



# City of Monterey Park

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## **BUILDING ADDRESS**

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A building address serves multiple purposes. It helps the postmasters deliver the mail and paramedics quickly locate a building. Most people may not know that the address is also the means with which the building departments and the assessor's office keep track of the building records. Search of building records would be impossible if we do not maintain the address properly.

### **Address as the Building ID**

State Laws require the city to maintain permit records of a building for the lifetime of the building. To be able to link a building's permit information to the building, all the permits related to a building must be associated with an ID that is unique to that building. Because the building address is used as the building ID for the purpose of record keeping, each building must have one and only one building address.

When a building permit is issued for a new building, an address must first be assigned for the proposed building so that the building permit and subsequent alteration permits can be linked to the building through the address.

Imagine how confusing it would be if some people have multiple Social Security Numbers, or some parcels have multiple Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN). Or imagine how difficult it would be for someone to look up the building records if the building's address has been changed without being reflected on the previous permits. In the real life, however, these situations do happen. Building owners sometimes replace an address with another preferred street number or add more addresses to a multi-tenant building, and do so without going through the proper procedure. Building and business owners may be unaware that these invalid addresses do create serious problems for maintenance of permit records.

### **Change of Address**

Depending on the availability of street numbers for a given location, the building owner may apply for a change of address. The application should be submitted to the City Engineer. The application fee is \$500 for each address. If the application is approved, the City Engineer will notify about a dozen agencies that maintain address records for certain purposes. New addresses must strictly adhere to the "one building, one address" rule. Applications to add an extra address to a building cannot be entertained.

## **Building with Multiple Tenants**

All tenants in a building share the same building address (street number), but should differentiate from one another by “suite” or “unit” numbers. While the building address is assigned and controlled by the City, the suite or unit numbers are generally up to the building owner. They can be either alphabetical or numerical. The owner, however, is required to file a copy of the “Tenant Key Plan” with the Building & Safety, showing the division of leasable areas and the floor area and suite or unit number of each tenant space.

A frequently asked question is why can't a building have multiple street addresses so that each tenant can have its own street number instead of a suite number? The reason is obvious if we understand the concept of using the address as a building's ID.

Tenant spaces do get merged or split from time to time. If each tenant has a street number, eventually no one can keep track of how many addresses a building might have had and what address was used for a particular part of the building at certain point in time. It would be virtually impossible to keep a usable permit record for a building.

Whenever the tenant spaces are adjusted, it is important that the building owner provide the Building & Safety an updated Tenant Key Plan. A Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) will not be issued to a tenant if the information in the C of O application conflicts with the Tenant Key Plan that the City has on file.

The “one building, one address” rule also helps us understand whether a block of structure consists of one building or multiple buildings without an in-depth investigation. Not all the attached structures are one building. For example, many buildings in downtown area are shoulder to shoulder without gaps between them. They might be structurally independent and considered separate buildings for the purpose of record keeping even though they are attached together. The building block with Rite-Aid in South Atlantic Square, as another example, is composed of three separate buildings attached to one another and looks like one building. Other than going through the original building plans, the addresses are the best clue for us to know in this case that there are three independent buildings there and that if one of them is demolished the other two may still remain.

Alteration permits for a multi-tenant building are issued under two types of addresses, depending on the scope of work. If the work is strictly within a particular tenant space, the permit will be issued with the tenant's address with a suite number. If the alteration affects the entire building in general (sometimes referred to as the “building shell”), the permit would be issued under the building address without suite numbers.

## **Removal of an Address**

An existing address can only be removed under two circumstances: by change of address or by demolition of the building. When either incidence occurs, the existing address is voided and may be reassigned to another building. A new building, however, does not have to use the same address as the previous building on the same lot.

In the case of address change, all records of the building will be detached from the previous address, and be attached to the new address. When the building is demolished, its address

along with its permit records is purged. Keeping the records of a building that no longer exists may be of historical interests, but could create confusion when the address is reassigned to a new building. For that reason, the laws only require the City to maintain the permit records for the lifetime of the building.

### **Invalid Addresses**

Before the City's permit process was computerized, verifying the validity of an address was beyond the capacity of our staffing level. Permits were issued practically with whatever addresses that were provided by the applicant.

If the applicant uses an invalid address, permits issued under that address would probably never be associated with the correct address of the building. If no prior permit records were found under that false address, City staff can only assume that the City has lost the original permit records of the building, and a new folder would be set-up to keep permit records under that new address.

Validating an address is now automatic and instantaneous. Our Accela PermitsPlus system, which is the most widely used permit system in California, retains a list of valid addresses in its database. It will prompt for verification when a permit is attempted for an invalid address.

If an invalid address involves only one street number for a building, the problem can be easily resolved by a change of address application. The original address can be deleted from the database and the new one added to it. Businesses thereby can retain their current addresses.

The situation of one building with multi-addresses, however, has no other solutions but to correct the building address. The PermitsPlus system, like all other permit systems, is rightfully programmed not to have the capacity of issuing a permit under multi-addresses. Permit application for a multi-address building, therefore by default is a mandatory trigger for address correction. It cannot be circumvented due to the technical limitation.

Understanding that it is a great inconvenience for a business to change the address that it has been using, our policy is not to invoke an address change unless it is absolutely necessary. We would continue to go by the customers' address for new certificates of occupancy and business licenses, even if it is an invalid address. The only trigger for an address correction under our current policy is when a permit is needed, as discussed above.

Even with this passive approach in address correction, slowly but surely we can clean up the invalid addresses. Understanding the reasons and necessity of an address change can help the building and business owners ease some agony caused by the inconvenience. Businesses that are affected by an address change may want to file an address forwarding with the post office, so that during the 6-month forwarding period they can continue to use the stationary that has been printed.