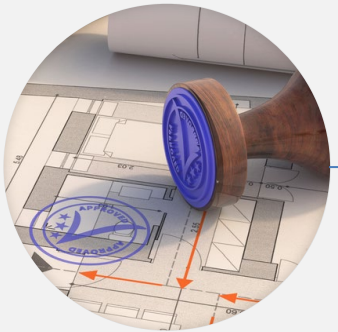
Proactive Management

With Accela, we can run automated reports to identify when something needs attention and fix the issue.

Getting plan check comments

	Plan Check	City Approvals	What is Reviewed
TODAY	Two stages of Plan Check; Planning first, then everyone else.	Planning approves, THEN DBI conducts a preliminary Plan Check.	What is checked during a Plan Check is not consistent.
FUTURE	One combined Plan Check with all comments provided at once.	DBI Plan Check happens concurrent with Planning review, before approval.	Checklists are used (and made public) to guide review and ensure consistency.

Getting your permit



Permit Issuance

Your permit is issued automatically, and you don't need to visit the Permit Center.

Defined Implementation

Applicants and the public understand what comes next.

Construction Document Review

When construction is proposed, Construction Documents are reviewed under the existing Addenda process.

Appeals

A Development Review Permit is appealable to the Board of Appeals. Construction Documents that follow are not appealable.

Getting your permit

	The Permit	Appeals	Next Steps
TODAY	When approved, get a “Site Permit”	Site Permits are appealable, Addenda are not.	Next steps are not defined.
FUTURE	When approved, get a “Development Review Permit”	Development Review Permits are appealable, Construction Documents are not	The permit includes a roadmap of implementation steps.

Construction Document Review (only for Construction)

Submit Construction Documents to Building

Follows the existing Addenda process.

Objective & Consistent

Planning Code compliance, Design Review, and Environmental Review are checked.

Not Appealable

Construction Documents

Impact Fees Apply Here

Just like today, you pay impact fees when you can start construction, not at the preliminary review phase.

PRELIMINARY PLAN CHECK
CRITERIA
Photo: Jason O'Rear

Building Preliminary Plan Check - DRAFT

1

Accessibility

Provide a preliminary review of compliance with ADA Accessibility requirements.

2

Construction Type

Review the proposed construction type and verify that it aligns with the size and height of the proposed building.

3

Fire Protection

Review if firewalls or other fire protective designs are required based on the location of the building and setbacks to property lines.

4

Egress

Verify that adequate egress is provided, particularly if fixing any deficiency may impact the building layout.

Public Works Preliminary Plan Check - DRAFT

1

Mapping Actions

Determine if the proposed project will require any mapping actions and define the process and requirements.

2

Tree Removals

If the design impacts any existing street trees, provide feedback on whether that is supported or if another design is preferred.

3

Transformer Vaults

If a transformer is needed, review the proposed location and if the location is appropriate.

4

Street & Sidewalks

If the project requires changes to public streets, provide a preliminary review of those changes.

Fire Department Preliminary Plan Check - DRAFT

1

Fire Features

Determine if the proposed building will require any specific features, such as sprinklers or an on-site fire tank.

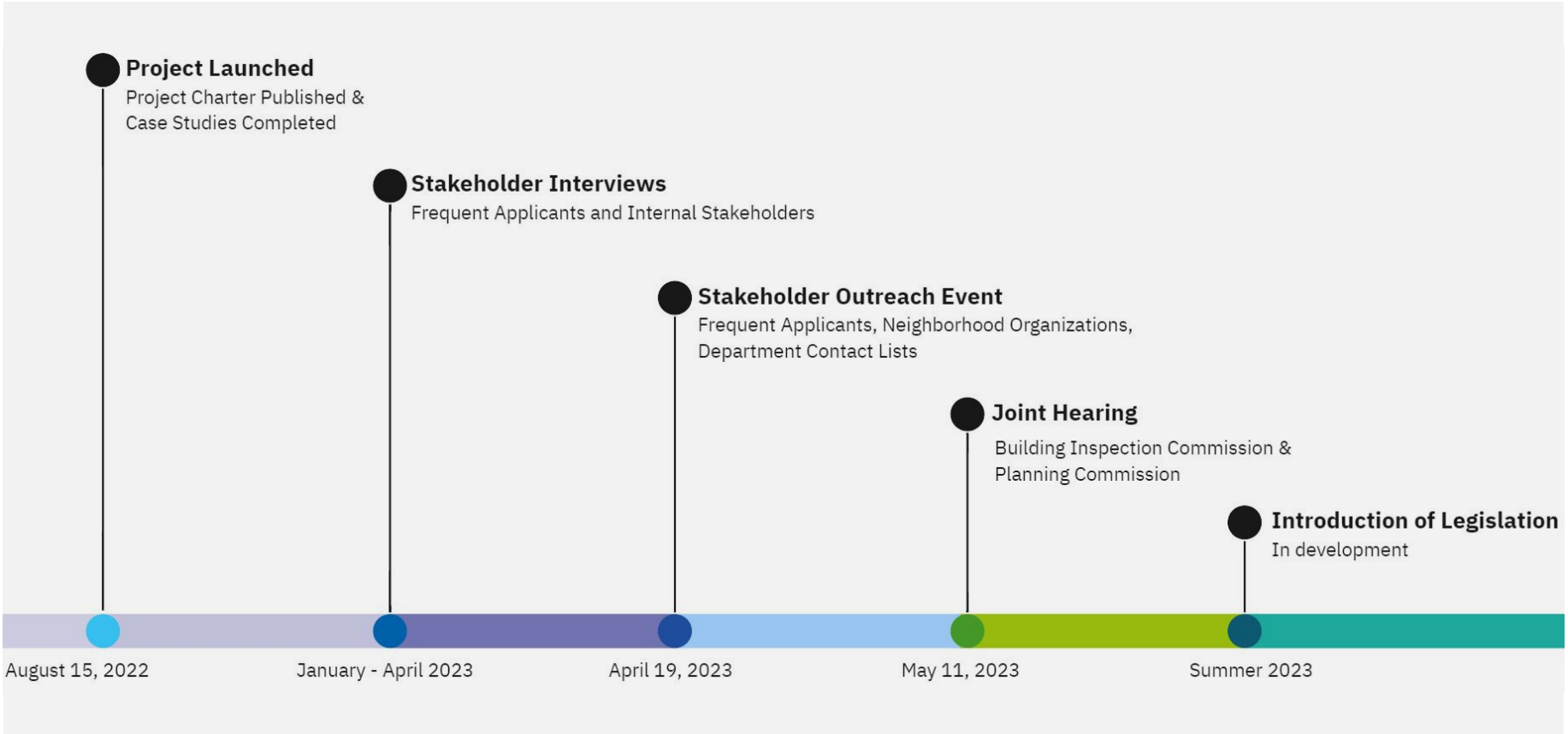
2

Safety Access

Review if safety personnel have adequate access to the site in the event of an emergency.

Photo: Jason O'Rear

Project Timeline



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