The San Diego Remodeling Permit Guide for 2026

One-page summary of the article at https://www.kaminskiyhomeremodeling.com/blog/navigating-home-remodel-permit-challenges/. Kaminskiy Design & Remodeling, San Diego, CA license #922807. Figures as of November 6, 2026; refreshed quarterly.

THE SHORT ANSWER

In the City of San Diego a kitchen or bath that keeps its layout and adds no fixture takes a **no-plan permit ($441)** that can issue in days; a wall moved, a fixture added, any new square footage or any new unit goes through **plan check** (about **$6,500** for a remodel or an addition to 500 sq ft before the trade permits, two review cycles). Where the homes we are asked to price sit: City of San Diego **57%**, one of the 17 other cities **37%**, unincorporated County **6%**. By type, **63%** of the remodels we price always go through plan check; **55%** of families want to start right away.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO FEES A REMODEL MEETS

City of San Diego, August 2026 schedule (after +7.25% on May 4, 2026)	Plan check	Inspection / permit	Notes
Same-layout kitchen or bath, no-plan combination permit (IB 103)	none	$440.82	All MEP work; plans if any framing is touched
Addition or remodel, first 500 sq ft (IB 501)	$3,512.92 + $6.98/sf	$2,228.29 + $4.46/sf	Attached ADU to 1,100 sf, detached to 500
Detached ADU over 500 sq ft; addition or remodel over 1,100	$8,085.26 + $4.10/sf	$8,401.90 + $4.21/sf	The larger-building tier
Deck to 500 sq ft / patio cover / custom pool	$1,677.99 / $1,412.54 / $2,649.60	$264.25 / $529.71 / $529.71	Pre-approved plans cost less
New or enlarged window or door, each	$793.95	$176.57	Same-size replacement: no-plan, $529.71
General Plan Maintenance Fee; mapping; lead hazard (pre-1978)	$737 once per project	$12.16; $58	Plus state surcharges on valuation
Trade permits (IB 103)	First 5 circuits $176.57; gas line $264.25; water heater $122.97; furnace $176.57; exhaust fan $105.98		HERS when 40+ ft of duct
Express Plan Check / hourly review / historic review	$793.95 + 1.5x plan check	$176.84 per hour / $177.68 per hour	Express: about 40 to 50% faster

School fee: San Diego Unified and Poway Unified $5.38 per sq ft on space added above 500 sq ft (none at 500 or less). Impact fees waived on an ADU of 750 sq ft or less. Exempt from a permit: cabinets and counters replaced in place, paint, flooring, a detached deck under 200 sq ft and 30 in, a patio cover of 300 sq ft or less outside the coastal zone.

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO (UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES)

County of San Diego, PDS 613 (effective July 10, 2026)	Plan review	Permit	Together
Minor interior remodel, patio, fence, re-roof, over the counter	$405	$521	$926
Major remodel, no added square footage	$2,296	$1,896	$4,192
Addition over 100 sq ft with plan check submittal	$2,196 + $0.372/sf	$1,466 + $0.759/sf	about $4,100 for 400 sf
Accessory dwelling unit	$1,940 + $0.41/sf	$1,677 + $0.564/sf	about $4,200 for 600 sf
Pool or spa / one trade / three trades	$266 / included	$955 / $392 / $734	re-inspection $205

THE REVIEW CLOCK

Review clock, City timeline page (data as of Oct 30, 2026) and County PDS 441A	First review	Recheck
Rapid Review, combined (interior remodels, garage conversions, first-floor additions to 750 sf)	7 days	3 days
Express Plan Check, combined	12 days	10 days
Standard track, combined / planning / electrical or storm water	14 / 18 / 31 days	10 / 15 / 17 days
Issuance once every discipline signs off	1 business day	
Historic review, any structure 45 years or older (IB 580)	10 business days	20 if discretionary
County, backlog before a first residential plan check	about 4 weeks	half need over 2 cycles
ADU: state limit for a decision on a complete application	60 days	15 business days to call it incomplete

WHAT THE 2025 CODES CHANGED (APPLICATIONS SINCE JANUARY 1, 2026)

Every altered light fixture high efficacy (JA8); heat pump the prescriptive baseline for new heating, no gas tankless water heater prescriptively in an addition; replacement windows 0.40 U-factor (0.30 for new windows in an addition in zones 7 and 10); more than 25 ft of new duct means HERS testing; on a pre-1994 house every noncompliant toilet, showerhead and faucet replaced before final (Civil Code 1101.4); smoke and CO alarms checked before sign-off on any permit over $1,000; the house wall no longer a pool barrier; in the fire zones a re-roof of half the roof or more meets the new-construction class. The existing house is not brought up to code; only the new work is. Local amendments frozen until June 2031 (AB 130).

PERMIT LIFE

City: an application not issued within two years of being complete is closed; a permit is void without an inspection in 12 months or after 180 days of suspended work, and expires three years after issuance (one 180-day extension, requested a month ahead); a stand-alone trade permit lapses after 180 days without an inspection. County: start within two years, an inspection every 180 days, finish within three; renewal at half the fee.

METHOD AND SOURCES

First-party shares: Kaminskiy customer records 2021 to 2026 (project city mapped to the issuing office; typed remodel inquiries mapped to the City permit path their type takes; first-call start dates); shares published, never counts. Published sources read November 6, 2026: City of San Diego IB 501, 103, 203, 580, 117, 400, 242, 146, the Rapid Review, Express and AB 253 pages, the permit timeline and inspections pages, the fee notices of 2022 to 2026, SDMC 126.0704 and 129.0211 to 129.0219; County PDS 613, PDS 441A, the 2026 Consolidated WUI Code, DEH septic guidance; the other cities' building pages; CEC 2025 Energy Code and the Single-Family Compliance Manual; Civil Code 1101.3, 1101.4, 1102.6; H&S 13113.7, 17926; B&P 7044, 7159; Gov Code 66317, 66311.5, 65913.3, 65943; Ed Code 17620; SDUSD and PUSD developer fee pages; HCD ADU Handbook update (January 2026). Full citations on the article page.

Kaminskiy Design & Remodeling, 858-271-1005, kaminskiyhomeremodeling.com. Updated November 9, 2026. You're welcome to quote these tables with a link to the article.