



## ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN

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**NO. AB-005**

**DATE** : September 18, 2002 (Updated 01/01/2017 for code references)

**SUBJECT** : Plan Review and Permit Process

**TITLE** : **Procedures for Approval of Local Equivalencies**

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**PURPOSE** : The purpose of this Administrative Bulletin is to detail the procedures to be used for the application and case-by-case review of requests for approval of equivalencies, when work is proposed which does not strictly comply with the provisions of the 2016 San Francisco Building, Electrical, Mechanical, or Plumbing Codes. Requests for approval of modifications or alternates will be considered by the Department of Building Inspection and, when applicable, the Fire Department on a case-by-case basis when reasonable equivalency is proposed.

**REFERENCES** : 2016 San Francisco Building Code - Section 104A, Organization and Enforcement  
- Section 104A .2.7, Modifications  
- Section 104A .2.8, Alternate materials, design and methods of construction  
DBI Administrative Bulletin AB-042, Board of Examiners: Request for Variance, New Materials, or Alternate Methods of Construction  
DBI Administrative Bulletin AB-028, Pre-application and Pre- Addendum Plan Review Procedures

**DISCUSSION** : Project sponsors may request the application of standard local equivalencies, as detailed in various Administrative Bulletins, or approval of other alternates when it can be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis that there are practical difficulties in meeting the specific provisions of the codes, that the modification is in conformance with the intent and purpose of the codes, and that reasonable equivalency is provided in fire-protection and structural integrity.

Project sponsors may request the application of standard local equivalencies, as detailed in various Administrative Bulletins, or approval of other alternates when it can be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis that there are practical difficulties in meeting the specific provisions of the codes, that the modification is in conformance with the intent and purpose of the codes, and that reasonable equivalency is provided in fire-protection and structural integrity.

Proposed modifications may be administratively approved by the Departments if they conform to the standard provisions of Local Equivalency. Other modifications and applications for use of alternate materials, designs and methods of construction may be administratively approved or may be referred to the Board of Examiners or other

review body as appropriate.

Based upon individual building and property conditions, the Department of Building Inspection and other City departments, such as the Fire Department, may impose requirements in addition to those proposed by the project sponsor when approving any request for use of a standard Local Modification, code modification or alternate material, design or method of construction. Additionally, the Department of Building Inspection or any other City agency may require that additional substantiation be provided supporting any claims made for such proposals.

### **Procedure for Application for Local Equivalencies**

Project sponsors wishing to apply for local equivalencies must fill out and submit the Request for Approval of Local Equivalency form (Attachment A). Fees are required to be paid as noted on that form.

### **Review Procedures for Application for Local Equivalencies**

The Department of Building Inspection and the Fire Department, when applicable, will conduct review meetings as required to consider requests for the approval of Local Equivalencies, Modifications and Alternates. At such review meetings each request will be either approved, approved with conditions, disapproved, referred to another official body, or placed on “Hold” pending submittal of additional information. Upon approval of the local equivalency, a copy of the signed form approving the equivalency and indicating any conditions of approval will be attached to the submittal documents as part of the permanent record of the project, and a copy will be sent to the project sponsor.

Please note that the Board of Examiners reviews requests for variances and requests for approval of certain new materials, methods, and types of construction. The Board of Examiners considers requests concerning structural provisions related to unreinforced masonry buildings. The Access Appeals Commission considers requests for equivalencies for issues related to disabled access.

### **Appeals**

Determinations of the staff of the Department of Building Inspection regarding local equivalencies may be administratively brought for further review to the Deputy Director and the Director of the Department of Building Inspection. Determinations of the Director may be appealed to the Building Inspection Commission or other designated appeal body.

Originally signed by:  
Frank Y. Chiu, Director  
October 3, 2002

Gary Massetani, Fire Marshal  
October 9, 2002

Approved by the Building Inspection Commission on September 18, 2002

Attachment A: Request for Approval of Local Equivalency (Rev. October 2017)



**DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTION**  
**City & County of San Francisco**  
**1660 Mission Street, San Francisco, California 94103-2414**

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF LOCAL EQUIVALENCY FOR MODIFICATION  
OR ALTERNATE MATERIALS, DESIGN OR METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION**

DATE SUBMITTED \_\_\_\_\_ [Note: This form shall be recorded as part of the permanent construction records of the property]

If no permit application has been filed, a Preapplication Review Fee is required for review of a request for local equivalency or modification, per SFBC Table 1A-B, Item 5. Additional fees may be required by Fire Department and other City review agencies.

If a permit application has been filed, no additional fees are required for this review.

Permit Application # \_\_\_\_\_

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Block and Lot: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Occupancy Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Construction: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Stories: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Use of Building \_\_\_\_\_

Under the authority of the 2016 San Francisco Building Code, Sections 104A.2.7 and 104A.2.8; the 2016 San Francisco Mechanical Code, Section 302.2; the 2016 San Francisco Electrical Code, Section 89.117; and the 2016 San Francisco Plumbing Code, Section 301.3; the undersigned requests modifications of the provisions of these codes and/or approval of alternate materials, designs or methods of construction. Two copies of supporting documents, including plans showing the proposed modifications or alternate materials, design or methods of construction, are attached.

Regular Code Requirement (specify Code and Sections)

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Proposed Modification or Alternate

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Case-by-Case Basis of Request - Describe the practical difficulties presented in meeting the specific conditions of the code and how the proposed modification or alternate meets the intent of the code. A separate form should be filled for each requested modification or alternate. Attach copies of any Administrative Bulletin, Code Ruling, reference, test reports, expert opinions, etc., which support this request. The Department may require that an approved consultant be hired by the applicant to perform tests or analysis and to submit an evaluation report to the Department for consideration.

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Requested by:     PROJECT SPONSOR                          ARCHITECT/ENGINEER

Print Name:     \_\_\_\_\_                          \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:     \_\_\_\_\_                          \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone:     \_\_\_\_\_                          \_\_\_\_\_

[PROFESSIONAL  
STAMP HERE]

PLAN REVIEWER COMMENTS:

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RECOMMENDATIONS:  
[signed off/dated by:]

Approve

Approve with conditions

Disapprove

Plan Reviewer:

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Division Manager:

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for Director of  
Bldg. Inspection

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for Fire Marshal:

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CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL or OTHER COMMENTS

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