

PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR ADDING GARAGES TO EXISTING RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES

This Bulletin is written to explain Planning Department procedures for the review of permit applications which propose to add garages to existing residential structures in order to provide off-street parking. The review requirements of other City Agencies, such as the Department of Building Inspection (DBI) or the Department of Public Works (DPW) are not addressed in this document.

In certain circumstances, approval of such permit applications can be granted immediately (e.g. over-the-counter). In other instances, the application may be routed upstairs for further staff review, after which it may be approved or disapproved.

All applications may be reviewed first at the Planning Information Counter (PIC). An initial determination can be made by PIC Staff as to whether the subject structure is a 'historic resource.' Any proposal to add a new garage in a structure which is considered a potential historic resource must be reviewed by one of the Department's preservation specialists and may be subject to the supplemental review process set forth in Zoning Administrator Bulletin 2006.1b, 'Additional Procedures for Adding Garages to Residential Historic Resources and Potential Historic Resources.' For the purposes of this bulletin these structures or "historic resources" are buildings constructed in or before 1913 that appear to be of historic or architectural merit and those previously evaluated and included on specified registers and surveys. This also includes properties over fifty years old that may be found to be historic resources based on available historic information.

For all other structures, Planning Staff at the PIC will determine compliance with the Planning Code, the General Plan, the Residential Design Guidelines (RDG)¹, and the specific criteria contained below. Should the proposed curb cut and garage door meet these standards, the application may be approved over-the-counter.

1. *Appearance of Garage Door.* Garage door design and materials should be compatible with the existing building and surrounding neighborhood character.
2. *Placement of the Curb Cut and Garage.* The location of curb cut and garage door should ensure maximum compatibility with the structure's context.
 - a. *On-Street Parking.* Could a greater number of on-street parking spaces be retained if the curb-cut and garage were shifted elsewhere on the building's frontage?
 - b. *Loss of Existing Street Trees.* Could existing street trees adjacent to the subject property remain if the garage and/or curb-cut was shifted elsewhere on the building's frontage?²
 - c. *Loss of existing Significant Trees.* Could existing Significant Trees within the subject parcel remain if the garage and/or curb-cut was shifted elsewhere on the building's frontage?³

¹ Pages 35 to 37 of the RDG contain recommended standards for new garage openings and curb cuts.

² Should any street tree removal be proposed, the application would be routed upstairs for further review while a Street Tree Removal Permit is sought from the Department of Public Works (DPW).

³ For purposes of this Bulletin, a Significant Tree is defined in Public Works Code Section 810A as a tree within 10 feet of the front property line which meets at least one of the following criteria: (a) a diameter at breast height (DBH) in excess of 12 inches, (b) a height in excess of 20 feet, or (c) a canopy in excess of 15 feet. Any removal of or impact to Significant Trees would result in the application being routed upstairs for further review while the applicant pursues required permits from DPW.

3. *Width of Garage Door and Curb Cut.* The total width of the garage door should be no larger than necessary to accommodate the off-street parking space. The total width of the curb cut should not exceed the Department's standard curb cut maximum of 10 feet⁴ ⁵. In any instance where a proposed curb cut or garage door exceeds either of these dimensional requirements, the application will be routed upstairs for further review, where the burden will be upon the applicant to show that there are special circumstances which warrant larger dimensions, such as:
 - a. *Site Constraints.* Is there a severe (1) lateral slope or (2) grade change in the front setback? Is the width of the lot or sidewalk atypical?
 - b. *Street Constraints.* Is the width of the street prohibitively narrow such that maneuvering a standard automobile into the proposed garage is not be possible?
 - c. *Limited garage or building depth.* When proposing a new multiple-space garage, could the garage be made deeper?
 - d. *On-street parking spaces.* Does excessive curb-cut or garage door width further decrease the number of available on-street parking spaces?
 - e. *Over-parking.* Would the proposal result in the provision of more than one parking space per dwelling unit?
4. *Creation of new street trees.* Are new street trees included in the proposal? If existing street trees would be removed, are replacement trees of similar caliper and canopy size proposed?
5. *Building Expansion.* Would any exterior dimension of the structure be increased? If building would be lifted to accommodate the garage, or if the proposal involves any exterior expansion whatsoever, in most cases neighborhood notification would be required and the application would be routed upstairs for further review.
6. *Interference with Transit, Bicycles or Pedestrians.* New or expanded garages or curb-cuts which are located along Transit Preferential Streets or which would otherwise affect transit stops, bicycle or primary pedestrian streets will be routed upstairs for further review.

⁴ This is a restatement of policies set forth in Zoning Administrator Bulletin 96.1. While Bulletin 96.1 presents background information and establishes a policy foundation for the regulation of curb cuts, this Bulletin (2006.1a) expands on and supersedes the policies contained in 96.1.

⁵ The Department's standard curb cut (7 feet across at the street level and 18 inch transition slopes [where the curb tapers down to the street] on either side) was established in Zoning Administrator Bulletin 96.1 and is reiterated on page 37 of the RDG

**ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES FOR ADDING GARAGES TO RESIDENTIAL
HISTORIC RESOURCES & POTENTIAL HISTORIC RESOURCES**

The ongoing demand for off-street parking in San Francisco has created a serious challenge for its historic resources. This bulletin is written to ensure adequate and consistent review of the City’s known and potential historic resources.

Rehabilitation and alteration standards for the preservation of designated City Landmark properties are contained in Article 10 of the Planning Code. However, there are structures within San Francisco that are considered historic resources in addition to landmark properties. For the purposes of this bulletin these additional structures or “historic resources” are buildings constructed in or before 1913 that appear to be of historic or architectural merit and those previously evaluated and included on specified registers and surveys. This also includes properties over fifty years old that may be found to be historic resources based on available historic information.

Inserting a new garage opening can have a major impact on a historic resource and the surrounding neighborhood. Due to this potential impact, the Planning Department reviews proposals for new garages on a case-by-case basis. Department staff will review all proposals for compatibility with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.⁶ These Standards were developed by the National Park Service and are applied as set forth by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15331. [It is important to note that as legal non-conforming structures, the Planning Code does not require the provision of off-street parking for these properties.]

Below is a list of the character-defining features that, if altered, may trigger additional Planning Department review; however, please note that in some instances the insertion of a garage opening will not be approved in a historic resource.

<u>Architecture</u> Bays Decorative features Front entries	<u>Relationship to adjacent buildings and streetscape</u> DPW Significant Trees (Tree Disclosure Form) Historic Fences Historic Pattern of Development	<u>Massing & Scale</u> Height Front Setbacks
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Generally, raising a historic resource to insert a garage opening is strongly discouraged when the act may render the building ineligible for the California or National Register. In some instances, raising a structure to insert a garage opening may be approved to avoid the removal of historic fabric as long as the integrity of the building, its original design, proportions, and its relationship to adjacent buildings are not compromised.

In cases where a garage opening may be appropriate, great care should be taken in the design and execution of the work. In addition to the criteria set forth in Zoning Administrator Bulletin 2006.1a, the following criteria apply to the review of new garages in historic resources.

⁶ For more information please refer to the San Francisco Planning Department Preservation Bulletin No. 21. <http://www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/planning/preservation/PresBulletin21Standards.pdf>

- Garage openings should be inserted on the side or rear whenever possible. These “secondary elevations” have fewer character-defining features.
- A new opening and curb cut should be no larger than absolutely necessary while still meeting the requirements of the existing Building and Planning Codes.
- Explore obtaining a Minor Encroachment Permit (Section 723.2 of the Public Works Code) from the Department of Public Works (DPW). This permit allows for the extension of the driveway into the public right-of-way and can lower the height of the garage door to avoid the removal of character-features. DPW can be reached at (415) 554-5810.
- All detailing, including garage doors, surrounds, and decorative features, should be compatible with the building’s architectural features without creating a false sense of history.
- Garages should be designed to be inconspicuous so they do not project out from the front façade of the building; however, new garage structures in the front yard setback of steeply sloping lots or in retaining walls may be appropriate.
- Landscape improvements should be incorporated into the proposal to minimize the impact a new garage opening has on the building and the surrounding streetscape.

Please note that approval of all garages, including those in historic resources and potential historic resources, is discretionary and are subject to CEQA as well as other relevant city requirements and code provisions.