

New Application Requirements for Nonconforming Buildings

Submittals for Structural Modification Now Need Modification Worksheet

Some Projects Will Also Require Modification Plan

New [regulations](#) adapted by the Board of Supervisors (after an inclusive public process) eliminate many restrictions on Nonconforming Structures and allow remodeling and additions to Nonconforming Uses. The new regulations use a “whole structure” approach to measuring the size of remodels of nonconforming structures, so a discretionary permit is now required only when 65% or more of the major structural components in a nonconforming building is modified over any five-year period. In certain specified locations, such as across a property line, within five feet of a right-of-way or within a riparian corridor, the discretionary threshold will be 50% modification.

To facilitate review of projects affecting Nonconforming Uses and Structures, all applications for building and discretionary permits involving nonconforming structures outside the Coastal Zone are now required to include a completed Modification Worksheet summarizing the percentage of structural modifications proposed. When proposed modifications are more than 55% on most sites or 40% in the specified locations, a [Modification Plan](#) is also required, to clearly highlight modified areas and show dimensions of modified walls, floors, roofs and foundations.

The new regulations (Ord. #5119) are now effective outside the Coastal Zone. Within the Coastal Zone, the original nonconforming ordinance will remain in effect until the Coastal Commission certifies the amendments.

The Department has developed a downloadable [Modification Worksheet](#) to help applicants and professionals determine whether a project is above the 65% and 50% thresholds. The worksheet and user’s guide, along with the guidelines for preparation of a Modification Plan, are available from the County of Santa Cruz Planning Department’s home page (www.sccoplanning.com). Preprints of this information, along with assistance and additional information, is available from the Planning Department Counter each Monday through Thursday.

Procedures for determining percent modification of structures are available at the County Planning Dept. web page, under, “[Evaluating Modification of Major Structural Components](#)”. The list of required elements for a Modification Plan is linked off of the “Evaluating Modification” page.

If you are interested in attending a repeat of the free public workshop, “The New Nonconforming Ordinance and How to Measure Structural Alteration,” sign up [here](#).