

From: [Serina Calhoun](#)
To: [Crayton, Monique \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Fielder, Jackie \(BOS\)](#); [Sauter, Danny \(BOS\)](#); [Sherrill, Stephen \(BOS\)](#); [Birnbach, Kerry \(ECN\)](#)
Subject: Streamlining ADA permit reviews
Date: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 3:03:31 PM

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Good afternoon Supervisors,

I'm writing today regarding an agenda item on your upcoming Government Audit and Oversight committee meeting - specifically item 4; 260072 Streamlining permit reviews for ADA requirements.

As part of the Accessible Business Entry Program (ABE), my team processed submittals for hundreds of entries across the city. Unfortunately, we began to see increasing challenges with DPW's interpretations of the code. They began to require us to regrade the sidewalk outside of the businesses to provide a "level" landing at the power-door operator buttons. DBI did not require this, but DPW was intractable in their interpretation of the code.

To avoid this issue for all small business owners proceeding with renovations and tenant improvements in the future, I'd like to request an amendment to the DA-04 and DA-05 that specifies the 30"x48" clear floor area required for the approach to the power door operator may be exempted from the requirements of a level landing where the clear floor area is located on the public right of way with a sidewalk slope in excess of 2% and a cross slope in excess of 2%.

I'm happy to speak with any of you regarding the former ABE program and the challenges we faced in obtaining approvals. Below you'll see an email I sent to several Supervisors in 2025 when Supervisor Mandelman proposed to repeal the program.

All the best,

Serina Calhoun
Principal Architect
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415-558-9843

Ask me about how to receive alerts anytime a violation is filed on your property. Or learn more at: [Property Atlas](#)

From: Serina Calhoun <serina@sync-arch.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 9:34 AM
To: MelgarStaff@sfgov.org <MelgarStaff@sfgov.org>; MahmoodStaff@sfgov.org

<MahmoodStaff@sfgov.org>; ChenStaff@sfgov.org <ChenStaff@sfgov.org>; John.Carroll@sfgov.org <John.Carroll@sfgov.org>

Cc: Kevin Riley <kriley82@gmail.com>; Christopher Roach <chris@studiovara.com>

Subject: Re: Opposition to Ordinance

Good morning Supervisors,

I'm emailing you today in strong support for Supervisor Mandelman's proposed Ordinance 240982. I recently learned this is scheduled to be heard at Land Use and Transportation on Monday.

My name is Serina Calhoun. I'm a local architect and I've been practicing in the Bay Area for 24 years. In the past 5 years, we have helped our clients received approvals for hundreds of business entries across the city. Although we have benefited from the work this program created, I'm writing to you today to strongly support repeal of the Program. As an architect, I understand the goal of making our city more accessible and I support those efforts. But achieving compliance is now requiring architectural services, building permits, civil engineering, and DPW permits. The costs for making these small businesses accessible is creeping up over \$30,000. That's a bitter pill to swallow for small businesses with less than 1,000 sf of space.

The ABE program was enacted without adequate research and without adequate notice to businesses. In fact, DBI doesn't even have an accurate list of commercial entry addresses. I filed many checklists for active businesses only to be told by DBI that, the address didn't exist. Legacy businesses like the Irish Bank are a good example of this oversight. Getting DBI to update their records to include legitimate addresses cost some of my clients thousands of dollars in city fees and we had to produce countless documents to "prove" the entry existed, including historic fire insurance maps. On the flipside, many of my clients received violation notices for their residential entrances, because again – the city didn't have an accurate list of which addresses were commercial vs. residential uses.

As a result, many small business owners remain completely ignorant of this program, even 7 years later. And who is supposed to be responsible? The property owner? Or the business owner? Most lease agreements between business owners and landlords place ADA compliance on the shoulders of the tenant, something this ordinance failed to understand.

More recently, installation of a simple power-door operator, has ballooned into a complete regrading of the sidewalk. In the last year, DPW began requiring that a level landing, with slopes no greater than 2% be provided at the exterior operators. In our city of hills, this is technically infeasible. Those sidewalk improvements have cost small businesses \$10,000-\$30,000 just for the sidewalk work. For my clients with a 680 sf hair salon, that kind of cost is untenable. For these buildings, all constructed prior to the implementation of the ADA code, forcing small businesses to regrade large portions of the public right of way at their own expense seems punitive.

DBI has an access appeals board that can hear some of these cases, but even after my 24 years of

practice, I still have no idea how to have a project heard by their group. There are no clear instructions about how to have a project brought before their board. Further, their findings are binding for DBI, but have no authority over DPW as a separate agency.

Although there is a \$10,000 grant for business owners to help offset the costs of the program, it has also been a failure. My office manager had to spend hours on the phone trying to get our application processed and, ultimately, the only way to obtain the funds was to register as a vendor for the city. How will the hair salons, nail salons, and corner stores obtain the funds when they don't qualify to be a city vendor? Because I didn't know I needed to pay my contractor prevailing wage, I didn't even qualify for the full amount for my own project.

This program has been a failure from the start. I urge you to support the repeal of the ordinance. I also strongly request that this group recommend DBI revise the DA-04 and DA-05 requirements for existing buildings and eliminate the requirement for level landings at sidewalk power door operators where the public right of way slope exceeds 2%. This interpretation of the code will continue to cripple small businesses in the future if this document is not revised when they bring in their tenant improvement projects.

I sincerely hope your committee can join me in supporting this legislation and repealing this poorly executed program.

All the best,

Serina Calhoun
Principal Architect
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