

Permitting in the Nation's Most Complex Market, California

How GreenLite is helping builders unlock faster, more predictable permits in California



800 Saved Days

Business days recovered across projects



28 Business Days

Business days, fastest submission to issuance permit



50+

Projects managed across industries

Intro

California is home to the nation's largest construction market, and some of its most unpredictable permitting timelines. In Los Angeles, commercial permits routinely take three to twelve months. Each round of corrections from a plan reviewer adds two to six weeks of waiting. In San Francisco, some commercial permit applications **sit in a queue for over a year** before first review.

The core problem is structural. California has hundreds of individual building departments, each with its own interpretation of the California Building Code, its own staffing challenges, and its own review timelines. Unlike states that have enacted Private Plan Review (PPR) laws allowing certified third-party reviewers to approve plans on behalf of municipalities, California has not passed statewide PPR legislation. Assembly Bill 2433, which would have created a streamlined third-party review pathway, died in committee in June 2024. While AB 2234 (signed 2022) set mandatory review time limits for certain residential projects, commercial and tenant improvement permits remain largely unconstrained. This has resulted in jurisdictions moving at their own pace, and **developers absorbing the cost of waiting.**

Adding to the challenge, California adopted the 2025 California Building Standards Code (Title 24), effective January 1, 2026, bringing updated energy, accessibility, and structural requirements that many design teams are still learning to navigate. Projects submitted without accounting for the new code requirements face immediate corrections, adding weeks to timelines that are already stretched.

GreenLite's Impact in California

GreenLite has taken a proactive approach to solving the root cause of permit delays: **plans aren't ready when they hit the building department.** Our pre-submission review process, led by our in-house team of licensed architects, engineers, and code professionals and supported by AI-assisted review tools, catches code compliance issues, missing documents, and jurisdiction-specific requirements before a

single page is submitted. In California's fragmented regulatory landscape, upstream precision is the difference between a permit in weeks and one that drags for months.

GreenLite's California workflow starts with a **Permit Roadmap**: a detailed, jurisdiction-specific guide that maps exactly what each AHJ requires for a given project type. Plan sets are then reviewed by our team of experts, supported by our internal review engine trained on thousands of real-world plan review comments, before submission. This process eliminates the correction cycles that define California permitting for unprepared applicants. The result is faster first-pass outcomes, fewer resubmittal cycles, and permit timelines that consistently beat market norms.

Across **50+ California projects** spanning banking, healthcare, retail, and restaurant verticals, GreenLite has demonstrated that proactive compliance is the most reliable path to a faster permit in California. From San Diego to San Francisco, Sacramento to the Inland Empire, we make sure your plans and designs meet the requirements before they reach the building department, compressing what would otherwise be months of back-and-forth into a controlled, predictable process.

800+

Business days recovered across projects

50+

Projects managed across jurisdictions and industries

28

Business days, fastest submission to issuance permit

Some of Our Projects

One of America's largest traditional banks

Locations: San Diego, Calexico, El Cajon, Lemon Grove, San Francisco, and additional Bay Area and Southern California branches — CA

Scope: Bank branch tenant improvements and interior alterations

One of America's largest traditional banks operates thousands of branch locations across the country and is running a refurbishment program that spans the full length of the state, each location in a different jurisdiction with its own submittal requirements and review culture.

California is one of the hardest permitting environments in the country for multi-site financial institutions. Commercial tenant improvement permits in Southern California typically take 12–20 weeks; in San Francisco, 16–24 weeks or longer.

Result: GreenLite's pre-submission plan review approach and jurisdiction-specific Permit Roadmaps target **8 weeks from submission to issuance per location**, turning what would be a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction guessing game into a repeatable, predictable process

National Bakery Franchise

Locations: Bakersfield, Livermore, Norco

A fast-growing bakery franchise accelerating its California footprint was running into retail TI permits that routinely drag past six months. Managing three simultaneous filings across different jurisdictions multiplied the scheduling risk, one delay in any market could stall the entire expansion.

Veterinary Emergency Facility

Locations: Palm Desert, Torrance, Calabasas

Veterinary emergency facilities don't follow a standard retail permitting path. Medical-use classifications, stricter life-safety requirements, and heightened AHJ scrutiny add complexity that derails timelines when permit teams don't understand the landscape. In California, medical-use tenant improvements **typically take 100–170+ business days**.

Result: In Palm Desert, GreenLite navigated from kickoff to permit issuance in 73 business days, with the building department completing plan check in just **57 business days and zero resubmissions required**.

Commercial Energy Infrastructure

Locations: Fremont (×2), Pomona, Tustin (×3), Fresno (×2)

A commercial energy company deploying infrastructure across California's most demanding permit markets, the Central Valley, the Bay Area, the Inland Empire, faced

Result: GreenLite managed all three filings simultaneously, handling resubmissions where required and turning corrections fast enough to keep every location on schedule. The average submission-to-issuance timeline across Bakersfield, Livermore, and Norco was **100 business days, compared to the 180+ day California baseline.** All three permits issued.

commercial/industrial permit timelines of 40+ weeks.

Six simultaneous filings across jurisdictions each operating on their own timelines, fee structures, and documentation requirements left no room for a reactive approach.

Result: GreenLite served as the company's dedicated California permit team, managing all six filings in parallel. In Fremont, plan check completed in just **29 business days**, and the full project moved from kickoff to permit

California won't get easier anytime soon. The structural conditions that make permitting unpredictable, like a fragmented jurisdiction authority, no statewide PPR pathway, and a newly adopted code cycle that many design teams are still catching up to, are the variables that make it that much harder to build in this state than almost anywhere else. National operators who wait for the regulatory environment to change before solving their California permit problem will keep absorbing the cost of waiting.

The projects that move fast in California are the ones that arrive at the building department fully prepared. In California, that means knowing what the City of Torrance requires versus what Palm Desert requires versus what Fremont requires, and knowing it before you submit, not after you receive your first correction letter. It means understanding whether a jurisdiction has a six-week first-review cycle or one that takes six months. Every resubmission adds time and lost revenue to your timeline.

GreenLite's team of experts, powered by AI-assisted plan review, catches the issues that trigger correction cycles before a single page hits a building department. Our jurisdiction-specific Permit Roadmaps map the exact submittal requirements, fee structures, and review culture for each AHJ before work begins. And our team of permitting experts handles the jurisdictional relationships, correction responses, and resubmittal strategy that keep projects moving when the process gets complicated.

Across GreenLite's California portfolio, clients have recovered an estimated **4 to 8+ weeks per permit compared to California's commercial TI baseline of 16–26 weeks.** Our fastest permit closed in 28 business days from submission to issuance. Across a 50+ project California portfolio spanning retail, healthcare, banking, and energy, faster permitting compounds into weeks and months recovered, time that stays in the construction schedule instead of disappearing into a plan check queue.

For national operators managing multi-site California programs, this is the difference between a rollout that hits its schedule and one that misses it by a quarter. GreenLite's California portfolio is growing.

The permit track doesn't have to be the reason your California expansion stalls.

California Project Team



Ally Cugini

Project Manager

Ally joined GreenLite in 2024 as a Permit Coordinator and was promoted to Project Manager in August 2025, reflecting her deep technical expertise and strong execution across complex projects.

Before joining GreenLite, Ally worked at Tesla in permitting and energy advisory roles, where she developed a strong command of regulatory processes and stakeholder coordination.

At GreenLite, she has led projects across multiple Tennessee jurisdictions, securing approvals through private provider plan review with no private inspections required, achieving first-cycle approvals or resolving all comments in a single review. Her work has also generated lasting value for the broader team, including documented insights on grease discharge water and sewer requirements, strong working relationships with city officials, and consistently clean health and building approvals in the City of Nashville.



Amanda Cole

Review Lead

Amanda is a Registered Architect and Review Lead at GreenLite, where she leads a national team of code experts reviewing permit drawings for compliance across a wide range of project types. She serves as the critical link between reviewers, design teams, and jurisdictions - translating complex code requirements into clear, actionable feedback that helps clients resolve comments faster and move permits forward without delays.

What sets Amanda apart is the depth of real-world design experience she brings to every review. With over 14 years in the field, she has worked on both sides of the table - as a designer, project architect, and project manager on commercial, residential, mixed-use, and historic preservation projects across New York City and beyond. At HLW, she spent five years advancing from Associate to Senior Associate, leading documentation and construction administration on complex urban projects. At Moody Nolan, she continued to

build her expertise as a Project Architect on large-scale work in New York.



Taylor Kirkland

Permit Coordinator

Taylor joined GreenLite in 2025 and currently serves as a Permit Coordinator. Prior to joining GreenLite, she worked as a Permit Project Manager across the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia regions. In this role, she specialized in a wide range of commercial projects, including multi-family apartments, college facilities, restaurants, single-family homes, and hospitals.

At GreenLite, Taylor collaborates closely with Project Managers on projects across various California jurisdictions, including Inglewood, Calabasas, and Los Angeles. She has played a key role in navigating strict clearance requirements and expediting permit approvals by building strong relationships with building departments and associated agencies.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take to get a commercial building permit in California?

Commercial building permit timelines in California vary widely by jurisdiction and project type. In Los Angeles, commercial permits routinely take 3 to 6 months. In San Francisco, some applications wait more than a year before first review. Statewide, the average commercial tenant improvement permit takes 16 to 26 weeks. California has not passed statewide Private Plan Review legislation, which means every project moves through the municipal queue.

Why are commercial permits so slow in California?

California's permitting system is fragmented across hundreds of independent building departments, each with its own staffing levels, code interpretations, and review timelines. There is no statewide mandate for commercial permit review speeds – AB 2234 (2022) set limits only for certain residential projects. When plan sets arrive with missing documentation or code compliance issues, each correction cycle adds 2 to 6 weeks of additional wait time. The result is a system where unprepared applicants absorb months of avoidable delay.

What is California Title 24 and how does it affect commercial permits?

Title 24 refers to the California Building Standards Code, which was updated in 2025 and took effect January 1, 2026. The updated code includes revised energy efficiency, accessibility, and structural

requirements. Plans submitted without accounting for the new Title 24 provisions face immediate corrections, regardless of where they are in the queue. Design teams unfamiliar with the 2025 updates are among the most common sources of first-round correction letters in California right now.



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