

City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety

Self-Certification Pilot Program Implementation Guideline For Licensed Architects

May 22, 2025

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I. Program Overview

On April 22, 2025, Mayor Karen Bass issued Emergency Executive Order No. 6 to accelerate the permit review for rebuilding projects in areas that were destroyed in the January 2025 Wildfires, requiring the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) to establish a plan check Self-Certification Pilot Program.

The Pilot Program will allow California-licensed architects (referred to in this Guideline as a Self-Certified Architect) to assume responsibility to verify compliance for construction projects with the California Residential Code as adopted by the City of Los Angeles and the California Energy Code. The Self-Certification Pilot Program is limited to the reconstruction projects for single-family dwellings and associated structures on sites with structures that were substantially damaged or destroyed in the January 2025 wildfires, that also qualify as like-for-like Eligible Projects under the Mayor's Emergency Executive Order #1. LADBS will not review or approve the plans for compliance with applicable codes, relying solely on the self-certified plans by the architect. All applicable reviews and approvals by City departments other than LADBS shall continue to be required.

This guideline provides the requirements to participate in the Self-Certification Program, registration process, required 3rd Party examination and certification, eligibility requirements of projects under program, project submission procedure and required audit of Self-Certified Projects.

LADBS will advertise the Self-Certification Program and will post on the Department's website the names of all Self-Certified Architects who are eligible to participate in the Self-Certification Program. The webpage will also contain all documents related to the Self-Certification Program to assist the Self-Certified Architect with project submission.

Projects utilizing the self-certification pilot program remain subject to all other regulatory requirements, including but not limited to: inspection, code enforcement, revocation, expiration, and any other enforcement authority of the City for non-compliant construction.

Upon obtaining a permit and commencing construction, contractors may schedule inspections through the regular process. During construction, inspections will continue to be performed by LADBS inspection staff per standard inspection process.

All required inspections and related sign-offs by LADBS and other applicable City departments for the issuance of a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy and/or Certificate of Occupancy shall continue to be required.

In addition to a self-certified review of compliance with the California Residential Code and California Energy Code, and in accordance with Emergency Executive Order No.6, the Self-Certified Architect shall certify that all the zoning requirements are met.

II. Definitions

As used in these guidelines, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Auditor: Any person designated by the Superintendent of Building to perform an audit.

California Residential Code: The California Residential Code in effect at the time of submittal for a permit, as adopted and amended by the City of Los Angeles.

Superintendent of Building: The General Manager of the Department of Building and Safety of the City of Los Angeles or a duly authorized representative.

Department: The City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, also referred to as LADBS.

Owner: For the purposes of Owner Certification, either the actual owner of the building and/or property, or the person who is “acting as an agent of” the owner, as permitted by the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

Project: Work identified in a building permit application and accompanying plans.

Registrant: The architect in the State of California with good standing.

Registration number or self-certification registration number: The registration number issued by LADBS upon demonstration of compliance with eligibility requirements as a Self-Certified Architect. Such registration number is separate and distinct from the professional registration issued by the State of California.

Reviewed by or Reviewed and sealed by: (a) The sealed plans were reviewed by the Self-Certified Architect for code compliance, or (b) the plans were drawn by others and were reviewed for code compliance and sealed by the Self-Certified Architect.

Self-Certified Architect: The licensed architect in the State of California identified on the building permit application and accompanying plans and is certified by the Department of Building and Safety.

Self-Certified Plans: A plan that has been prepared by a Self-Certified Architect; and processed and stamped by LADBS in accordance with the Self-Certification Program.

Wildfires: Individually or collectively, the Palisades, Hurst, Kenneth, Archer, and Sunset Fires that occurred in January 2025, in whole or in part within the City of Los Angeles.

III. Project Eligibility Criteria

The projects appearing in the "Projects Eligible for Self Certification" section of the Self-Certification Eligibility Chart below are eligible for self-certification.

Projects Eligible for Self Certification	Projects Not Eligible for Self Certification
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconstruction projects for sites with structures that were substantially damaged or destroyed in the January 2025 Wildfires that meet all of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ The project shall meet the requirements of an Eligible Project (like-for-like), as defined by the Mayor's Emergency Executive Order No. 1.◦ The project is a single-family dwelling and is limited to 3 stories (within the scope of the California Residential Code), and may include any associated structures such as Accessory Dwelling Units, accessory living quarters, patio covers, recreation rooms and private garages.• Projects may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Swimming pools, with an LADBS approved standard plan associated with the reconstruction project.◦ Temporary shoring and retaining walls associated with reconstruction projects.◦ Deferred submittal for roof trusses associated with reconstruction projects.◦ Site Grading, except in locations outlined in Information Bulletin: P/BC 2025-157 and the LADBS implementation guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project and site shall not be located in whole or in part within a Geologically Sensitive Area as identified in Information Bulletin P/BC 2025-157.• Multi-family residential projects.• Non-residential projects.• Projects not meeting the requirements of an Eligible Project (like-for-like), as defined by the Mayor's Emergency Executive Order No. 1.

If there is a dispute over whether a project is eligible for self-certification under these rules, the Self-Certified Architect can ask for "Second Opinion" from an LADBS staff supervisor. After the results of the "Second Opinion", the project applicant can appeal to the Superintendent of Building. A final determination of eligibility shall be made by the Superintendent of Building.

IV. Requirements for Self-Certified Architect

A. Eligibility

1. The Architect has been a registered architect for at least three (3) years and is registered in the State of California; and
2. Within the preceding five-year period, the Self-Certified Architect has not been convicted or found liable of: (1) knowingly making a false statement of material fact on or in connection with any building permit application, or (2) knowingly submitting in support of a building permit application any document containing false or fraudulent information, or (3) knowingly affixing a false signature to any building permit application. A Certificate of Good Conduct to this effect will be required to be signed by the Architect; and
3. Responsible for compliance with the California Residential Code, California Energy Code and the City of Los Angeles Zoning requirements.

B. Insurance Requirements

For each project, the Self-Certified Architect is required to furnish to LADBS a certificate of professional liability errors and omissions insurance, issued by an insurer authorized to insure in California, with limits of not less than \$250,000 per claim and \$500,000 in the aggregate for all claims made during the policy period.

C. Required Third Party Certification

In order to show competency in the California Residential Code, including life and fire safety provisions, the architect participating in the Self-Certification Program must successfully complete the [California Residential Code self-certification](#) examination administered by the International Code Council (ICC), demonstrating knowledge in the application of the California Residential Code (CRC).

Architects must contact the ICC directly to schedule the exam. Upon successful completion of the examination, architects will receive ICC certification, which is required to participate in the City's Self-Certification Program. A valid ICC certification shall be required at all times to maintain certification with the City.

D. Architect of Record Statement

The Self-Certified Architect is required to submit an Architect of Record Self-Certification Statement on a form to be furnished by the Department, in which the Self-Certified Architect certified that anytime plans are stamped by the Self-Certified Architect are prepared by, under the direct supervision of, or reviewed by him/her; are complete; and are, in accordance with the requirements of the California Residential Code as amended by the City of Los Angeles, California Energy Code, City of Los Angeles Zoning regulation and all other applicable laws; all information in the application is true and correct and will be relied upon as the basis for issuing a permit;

the permit is subject to revocation by the Superintendent of Building if necessary or appropriate to protect the public health, safety or welfare, and if LADBS determines that the Self-Certified plans do not conform to the requirements of the California Residential Code, City of Los Angeles Zoning regulations or any other applicable law; the Self-Certified Architect agrees to make all necessary revisions in a timely manner, and that a Notice to Stop Construction can be issued at the discretion of the Superintendent of Building. The Superintendent of Building may require additional certifications in the Professional of Record Self-Certification Statement.

E. Enrollment in Program

Once certified under the Self-Certified Architect program by the Department, the certification will be valid for three years from the date of issuance. Should the City adopt new relevant codes or adopt amendments to relevant code during the three-year certification period, the Self-Certified Architect is responsible for keeping himself/herself up to date on all relevant code revisions.

To register in the Self-Certification Program, applicants must submit the following documents, fee, and be accepted:

1. Proof of professional architectural licensure in the State of California.
2. Proof of insurance.
3. Proof of ICC Certification under the California Residential Code Self-Certification Program.
4. Registration fee.
5. Certificate of Good Conduct.

Enrollment in the Self-Certification Program will be administered by LADBS. Documents must be emailed to: ladbs-selfcertification@lacity.org. LADBS will confirm eligibility and complete the enrollment process.

V. Hold Harmless Affidavit

For each project, the Self-Certified Architect, structural engineer and the Owner are required to sign an affidavit, provided by LADBS, agreeing to the following:

- A. To protect, defend, indemnify and hold harmless the City of Los Angeles and its officers, representatives, managers and employees against any and all claims,

liabilities, judgments, costs, expenses, delays, demands or injuries arising out of or in any way connected with the design, construction, code compliance review or issuance of a building permit for the project identified in the building permit application; and

- B. That if construction is contrary to the California Residential Code, City of Los Angeles Zoning Code or any other applicable law or to any permit issued under the Self-Certification Program, the owner, as applicable, shall, without undue delay, remove or modify any component of such construction that does not conform to the requirements of the California Residential Code, City of Los Angeles Zoning Code or any other applicable law or to such permit.

Nothing in this rule shall be construed to prohibit the Superintendent of Building from requiring additional agreements in the Hold Harmless Affidavit. This affidavit shall be recorded with the County Recorder's office. A copy of the recorded affidavit shall be provided to LADBS prior to building permit issuance.

VI. Project Submission Procedures

The Self-Certified Architect must:

- A. Submit plans and documents electronically via the LADBS ePlan portal. LADBS Staff will determine if the project qualifies for the Self-Certification Program
- B. Schedule an ePlanLA Virtual Counter appointment or call 311 for assistance, if needed.
- C. Refer to the [Plan Submittal Requirements](#) for a comprehensive list of required plans, documents, and information needed for plan acceptance.
- D. The permit application and accompanying plans must be stamped by the following:
 - 1. Architectural Plans: To be signed and stamped by the licensed architect who prepared or reviewed the plan as the Self-Certified Architect responsible.
 - 2. Structural Plans: To be signed and stamped by a structural engineer with a valid license from the State of California.
 - 3. Energy Calculations: To be stamped and signed by a mechanical engineer with a valid license from the State of California.
- E. Every sheet of the plan shall be stamped and signed by the Self-Certified Architect.

The cover sheet of the plan shall:

1. Be signed, dated, and stamped by the Self-Certified Architect responsible for preparing the plans; and
2. Contain an Index of Drawings as required by law; and
3. Contain a **Self-Certification Notice** which reads as follows: *“This project has been permitted under the City of Los Angeles Self-Certification Program. The project is subject to audit and field inspections. If the construction of the project is contrary to, or does not meet the standard of the California Residential, Energy or the City of Los Angeles Zoning Code, the owner shall remove or modify any and all components that do not conform. Any deviations from this approved plan must be coordinated in advance with the LADBS Inspection Staff and revised plans or sketches must be provided by the self-certified architect.”*
4. Contain the following certification statement on the cover sheet: *“I hereby certify that these drawings are prepared by me, under my supervision, or reviewed by me and to the best of my professional knowledge conform to the California Residential Code and the City of Los Angeles Zoning Code. Such a certification statement shall be signed by the Self-Certified Architect and shall clearly show his/her name and City of Los Angeles registration number .”*

VII. LADBS Processing of Self-Certified Plans and Permit Application:

If the intake staff determines that all Self-Certification Program requirements have been met, they shall accept the project for admission to the Self-Certification Program.

If the intake staff determines that any of the Self-Certification Program requirements have not been met, LADBS will notify the applicant of any missing or incorrect items.

After a project is accepted for submittal to the Self-Certification Program and prior to the issuance of a permit for such project, the plan review staff will verify that the application for the permit and all accompanying documents are complete. No LADBS plan review is conducted unless the application is selected for audit.

The Plan Check staff will still do the following:

1. Apply the clearances from applicable City Departments and Governmental Agencies. Rebuild projects under the Self-Certification Program shall obtain any applicable clearances/approvals/permits from City Departments and Governmental Agencies including:
 - Department of City Planning
 - Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD)
 - Department of Water and Power (LADWP)

- Bureau of Engineering
 - Bureau of Sanitation
2. Generate all applicable permit applications associated with the rebuild project.
 3. Generate processing fees for the permit application and shall be based on the hourly rate specified in LAMC 98.0415(e). Applicable surcharges may apply as required by the LAMC. (Note: Per the Mayor's Emergency Executive Order No.7, all fees are currently suspended for rebuilding properties damaged or destroyed by the 2025 Wildfire).
 4. Once all the steps above are completed, the plan check staff will issue a "Ready-To-Issue" form, which the contractor can use to obtain a permit.
 5. Permit Issuance: When the permit is issued, the plan check staff shall affix a LADBS **"Self-Certified" approval stamp** to each sheet of the construction plans and then another stamp on the cover sheet indicating the issuance date, permit number, and stating the following:
 - ***This set of plans MUST be at the job site during construction.***
 - ***It is unlawful to alter, change, or deviate from these plans.***
 - ***The stamping of this plan SHALL NOT constitute approval of violation of any provisions of any Ordinance or Law.***
 - ***This permit was issued as a combination permit for a One or Two Family Dwelling pursuant to LAMC Section 91.0107.2. This approval is only for the items indicated on the permit work description. Other items shown on the plans are NOT included in this approval. Separate permits are required for fire sprinklers and elevators.***

VIII. Audit Guidelines

Self-Certification Projects are subject to random audits at a rate of at least 20% of the program as a whole, the audit rate can be changed by the Department at any time. Additionally, an individual Self-Certified Architect who has submitted five or more projects may be subject to random audits of 20% per Self-Certified Architect. An hourly plan check fee shall be charged for all audits (random or automatic) pursuant to LAMC Sections 91.107.3.1.4 and 98.0415(e).

The purpose of the audit is to determine whether the plans and/or projects are in compliance with the requirements of the California Residential Code, California Energy Code, and other ordinances and codes adopted by the City of Los Angeles. The audit will also measure the effectiveness of the Self-Certification Program. In addition to the random audits, projects may be audited if LADBS determines that a field inspection conducted by LADBS finds that the plans permitted under the Self-Certification permit program are not

in compliance with the requirements of the California Residential Code or other codes or ordinances of the City of Los Angeles.

If code violations are identified during the audit, the Self-Certified Architect will be notified in writing via email or ePlan. The notification will direct the Self-Certified Architect to address all code violations found in the audit. Inspections may be suspended until the corrected plan is made available at the construction site.

If the Self-Certified Architect of an audited project disputes the results of the audit or disputes the accuracy or applicability of any code correction comment entered in connection with such audit, the Self-Certified Architect has the right to request a meeting to review the matter with the plan check supervisor or schedule an appointment with the Superintendent of Building or duly authorized representative. If the Self-Certified Architect disputes the results of the Superintendent of Building, an appeal can be made through the Los Angeles Board of Building and Safety Commissioners (BBSC), granted under Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 98.0403.2.

A. Appeal Process

For information on the appeal process that must be followed, see the BBSC appeal process through the following links:

- <https://dbs.lacity.gov/our-organization/building-and-safety-commissioners/bb-sc/appeals-ordinances>
- <https://dbs.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/efs/forms/pc17/ib-p-bc-2017-149-appeals-to-the-bb-sc.pdf>

IX. Revisions to Self-Certified Plans

Voluntary Field Changes and Revisions

The Self-Certified Architect or the Contractor must inform the LADBS Inspector of any proposed field changes or revisions. The inspector will determine if the proposed changes are minor and can be processed in the field or require revised plans.

If the changes require revised plans, the revised plans must be sealed by the Self-Certified Architect's approved stamp. Structural revisions must be stamped by the Structural Engineer of Record. The revised must go through the established Self-Certified submittal process and be kept by LADBS as part of the record. Changes or revisions which add to the scope of work included in the original plan submittal shall be treated as new work requiring a supplemental permit.

Mandatory Field Changes and Revisions

When an inspector determines that the plans contain code violations or are missing critical information, the inspector will inform the Contractor in writing and shall notify plan check. A revised plan by the Self-Certified Architect, processed by the Department, will be required to be provided at the project site.

X. Suspension and Revocation of Self-Certification Privileges

Privileges shall be revoked by the Superintendent of Building if the Self-Certified Architect fails three (3) consecutive audits or more than 20% of the audits, have designs with major life safety code violation, shows lack of proper attention or oversight in their plan preparation; or fails to take all remedial measures within such Self-Certified Architect's control to bring the required plans and any construction thereunder into compliance with the California Residential Code.

If a Self-Certified Architect's privileges are subject to revocation for any reason, LADBS shall cause a dated notice to be mailed, by first class mail, to such Self-Certified Architect at their last known business address or sent via email to the email address on file as provided during registration. Such dated notice shall inform the Self-Certified Architect of the following facts:

- A. Unless the Self-Certified Architect can show cause at an appointment with the Superintendent of Building or duly authorized representative not to revoke their privileges, they shall be revoked for a period of one year. To reinstate privileges, the Self-Certified Architect must show the Self-Certification Certification by ICC. The revocation of the Self-Certified Architect's Self-Certification Program privileges shall become effective ten (10) business days after the date on which notice is mailed under this rule. The Superintendent of Building also has the authority to permanently revoke the Self-Certified Architect's privileges.
- B. If the Self-Certified Architect has reason to believe that revocation of their Self-Certification privileges is not warranted, the Self-Certified Architect has the right to appeal the decision to the BBSC. The hearing would be solely to determine whether revocation of the self-certification privileges is warranted.

A Self-Certified Architect's self-certification privileges shall be permanently revoked by LADBS, if such Self-Certified Architect is convicted or found liable of: (1) knowingly making a false statement of material fact on or in connection with any building permit application, or (2) knowingly submitting in support of a building permit application any document containing false or fraudulent information, or (3) knowingly affixing a false signature to any building permit application.

The Superintendent of Building may revoke any permit issued under the Self-Certification Program if an audit or inspection indicates that the permitted project or any portion thereof poses a threat to the public health, safety, or welfare.