CITY OF DANA POINT

AGENDA REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2026

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JONATHAN LIGHTFOOT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
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KURTH NELSON, PLANNING MANAGER
RAY OROPEZA, CODE ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT UPDATE FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2026

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council receive and file the report.

BACKGROUND:

This report provides a summary of development activity in Dana Point. Statistics cover the 3rd quarter (July through September 2026), and the narrative sections cover activities up until early November. The report has five sections:

1. Development Improvement Plan progress;
2. Code Enforcement activity and success stories;
3. Status of notable development projects in the City;
4. Community Development operations and performance metrics; and
5. A synopsis of community feedback received through the City's Development Customer Service Survey.

DISCUSSION:

1. Development Improvement Plan

On July 7, 2026, staff introduced the Development Improvement Plan (DIP) to the City Council[1]. The DIP outlined an implementation roadmap through four phases: Immediate; Short Term (summer 2026); Intermediate (through July 2027); and Long Term (through July 2028).

[1] https://www.danapoint.org/files/9c976c89-9e71-41fa-b3c0-a40b2a467e8f/11.-Development-Improvement-Plan.pdf

The goals for Phase 2 are to:

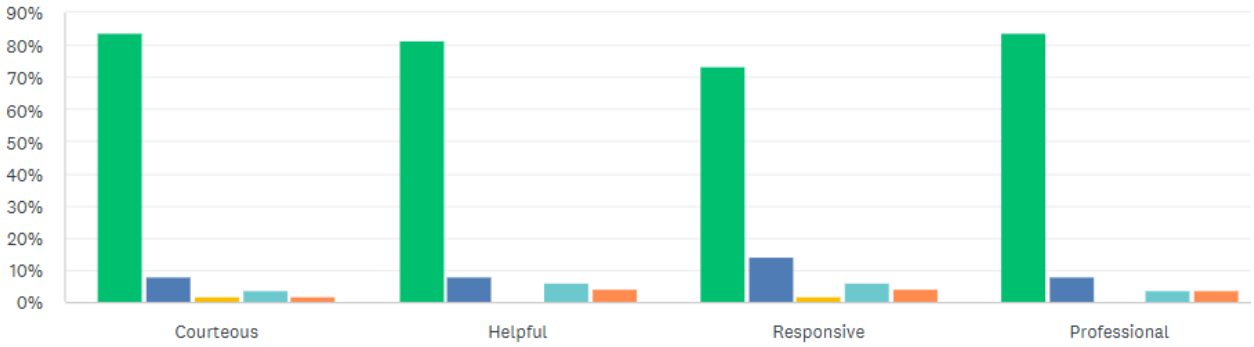
- Train all staff on the Counter Operations Manual
- Improve the eTRAKiT portal experience for applicants
- Speed up simple permits and expand over-the-counter (OTC) approvals
- Improve coordination between departments
- Review True North performance

Staff have made the following progress:

- **Staff training:** New permit technicians were onboarded, fees were standardized, and staff completed formal customer service training, all based on the new Counter Operations Manual.
- **Plan check scorecard:** The Building Official now reviews the City's third-party plan checker each month for turnaround time and comment quality.
- **eTRAKiT issue log:** Staff now track portal problems in a log and send them to the vendor to fix. Front-line staff have found the log helpful.
- **California Permit Streamlining Academy:** The City applied to this state program. Cities selected will receive training in December 2026 and a $25,000 implementation stipend.

Monthly customer service results show improvement since these changes, including a positive overall satisfaction trend and much improved satisfaction related to responsiveness and callbacks. A sample question and chart detailing responses for the month of September are shown below. Additional survey results from July to September 2026 are included in Supporting Document A. Additionally, an analysis of the effectiveness of the survey over the first 6 months is included as Supporting Document B.

Question 35: How well do the following descriptions apply to the service provided by the City employees you dealt with in this process? Does it apply a great deal, apply somewhat, apply not too well, or not apply at all?



	Applies a great deal	Applies somewhat	Applies not too well	Not apply at all	No opinion	Total
Courteous	42	4	1	2	1	**50**
Helpful	40	4	0	3	2	**49**
Responsive	36	7	1	3	2	**49**
Professional	42	4	0	2	2	**50**

Staff is currently wrapping up Phase 2 and as we look forward to moving into Phase 3 (Intermediate / through July 2027), staff have initiated a number of the process improvements contemplated in the DIP, including:

- **Express Permits expansion:** expected to launch on November 30: residents will be able to get 16 common permit types, reroofs, water heaters, EV chargers, panel upgrades, and more, issued instantly online through Symbium, the same platform used for solar applications. This is the biggest resident-facing change coming out of the DIP and directly addresses the most common complaint received through surveys.
- **Homeowner Building Guide:** a draft is attached as Supporting Document C, with the final to follow. This is a plain-language, brand-aligned guide (with QR-code portal access) that walks residents through the permitting process from start to finish.
- **Self-certification for simple commercial tenant improvements:** the Building Official and Chief Building Inspector are preparing parameters for this initiative, which would let licensed professionals self-certify code compliance for faster issuance, paired with an audit and accountability track. This also aligns with recently passed state legislation, Assembly Bill 2418[2].
- **Faster plan review:** our case-study analysis showed about one in five projects needs three or more review rounds; we're targeting the third review as an intervention point and setting comment-quality standards with our plan checker to cut cycles and shorten timelines. We have conducted one trial with an AI “pre-screen” of building plans as we consider process and technology options that could shorten review times.
- **Interdepartmental coordination:** a weekly review-aging report and a monthly cross-department meeting to catch overdue reviews before they stall a project.
- **Ongoing training:** Permit technicians, inspectors, and the Building Official participated in the annual CALBO conference in October.

[2] https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/bills/ca_202520260ab2418

Later in Phase 3, staff plan to add a public permitting performance dashboard and establish a Quick Response Team for time-sensitive projects, and keep adjusting based on survey results.

2. Code Enforcement Updates

October was National Code Enforcement month, and our Code Enforcement team has handled a wide range of cases to ensure that Dana Point remains an attractive, safe place for all residents and visitors. A few of the recent cases and initiatives from Code Enforcement include:

- **Deferred maintenance at the Doheny Village Plaza:** The Dollar Tree facade has been refreshed and repainted, and the parking lot has been resurfaced.
- **Addressing blight conditions at the shuttered Cannons restaurant:** Code Enforcement helped to facilitate the submittal and review of plans for exterior improvements. Those plans were approved, and work began in October.
- **Receivership cases:** Officers have worked with the City Prosecutor to advance receivership cases at nuisance properties on Via Catalina and Camino Capistrano.
- **Fair Housing:** Working with external partners, including Orange County Social Services and OC Fair Housing, officers helped a homeowner living in an unpermitted shed return to her home by assisting with a family dispute, and secured rent reimbursement for a tenant who had leased an unpermitted ADU.
- **Short Term Rentals:** Officers continue to conduct inspections, but recently focused on enforcing limitations on the frequency of rentals at Primary STRs.

3. Project Pipeline

Commercial and multifamily projects which are approved, under review, or under construction are viewable on the City's website[3].

Current Planning Activity

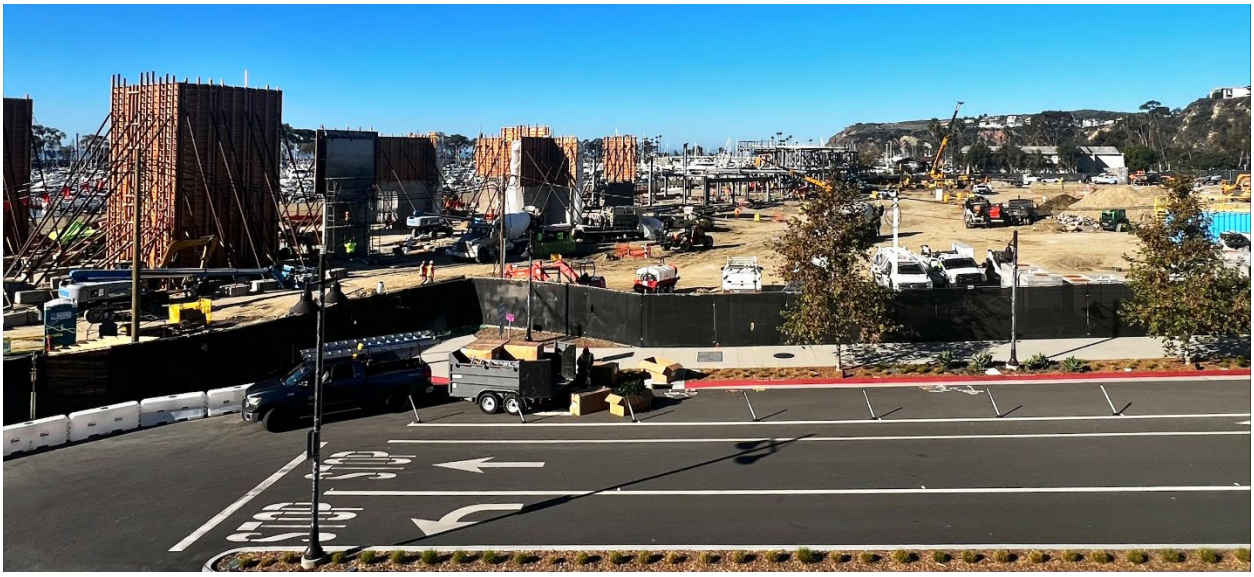
A total of 27 new planning applications were submitted from July through October. Twenty (20) of the planning applications were discretionary applications, primarily consisting of residential Site Development Permits and/or Coastal Development Permits, and an application for a triplex development that includes a tentative parcel map and a Variance (height). Commercial related applications included several Conditional Use Permits for alcoholic beverage outlets (2 total: restaurant beer and wine licenses), a personal service uses (salon studio), and a parking study all for sites in the Lantern District, and a Site Development Permit for a monument signage at the recently rebranded Capistrano Coast House boutique hotel on Coast Highway.

[3] https://www.danapoint.org/City-Government/City-Manager/Economic-Development/Development-Pipeline

Status of Approved Projects:

Harbor Hotels - Coastal Development Permit CDP19-0017 was approved by the City in June 2025, and was not appealed to the California Coastal Commission. Staff has plan checked demolition, precise grading, landscaping plans and one (1) building plan for the project approved as part of CDP19-0017. However, the project is reliant on a restructuring of the related lease agreements with the County of Orange, and although it has been agendized three times over the summer 2026 at County Board of Supervisors meetings, the proposal failed to receive the necessary super majority approval from the Board. Status and timeline of the implementation of the two hotels and associated improvements approved as part of CDP19-0017 is unknown.

Dana Point Harbor Commercial Core - Construction continues along the East Cove Marina with vertical construction commencing (see photo at end of this section). As of October 31, 2026, all businesses in Buildings 2–5B on the Wharf with the exception of Building 4 (Catalina Express and Dana Wharf Sport Fishing & Whale Watching), are closed in preparation of the partial demolition needed for their remodel, which will be underway shortly following the demolition of Building 1 (former Wind and Sea). Catalina Express and Dana Wharf Sport Fishing & Whale Watching will soon be relocated to temporary trailers just east of the Harbor parking structure which remains fully open. Demolition of the remaining buildings along Casitas Place (Mariner's Village) is complete and the former surface parking lot between Casitas Place and Harbor Way (formerly Golden Lantern) is now closed to the public and surrounded with construction fencing. Commercial Core construction is anticipated to last approximately two (2) years (estimated to last until 1st–2nd quarter of 2028).



Victoria Apartments – Permits for the demolition of above ground structures was permitted in July and finaled on October 6. At- and below-grade demolition will occur once all soil testing EIR mitigation measures are provided and associated plans are submitted. Rough grading is on its fourth review and includes first time submittal of several mitigation measure compliance documents related to a soil management plan, and a comprehensive construction management, staging and phasing plan. The parking structure and surrounding apartment building are also in for their fourth plan check, while second submittals of retaining walls and public street improvements are also under review. Corrections for the first review of the landscape plan and associated exterior improvement plans that include public park, open space and vehicular access areas has also been recently completed. Approval of the construction management and staging and phasing plan and soils testing will clear the way for issuance of both the at- and below-grade demolition permit and rough grading permits.

Victoria Self Storage – Approved by the Planning Commission in June of 2024, building permits for the two self-storage buildings on the parcels at the western end of Victoria Boulevard were issued in June after substantial ground modifications associated with grading activities. Construction of the third story of Building 1 on the southern parcel has commenced, while construction on Building 2 on the northern parcel is at the second story. Buildings 1 and 2 are 93,878 and 47,810 square feet respectively. Building 1 includes the rental office, an access lobby, restrooms, and individual self-storage units, while Building 2 features two lobbies each with a restroom and elevator in each lobby.

Ocean Cliffs at Dana Point, a JW Marriott Resort – Construction is progressing on the facility and amenity improvements approved by the Planning Commission in September 2025. The Building Division is working with the Resort for phased Temporary Certificates of Occupancy with the first released area being the conversion of seven ground-level guestrooms into restrooms, storage, and an executive suite and the adjacent new event lawn between wings A and B on the west side of the Resort. Work is ongoing at the new pool area, which replaces the existing event lawn, and will be adjacent to the upgraded lobby, restaurant, and bar lounge. At the rear of the property, the new ballroom is under construction.

Del Prado Place (C3, Brattle Street) – The three-story mixed-use structure was issued a certificate of use and occupancy (C of O) in June for this new development at the corner of Old Golden Lantern and Del Prado Avenue. The property owners have engaged with prospective tenants which led to the submittal of both a tenant improvement plan for a take-out gelato use (TreLune Dolci) in one suite, and a Conditional Use Permit for salon studio in one of the first floor commercial spaces mentioned in the *Current Planning Activity* section above.

4. Development Operations & Metrics

Building Permits

Building permits are a leading indicator of construction activity, as work typically begins soon after issuance. The charts below indicate permit applications and fees collected for the third quarter of 2026. Permit fees are reflective of construction valuations and illustrate the scale of development and investment in the community. The City received 671 permit applications in Q3. Figure 1 below provides a summary of the permit types (omitting permit types where two or fewer applications were received). Total valuations for projects between January – September of 2026 are $101.5 Million, with $20.9 Million associated with commercial improvements. Figure 2 details the fees received for permitting activity.

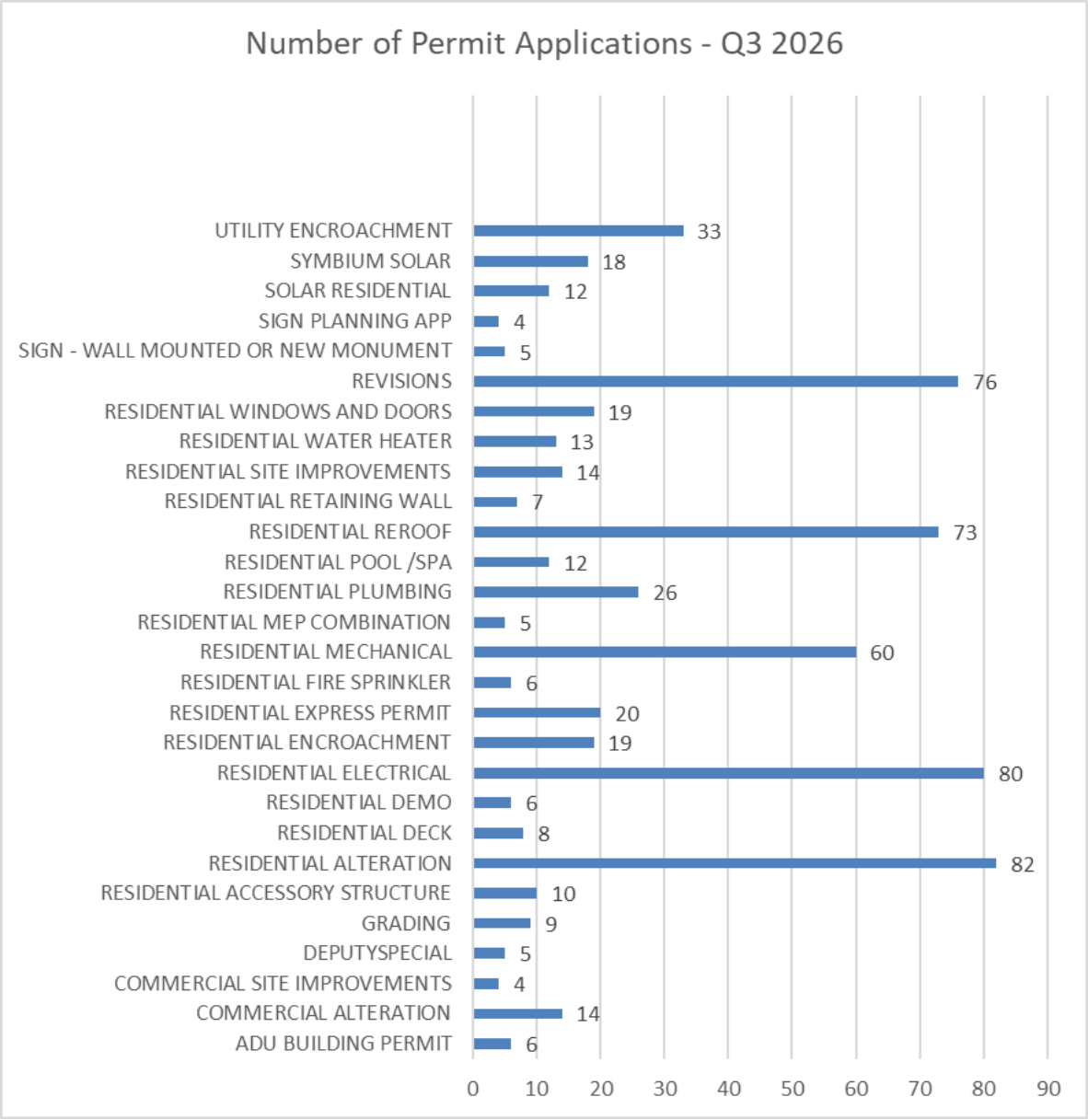


Figure 1. Number of Permit Applications By Type, Q3 2026.

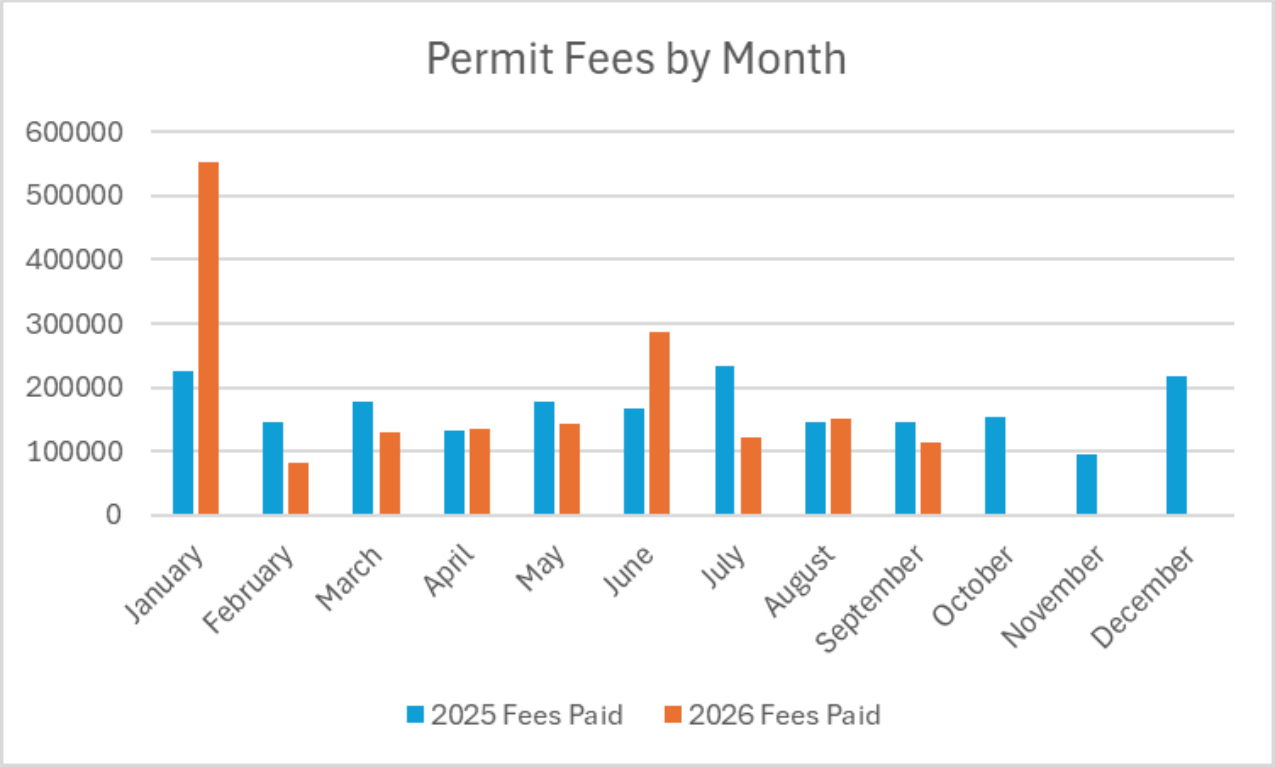


Figure 2. Building Permit Fees Received, By Month.

Figure 3 provides the number of Building permits issued per month. The City typically issues about 150 permits per month, with occasional outliers. Permits issued in Q3 remain close to the average of 150 per month.

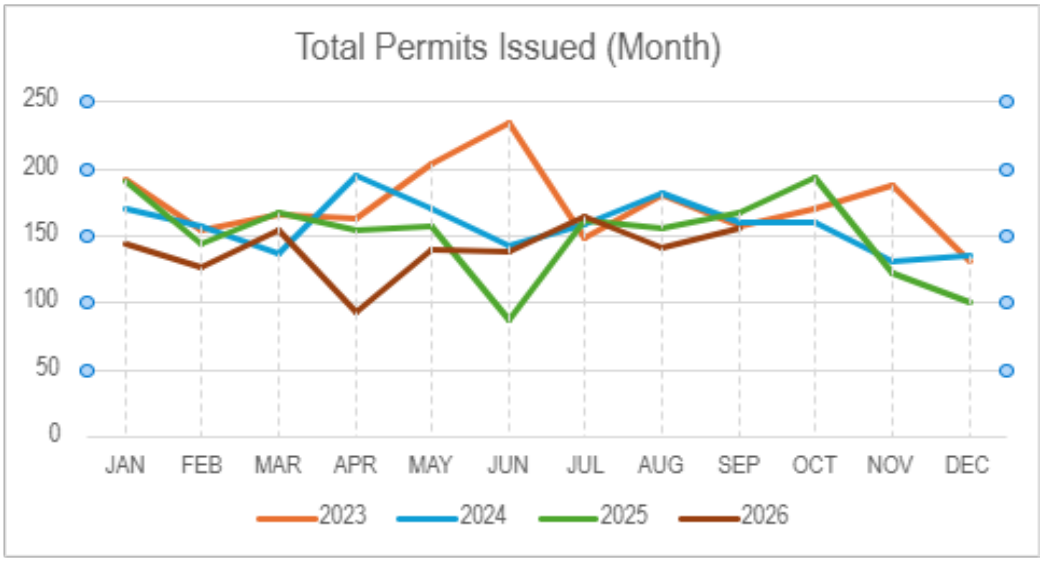


Figure 3. Number of Permits Issued, By Month.

Building Inspections

Inspections are scheduled within 24 hours of request, with two-hour inspection windows provided. The City's three building inspectors serve both contractors and homeowners, and they typically conduct about 40 daily inspections. Additional uncaptured inspection workload occurred in Q3 due to coastal flooding conditions from Hurricanes Marie and Rachel, resulting in a local emergency and additional inspector visits to the affected areas of Beach Road.

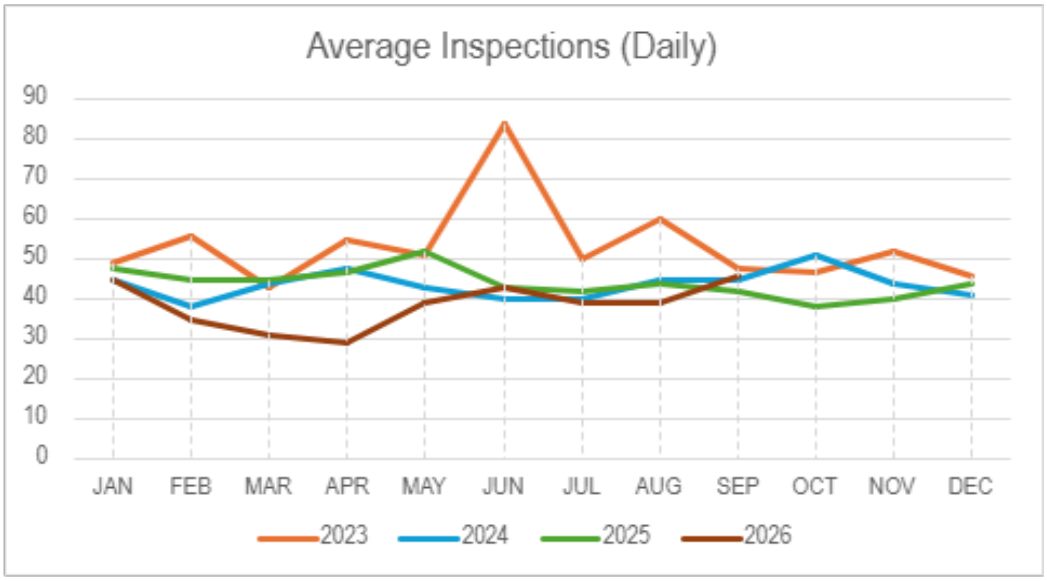


Figure 4. Average Daily Inspections

Permit Reviews and Public Counter Activity

The City contracts for the majority of its building plan check services. Since June 2025, all initial permit applications were transitioned to electronic submittal, thus most building plan check services are provided through electronic routing and off-site review. However, one contract plans examiner is on-site at City Hall two days a week to address questions at the public counter. Additionally, the City's Chief Building Inspector conducts occasional plan checks over the counter when not in the field conducting inspections.

Over the counter plan check reviews are limited to projects that are not complex, such as patio covers, re-roofs, and minor field revisions. The table below denotes the proportion of plan checks conducted in-house (by either the on-site contracted plans examiner or City staff) vs. plan checks that are sent out for review to the City's contracted consultant.

	PLAN CHECK SUBMITTALS Q3		
	July 2026	**August 2026**	**September 2026**
In House	66	55	67
Sent Out	98	78	84
TOTAL	164	133	151

Table 1. Plan Check Submittals.

Figure 5 compares the average daily visitors to the Community Development Counter over the past four years in Dana Point. In 2024, after the introduction of online plan submission capabilities, the daily average dropped to 20 visitors. Average time to service for in person visits tracks steadily under 5 minutes. In June 2025, the city transitioned to accepting plan check submissions exclusively online through the eTRAKiT plan review and permit application portal. Since that time, there has been a steady decrease in the number of visitors to the public counter. In turn, staff time has increased in reviewing uploaded documents/plans and corresponding with applicants. Staff also spends substantial time fielding calls for assistance related to the online permitting system.

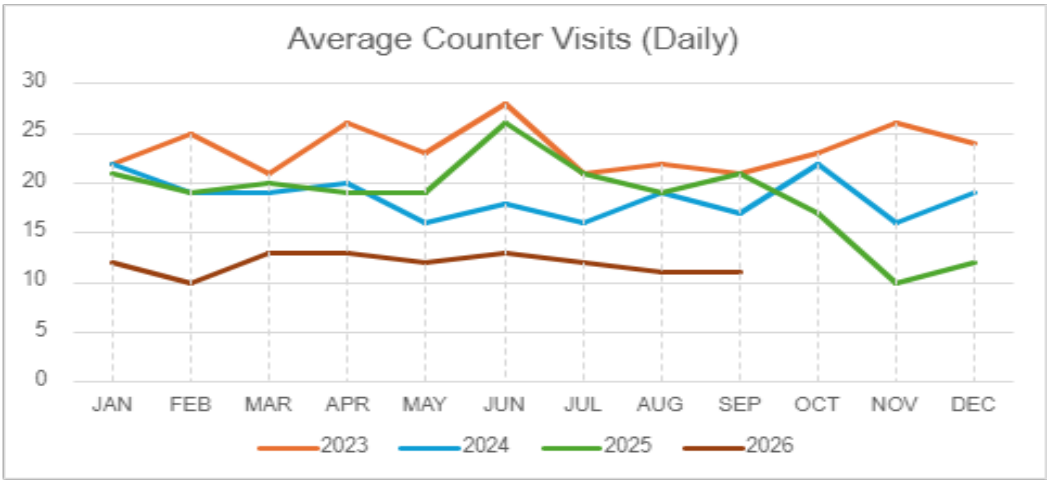


Figure 5. Average Daily Counter Visits, By Month.

Long Range Planning

Planning Staff continues coordination with Coastal Commission staff on the Local Coastal Plan Amendment (LCPA) cleanup effort that includes a "De Minimis" LCAP/Zone Text Amendment approved by the Planning Commission at their November 9th meeting. This was a minor clarifying action specifying that required parking stalls shall be provided within a garage outside the Coastal Zone.

Staff are currently in discussions with the Coastal Commission regarding compliance with Senate Bill 272 (Laird, 2023) which requires local governments within California's coastal zone to prepare comprehensive sea-level rise adaptation plans. These plans must be

developed as part of a local coastal program approved by the California Coastal Commission by January 1, 2034. City staff completed an initial Sea Level Rise (SLR) Vulnerability Assessment in October 2019, which evaluated coastal hazards—including sea level rise, storm waves, tsunamis, and flooding—and identified initial risks to infrastructure, beaches, bluffs, and coastal resources. Staff anticipate pursuing grant opportunities to fund a future Sea Level Rise and Adaptation Plan for the City. Key implementing agency partners will be integrated into the scoping and project development process.

City staff are also currently preparing for the 7th Cycle of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) released the draft Regional Housing Needs Determination (RHND) for the Southern California Council of Governments (SCAG) area on October 20, 2026. The RHND establishes the entire region's total housing need for the RHNA process. The draft RHND is approximately 1,359,750 new units needed between 2029-2037, which is similar to the 6th Cycle RHND of 1,341,827 (2021-2029).

Staff will continue to coordinate with SCAG and the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) on the data gathering phase for the RHNA which includes submitting the Connect SoCal Local Data Exchange (LDX) in November 2026 and the RHNA Survey due in January 2027. The LDX Data Survey is SCAG's official process for collecting local jurisdiction input on land use, transportation, environmental, public health, and data to inform the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) and the RHNA. Both the LDX Data Survey and the RHNA survey will be reviewed by the City Manager prior to submittal.

Staff anticipate SCAG developing a RHNA allocation methodology and public comment period into mid-2027 with an appeals period during Fall/Winter 2027-2028, followed by SCAG issuing draft allocations by Spring 2028. The apprval of the final RHNA allocation is estimated for April 2028. Staff will then take the final allocation and integrate it into an update of the General Plan Housing Element which is due October 2029. Staff anticipate developing an RFP to assist with the RHNA process and the development of the Housing Element and Land Use Element Update early next year.

NOTIFICATION/FOLLOW-UP: N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

Strategic Plan Goal #3, Foster Economic Health and Prosperity.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This report is informational in nature and there is no additional fiscal impact associated with its preparation beyond the staff time necessary to compile the information. It is estimated that it will take approximately five (5) hours of staff time per quarter to prepare this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: **Page No.**

A. Customer Survey Results – July through September 2026 13
B. Customer Service Survey Six-Month Review 17
C. Draft New Home Building Guide 21

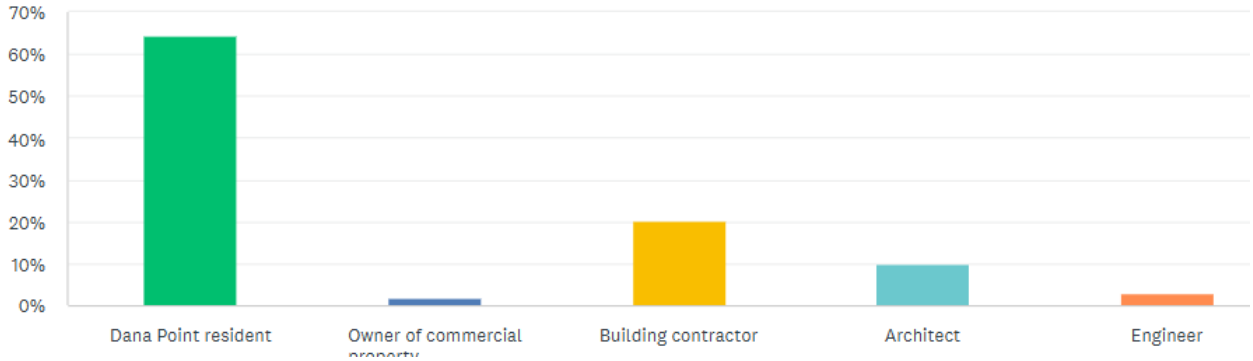
SUPPORTING DOCUMENT A: Customer Survey Results – Q3 2026

City staff send a monthly, optional, anonymous survey to guests after permit counter visits or permit/inspection submittals. Surveys include multiple-choice, yes/no, and open-ended questions.

From July through September 2026, 3,350 guests were contacted, resulting in 255 responses and an overall average response rate of 7.61%. Response rates naturally fluctuate from month to month, as frequent counter visitors may not submit feedback each time they visit. Therefore, the following summary focuses on responses received in September to provide a more current snapshot of guest engagement and feedback.

Also included are select optional comments from Question 36. Not all respondents answer this open-ended question; those who do provide valuable feedback and suggestions for service improvements.

Question 1: *First, which of the following applies to you? You can select all that apply.*

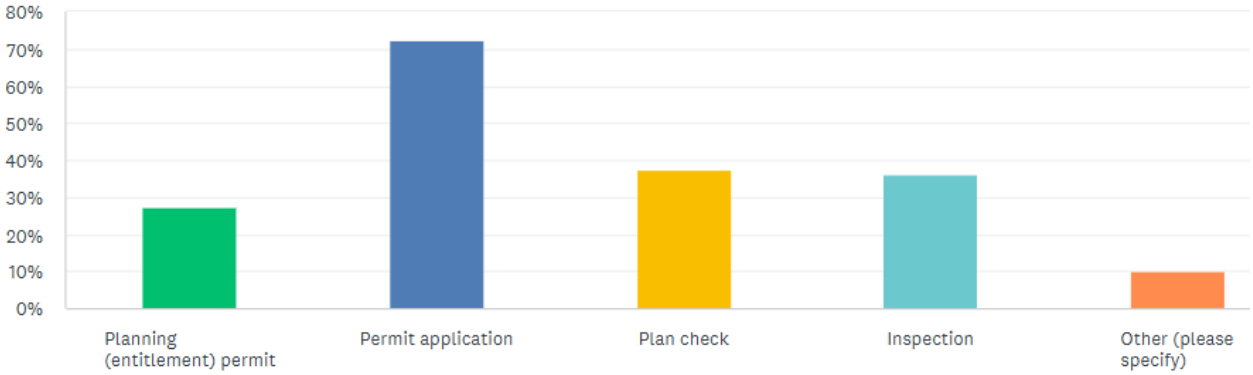


Dana Point resident	64.65%	64
Owner of commercial property	2.02%	2
Building contractor	20.20%	20
Architect	10.10%	10
Engineer	3.03%	3

Additional categories:

- Designer
- Structural
- Non-resident owner of residential property
- Traffic control contractor
- Appraiser
- Realtor
- Retired building contractor
- Building contractor

Question 2: Which of the following did your project need? Please select all that apply.

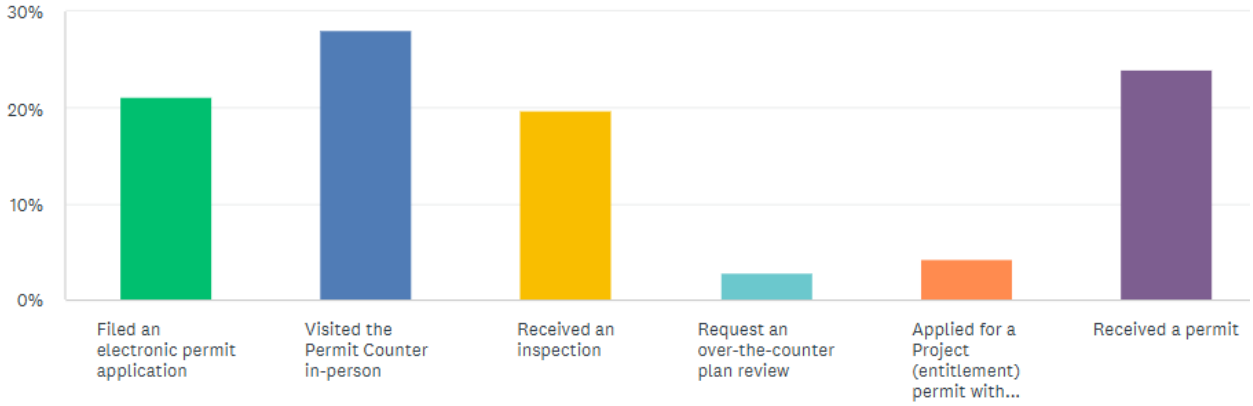


Planning (entitlement) permit	27.50%	22
Permit application	72.50%	58
Plan check	37.50%	30
Inspection	36.25%	29
Other (please specify)	10.00%	8

Additional Responses:

- Enforcement
- See neighbors plans
- Planning other agency forms
- Project status
- Illegally parked cars
- Neighbor is using driveway pad as a patio party pit
- Encroachment agreement
- Needed assistance with a neighbor violation infringement

Question 4: Which of the following did you do in the last month?



Filed an electronic permit application	21.13%	15
Visited the Permit Counter in-person	28.17%	20
Received an inspection	19.72%	14
Request an over-the-counter plan review	2.82%	2
Applied for a Project (entitlement) permit with Planning	4.23%	3
Received a permit	23.94%	17

Question 36: If you have any additional comments or thoughts on how we can better serve you, please enter them in the box below.

This is an optional, open-ended question, and not every participant chooses to respond. The following responses are for the month of September. See attachments for the full list of comments received for the months of July through September.

The best way to summarize these comments is to put them into categories:

- **Positive comments:**
  - Themes include: Accommodating, helpful, good attitudes, courteous
  - Highlights include:
    - "The people I dealt with were very accommodating, kind and great to work with"
    - "Every employee I met when I visited was very nice and helpful. Simple "hellos" and "good mornings" went a long way and they did not fall short of this. Good attitudes and characters. Very respectable people. Good work Dana Point!"
    - "We liked the attention to detail and courteous follow up with comments and useful direction."
    - Employees mentioned:
      - Dean
      - Donna
      - Nicolo
      - Eve
      - Nichole

- **Suggestions/Minor Complaint:**
  - Themes include: Online submittal, permit process
    - "I don't like the on line permit process. It's much easier to do in person."
    - "this was a 1 1/2 complete rebuild and in general I have been very satisfied with everyone I have been in contact with The inspectors are thorough but fair which is the way they should be. The early process

was a bit difficult and time consuming but once the permits were issued it has been a pretty straight forward process. It would be helpful if we as contractors could choose an am or pm inspection but on the plus side is that we generally know by 5pm the day before what the time will be for inspection. I am somewhat old fashion abut using the counter more then everything being electron but understand thats the way things are these days. I believe that adds extra time to the approval process or and changes. Many of the items I had to deal with in the beginng of this job should have been handled by the architect but I tried to do it to speed up the process. All in all it was good working with the people of the city of DP. Everyone was helpful and great . the process is the process.. Thank You."

- "This survey is asking the wrong questions. It focuses on the tone of conversations with staff. The online portal is not helpful in explaining submittal requirements, providing links to or explanations about additional forms and requirements, etc. and the online application process puts an excessive burden of time and paperwork on the applicant."

- **Negative comments:**
  - Themes include: Communication, online submittal, turnaround
    - "just process took about a week to get an answer"
    - "While the city processes for permit application are streamlined, the time taken to process a permit are inordinately high. City needs to constantly review its partner (outsourced) engg./architect firms for competent and experienced staff as that seems to be weak link in the city's turnaround of permit applications."
    - "online forms were hard to find - still dont know what the basic building plans submittal form is or where to find it in trackit. also when i resubmitted no one emailed to let me know the incorrect filing was voided."

- **Neutral comments:**
  - A neutral comment was neither negative nor positive, as the participant simply did not have feedback to provide (i.e. "No Comments").

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT B: Customer Service Survey – Six-Month Review
JULY 2026 COMMENTS

City of Dana Point Customer Service Survey

Q36 If you have any additional comments or thoughts on how we can better serve you, please enter them in the box below. Please do NOT leave specific requests about a project as these will not be seen or responded to quickly.

Answered: 16 Skipped: 73

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I left a message for the senior planner to call me so that I could set a time up to speak to her personally 5 days and no response	8/6/2026 5:16 PM
2	everyone I encounter from City of Dana Point was very helpful. I appreciated them looking out for the construction of my new home.	8/6/2026 4:36 PM
3	The Permit process took too long.	8/6/2026 12:47 PM
4	The outside plan checkers are not very good.	8/6/2026 10:04 AM
5	Most of the communication with the City of Dana Point was done by SolarMax. We had two Inspectors come, both very professional, friendly & fast.	8/6/2026 9:49 AM
6	NONE	8/6/2026 9:45 AM
7	Wish the requirement that prevented my final, would have been required and noted on plan approval months ago, now it is a big deal to fix. Putting in a vent along the beam, should have been required at the beginning of my project.	8/6/2026 9:32 AM
8	Very bad service, whomever answered, they said we aren't sitting here eating Bon-Bons, very rude and unprofessional	8/6/2026 9:18 AM
9	Many electronic review comments do not apply to the project at hand. Took many frustrating application revisions to resolve non applicable issues. In the past, applicant had the ability to have a face to face to discuss & better understand comments and provide needed information in one resubmission, not multiple revisions. Go back to previous application & plan review process, more efficient and personable.	8/5/2026 9:14 PM
10	City of Dana Point permits team is WONDERFUL! Thank you for your outstanding service to our community!	8/4/2026 2:54 PM
11	there seemed to be a lot of turnover in the city planning/building dept over the last 12 months, which created a lot of confusion who was accountable for what. It woudl be very helfpul for not only contractors but homeowners to know who to contact for what and how to reach each person and what expectations there should be when to receive an answer. Our experience was once anything was needed from the City of Dana Point it was a black hole and very frustrating.	8/3/2026 1:55 PM
12	rECEPTIONIST AND ALL EMPLOYEES MUST RESPOND TO PHONE CALLS OR LV. VOICEMAILS/TEXTS IMMEDIATELY.	8/3/2026 12:42 PM
13	N/A	8/3/2026 9:42 AM
14	Once a correction is submitted, it would be helpful if I could track the review in the Etrak portal	8/3/2026 9:30 AM
15	The City needs to be able to review and approve small and simple projects quickly, and not include and review small projects as if they are large projects, as a lot of the variables and requirements do not apply. Such process and requirements are an administrative nightmare and waste tremendous amount of time both for the City and for the homeowners.	8/3/2026 9:27 AM
16	Nicolo D'Amico is incredibly helpful and courteous and is great.	8/3/2026 9:25 AM

AUGUST 2026 COMMENTS

City of Dana Point Customer Service Survey

Q36 If you have any additional comments or thoughts on how we can better serve you, please enter them in the box below. Please do NOT leave specific requests about a project as these will not be seen or responded to quickly.

Answered: 15 Skipped: 52

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I was so impressed with how kind and professional everyone was at the DP city in planning and at the front office. Nick was exceptional and so was the intern. I'm used to going to Laguna Beach and that feels like tge DMV. This was an amazing experience and I can't say enough positive things about my experience ☺️	9/7/2026 10:44 AM
2	More timely and prompt processing of relatively simple and uncomplicated application	9/4/2026 12:27 PM
3	Filed an HVAC replacement mechanical permit. Permit was handled by a 3rd party contractor and energy compliance company. City staff did not seem to understand the process and how the filing, permitting and inspection process worked.	9/4/2026 8:06 AM
4	Gentleman at counter was very helpful with the permitting process	9/3/2026 8:51 PM
5	Denibee, is very helpful with directions and assistance with all the Digital details requied	9/3/2026 7:31 PM
6	Window contractor had a very difficult time submitting and resubmitting plans online. He had to go in person several times.	9/3/2026 4:15 PM
7	Needs to improve communication. I had to be checking actively online portal to make sure nothing is pending/creating permit process to further delay. Example there were outstanding fees on my part and I was not notified of this in neither email or phone call. I applied for a permit in June it is now September and I still have not received permit issuance. Emails bounce back when I attempt to contact city techs - and I am unable to find the best call back number to communicate with them or their department.	9/2/2026 11:04 AM
8	Need a better online program for submittal. Ive worked with other cities and they all are much better.	9/1/2026 8:50 PM
9	Nico was extremely polite, very helpful and a joy to work with.	9/1/2026 5:18 PM
10	one of the best visits to a planning office ever	9/1/2026 5:02 PM
11	Everybody was helpful, pleasant, professional.	9/1/2026 4:54 PM
12	the trakit website was dificult to maneuver. The submitted documents and the correction documents weren't labeled well and it was clear which was which. No notifications were sent either.	9/1/2026 3:47 PM
13	Just great	9/1/2026 3:39 PM
14	You punish honesty	9/1/2026 3:29 PM
15	I called the building department staff for help locating an application document and have not received a reply in over a month. I called planning department staff, and have had a few conversations, but response times take multiple dayes.	9/1/2026 3:23 PM

SEPTEMBER 2026 COMMENTS

City of Dana Point Customer Service Survey

Q36 If you have any additional comments or thoughts on how we can better serve you, please enter them in the box below. Please do NOT leave specific requests about a project as these will not be seen or responded to quickly.

Answered: 21 Skipped: 78

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	No comments	10/6/2026 6:04 AM
2	I don't like the on line permit process. It's much easier to do in person.	10/5/2026 5:14 PM
3	We were very satisfied dealing with the city of Dana Point	10/5/2026 11:40 AM
4	You team has always been great to work with	10/5/2026 11:35 AM
5	Did not know in advance when to expect the inspector (which may have been the fault of the contractor who pulled the permit).	10/5/2026 11:33 AM
6	The people I dealt with were very accommodating, kind and great to work with	10/5/2026 11:31 AM
7	this was a 1 1/2 complete rebuild and in general I have been very satisfied with everyone I have been in contact with The inspectors are thorough but fair which is the way they should be. The early process was a bit difficult and time consuming but once the permits were issued it has been a pretty straight forward process. It would be helpful if we as contractors could choose an am or pm inspection but on the plus side is that we generally know by 5pm the day before what the time will be for inspection.I am somewhat old fashion abut using the counter more then everything being electron but understand thats the way things are these days. I believe that adds extra time to the approval process or and changes. Many of the items I had to deal with in the beginng of this job should have been handled by the architect but I tried to do it to speed up the process. All in all it was good working with the people of the city of DP.Everyone was helpful and great . the process is the process..Thank You.	10/5/2026 11:24 AM
8	My contractor did the permit application. I had no direct involvement, thus I have no personal knowledge of the process.	10/5/2026 11:15 AM
9	Dean Brady was a pleasure to work with. He made the whole process very easy.	10/5/2026 11:12 AM
10	just process took about a week to get an answer	10/5/2026 11:11 AM
11	While the city processes for permit application are streamlined, the time taken to process a permit are inordinately high. City needs to constantly review its partner (outsourced) engg./architect firms for competent and experienced staff as that seems to be weak link in the city's turnaround of permit applications.	10/2/2026 4:28 PM
12	Donna, Niccolo etc all have been great to work with	10/1/2026 7:07 PM
13	none	10/1/2026 6:03 PM
14	You should give Eve a raise. She is AMAZING. Super helpful, AI will never replace people like her m!	10/1/2026 5:49 PM
15	online forms were hard to find - still dont know what the basic building plans submittal form is or where to find it in trackit. also when i resubmitted no one emailed to let me know the incorrect filing was voided.	10/1/2026 4:52 PM
16	Problem still continues. Dealt with public works department.	10/1/2026 2:22 PM
17	I did receive help when I asked. The response was completely courteous	10/1/2026 12:10 PM

City of Dana Point Customer Service Survey

18	Nichole Squirrel continues to go above and beyond the call of duty to help out my construction project. Her knowledge and willingness to assist and bring things across the finish line is unsurpassed.	10/1/2026 12:06 PM
19	Every employee I met when I visited was very nice and helpful. Simple "hellos" and "good mornings" went a long way and they did not fall short of this. Good attitudes and characters. Very respectable people. Good work Dana Point!	10/1/2026 11:58 AM
20	This survey is asking the wrong questions. It focuses on the tone of conversations with staff. The online portal is not helpful in explaining submittal requirements, providing links to or explanations about additional forms and requirements, etc. and the online application process puts an excessive burden of time and paperwork on the applicant.	10/1/2026 11:45 AM
21	We liked the attention to detail and courteous follow up with comments and useful direction.	10/1/2026 11:32 AM

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT C: Draft New Home Building Guide

CITY OF DANA POINT

Community Development Department

Building a New Home in Dana Point

YOUR GUIDE FROM PLANNING TO COMPLETION

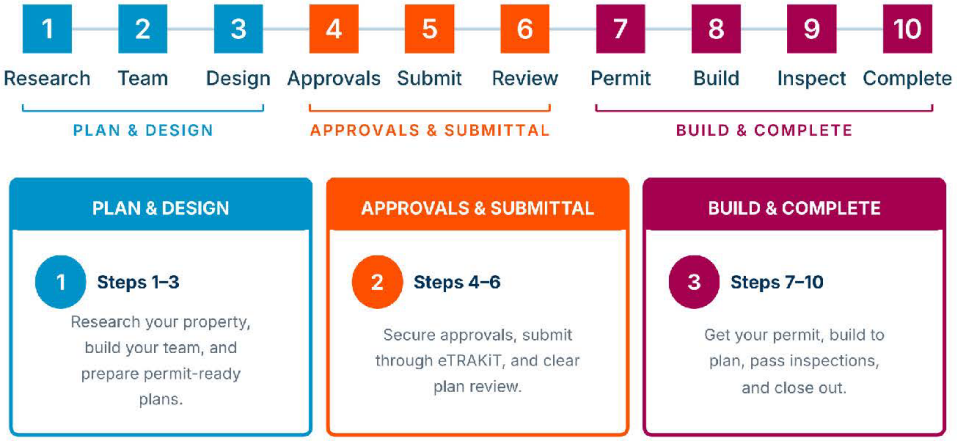


THE PROCESS AT A GLANCE

Building a New Home in 10 Steps

Building a new home is an exciting journey. The City of Dana Point is here to help you understand the process, prepare your project, and navigate the required permits and inspections.

This guide walks you through the City's process from planning to completion, so you know what to expect and how to keep your project moving.



Every project is unique. This guide cannot address every scenario, but it should help you get started and know what to expect. You can always visit us at City Hall with questions about your project.

1

STEP 1 · PLAN & DESIGN

Research Your Property

Bit.ly/DP_Map

Before you design, learn what your property allows. Look it up on the City's interactive Community Map for its zoning, parcel number, and legal description.

Gather this early

- Zoning and development standards
- Required setbacks and height limits
- Coastal Zone requirements
- Hillside, geotechnical, and floodplain conditions
- Grading and drainage
- Easements and property restrictions
- Existing utilities and site conditions

You may coordinate with

- Planning, for the General Plan and Zoning Code
- Building & Safety, for plan review and inspections
- Public Works & Engineering, for grading and drainage
- City Clerk, for existing entitlements or property records
- Partner agencies such as OCFA and utility providers

START EARLY

Contact the City early in planning. Identifying requirements before you finish your plans reduces delays. Staff and agency contacts are at the back of this guide.

2

STEP 2 · PLAN & DESIGN

Assemble Your Project Team

Most new-home projects involve several licensed professionals. Build the right team for your project's scope.

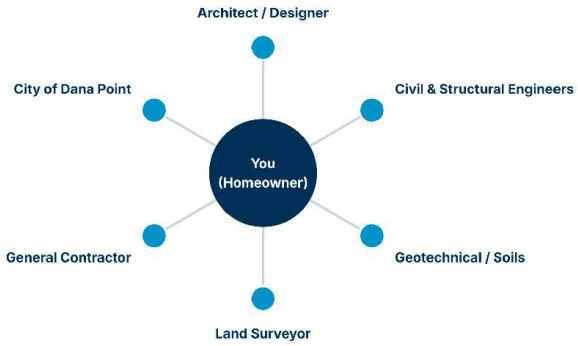
Your team may include

- Architect or design professional
- Civil and structural engineers
- Geotechnical or soils professional
- Landscape architect and surveyor
- General contractor and specialty trades

Your team can help you

- Understand building requirements
- Coordinate technical information
- Respond to plan review comments
- Manage construction

Your Project Team



HOMEOWNER TIP

Interview a few candidates and ask whether they have worked in Dana Point. Before hiring, agree on responsibilities, fees, schedule, and who will communicate with the City.

3

STEP 3 · PLAN & DESIGN

Design Your Home

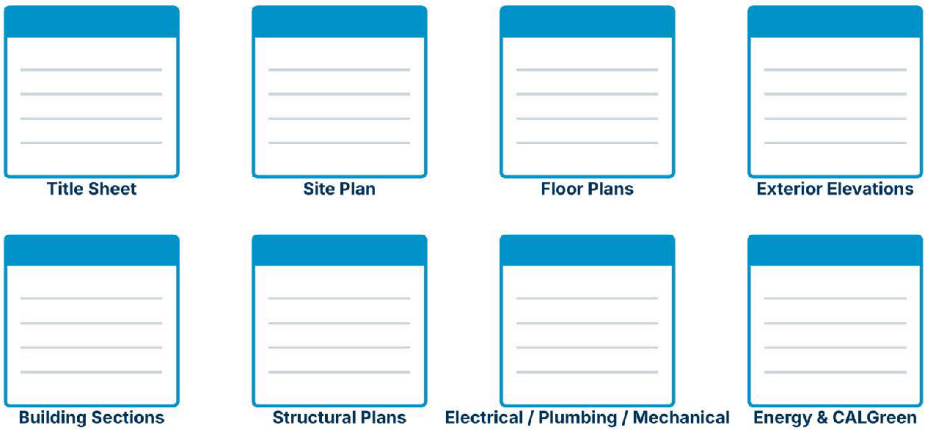
Give your team your vision, and have your designer consult a City Planner so the concept meets zoning and development standards. Your construction plans should clearly show what you propose to build.

Construction documents ("Plans") may include

- Title sheet, site plan, floor plans, and exterior elevations
- Building sections and foundation plans
- Structural plans and calculations
- Electrical, plumbing, and mechanical plans
- Energy documents and CALGreen checklist
- Drainage plans
- Soils or geology reports, when required

The City's Building & Safety Division reviews the building, structural, life-safety, energy, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical components of your project.

What's in a Complete Set of Plans



4

STEP 4 · APPROVALS & SUBMITTAL

Complete Required Approvals

If your project meets all zoning standards, it proceeds straight to building plan check. If you are requesting exceptions, such as added wall height or reduced setbacks, or your project is in the Coastal zone, you will need an entitlement first.

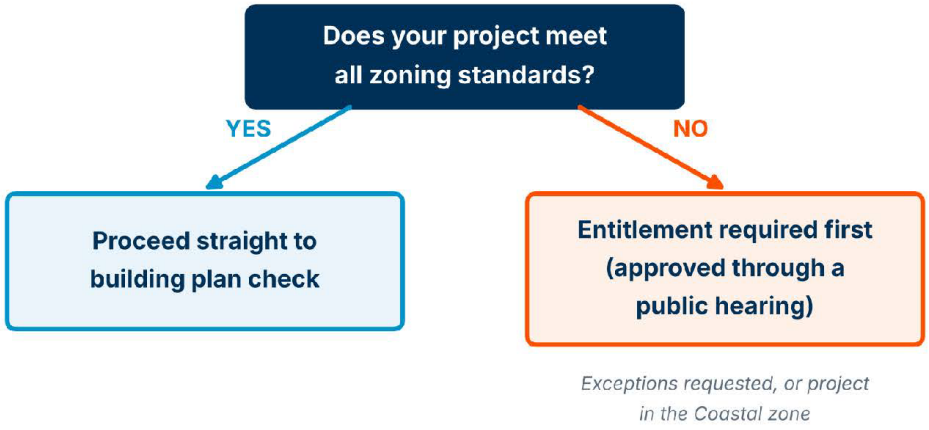
Your project may need

- Planning review
- Public Works & Engineering review
- Grading or drainage review
- Coastal-related or discretionary approvals
- OCFA fire protection review
- Utility approvals and encroachment permits
- Other agency approvals

WHAT IS A PLANNING ENTITLEMENT?

A Planning entitlement is a permit approved through a public hearing process. The Planning Division provides a separate checklist outlining requirements for these permit types.

Do I need an entitlement?



5

STEP 5 · APPROVALS & SUBMITTAL

Submit Your Plans for Review

Building permit applications and plans are submitted electronically through the City's eTRAKiT Permit Portal. Large or complex projects may need coordination before formal submittal.

Bit.ly/DPeTRAKIT

BEFORE YOU SUBMIT, MAKE SURE

- ☐ Your application is complete
- ☐ Your plans are complete and coordinated
- ☐ Required technical documents, signatures, and stamps are included
- ☐ Other required approvals have been addressed
- ☐ Applicable fees have been identified

Complete plans save time. Review is faster when plans are complete, consistent, and include all supporting documents. Incomplete or conflicting information can add review cycles.

6

STEP 6 · APPROVALS & SUBMITTAL

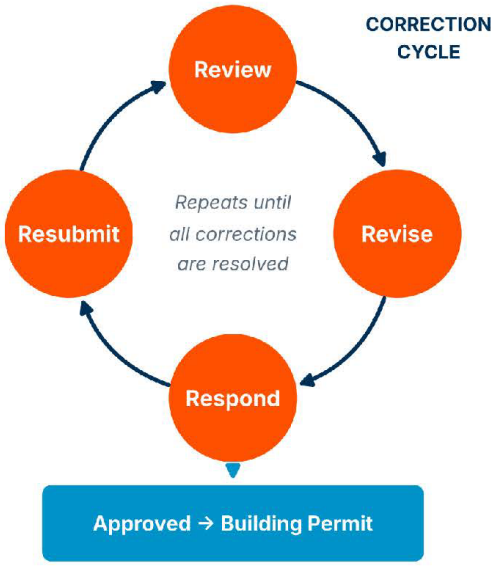
Plan Review and Corrections

After a short intake review, typically one to two business days, your plans are routed to the right reviewers, who return comments or corrections. The time needed varies with the scope and complexity of your project.

If corrections are identified

1. **Review** Read all comments carefully.
2. **Revise** Work with your design professionals to make the changes.
3. **Respond** Update your plans and respond to each comment.
4. **Resubmit** Submit the revised set for another review.

This continues until all required corrections are resolved.



KEEP IT COORDINATED

A change to one part of your project can affect other plans. Make sure every revised document stays coordinated and cloud your changes on resubmittal to show updates.

7

STEP 7 · BUILD & COMPLETE

Obtain Your Building Permit

Once plans are approved and all required conditions have been satisfied:

- Pay applicable fees
- Complete remaining permit requirements
- Obtain your approved permit documents and plans



DO NOT BEGIN CONSTRUCTION UNTIL YOUR PERMITS ARE ISSUED

Building without required permits may result in enforcement action, including a Stop Work notice.

8

STEP 8 · BUILD & COMPLETE

Begin Construction

Before construction begins, make sure you understand:

- Your approved plans and scope of work
- Required inspections
- Construction hours
- Site safety and water quality requirements
- Your contractor's and design professionals' responsibilities
- How proposed changes will be handled

CONSTRUCTION HOURS

Monday – Saturday, 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

No work on Sundays or Federal Holidays. Keep a copy of your approved plans and permit on site. Verify hours against the current Municipal Code.

If your plans change, your Plans must change. Submit a revision with updated construction documents through eTRAKiT.

9

STEP 9 · BUILD & COMPLETE

Schedule Inspections

Inspections verify that work matches the approved plans. Schedule before any work is covered or concealed. The permit holder, contractor, or authorized party requests inspections.

Bit.ly/DPInspections

SelecTXT (888) 308-3015

(949) 248-3590

Inspection Sequence

As construction progresses ↓

1. Foundation & Footing
2. Underground / Reinforcing Steel
3. Framing
4. Rough Electrical, Plumbing & Mechanical
5. Insulation
6. Drywall
7. Final Inspections

SCHEDULING IS EASY

- Cancellations after 4:00 PM for the next day and same-day cancellations are not allowed through SelecTXT, instead call (949) 248-3564
- Optional comments (e.g., gate code or AM/PM preference) may be included
- The City offers two-hour inspection window so you can plan your day

Depending on your project, inspections may include

- Foundation and footing
- Setback and height certifications
- Reinforcing steel and underground utilities
- Framing
- Electrical, plumbing, and mechanical
- Insulation and drywall
- Exterior work and final inspections

10

STEP 10 · BUILD & COMPLETE

Complete Your Project

Before your project is complete, all required inspections and approvals must be finalized.

Your final checklist may include

- ☐ Building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical final inspections
- ☐ Required fire or life-safety approvals
- ☐ Required site work completed
- ☐ Permit conditions satisfied
- ☐ Coastal or discretionary conditions satisfied, if applicable
- ☐ All final approvals obtained (Planning, Public Works & Engineering, OCFA, utility providers)

Once all required work and inspections are complete, your project can close out through the City's final approval process.



QUICK REFERENCE

Your Project Checklist

Before design

- ☐ Research property requirements
- ☐ Identify zoning and development standards
- ☐ Determine whether approvals are required
- ☐ Assemble your project team

During design

- ☐ Prepare complete construction documents
- ☐ Coordinate architectural and engineering plans
- ☐ Obtain required technical reports

Before construction

- ☐ Submit plans for review
- ☐ Resolve plan review comments
- ☐ Obtain required approvals and pay fees
- ☐ Obtain your building permit

During construction & completion

- ☐ Follow the approved plans
- ☐ Schedule required inspections
- ☐ Obtain approval before significant changes
- ☐ Complete all final inspections and approvals

CONTACTS

We're Here to Help

Building a new home is a major investment. Planning ahead, submitting complete information, and keeping in touch with the City and your team makes the process smoother.

Building & Planning Services: (949) 248-3564

Public Works & Engineering: (949) 248-3554

Inspection Scheduling: (949) 248-3590

Inspections by text (SelecTXT): (888) 308-3015

Permit center hours

Lobby Hours	Monday–Thursday: 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday: 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Permit Counter Walk-In Hours	Monday–Friday: 8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
Over-the-Counter Plan Review	Tuesday and Thursday: 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

Partner agencies

- Orange County Fire Authority: (714) 573-6108
- San Diego Gas & Electric: (800) 411-7343
- SoCalGas: (877) 238-0092
- South Coast Water District: (949) 499-4555
- Moulton Niguel Water District: (949) 831-2500

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This guide provides general information and is not a substitute for the Dana Point Municipal Code, the California Building Standards Code, approved plans, permit conditions, or other applicable laws. Requirements may change and project-specific requirements may apply. Contact the City before beginning work to confirm current requirements.

