

Public Works Code Article 15, Section 723.2 outlines the sub-sidewalk basement encroachment permit process and Public Works Order No. 169,271 establishes a policy on sub-sidewalk basement abatement procedures for curb ramp installation.



### San Francisco Public Works

#### Street-Use and Mapping

49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 300  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Phone: (628) 271-2000

### San Francisco Public Works

#### Permit Center

49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 200

**Processing Hours:** Please visit  
<https://sf.gov/location/permit-center>  
for operating hours of the Permit Center.

- Closed on official holidays



Contact 311 for service requests

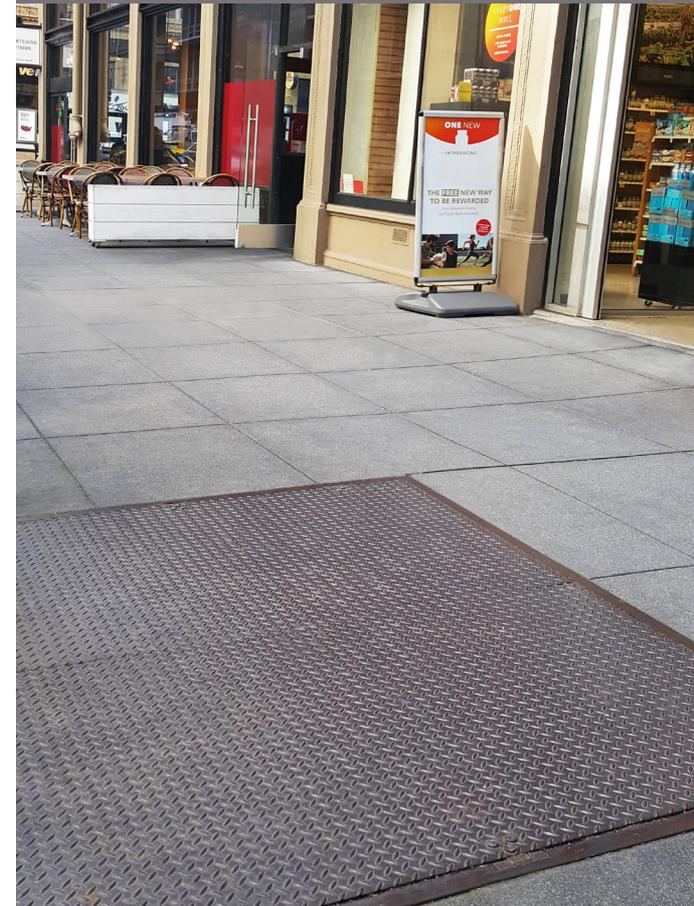


Printed on 30% post-consumer recycled stock

REVISION DATE: 08.05.2020

# Sub-Sidewalk Basement

Guidelines for permitting, abating and  
abandoning sub-sidewalk basements



[www.sfpublicworks.org](http://www.sfpublicworks.org)

# EXISTING SUB-SIDEWALK BASEMENT INDICATORS



WATERPROOFING



GLASS



ACCESS DOOR

## 1. WHAT IS A SUB-SIDEWALK BASEMENT?

**A.** A sub-sidewalk basement is any portion of a building's basement that may extend beyond the property line and under the sidewalk. In some instances, these basements extend beyond the curb and are actually under the street. These basements often provide delivery access to businesses.

**B.** Private property owners are granted the right, through San Francisco Public Works encroachment permits, to occupy public right of ways with sub-sidewalk basements.

**C.** Since the sub-sidewalk basement is in the public right of way, San Francisco Public Works Bureau of Street-Use and Mapping is responsible for regulation of sub-sidewalk basements. A basement, regardless of its location in relation to the property line, is part of the structure of a building and also falls under the purview of the Department of Building Inspection and is subject to all its building codes, regulations and requirements.

## 2. WHAT PERMITS ARE REQUIRED FOR A SUB-SIDEWALK BASEMENT?

**A.** A Minor Sidewalk Encroachment Permit is required for a sub-sidewalk basement in the right of way, regardless of any usage of this space by the property owner. In addition, any construction or improvement to a basement will require a permit from the Department of Building Inspection.

**B.** Article 15, Section 723.2 of Public Works Code outlines the sub-sidewalk basement encroachment permit process.

## 3. HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR SUB-SIDEWALK ENCROACHMENT PERMIT?

**A.** Contact San Francisco Public Works Bureau of Street-Use & Mapping:

49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 200  
San Francisco, CA 94103

### Processing Hours:

7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Closed on official holidays

## 4. WHAT IMPACT DO SUB-SIDEWALK BASEMENTS HAVE ON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS?

**A.** The presence of sub-sidewalk basements is one of the many challenges to the construction of public infrastructure, such as ADA-compliant curb ramps.

**B.** Public Works Order No. 169,270 establishes a policy on curb ramp installation priorities. If it is determined that a curb ramp needs to be constructed at a location and the location is over a sub-sidewalk basement, it is the responsibility of the private property owner to structurally alter the sub-sidewalk basement at no cost to the City, to allow for the construction of a curb ramp.

**C.** The procedure on how property owners are notified is outlined in Public Works Order No. 169,271.

**D.** Excavators must take care and review existing sidewalks for the presence of sub-sidewalk basements prior to the start of work, especially in Supervisorial Districts 3 and 6, as most of the sub-sidewalk basements are located in these districts.

## 5. WHAT IS THE CURRENT PUBLIC WORKS POLICY REGARDING SUB-SIDEWALK BASEMENTS?

**A.** Public Works requires all property owners to obtain a Minor Sidewalk Encroachment Permit for their sub-sidewalk basements.

**B.** Property owners of unpermitted sub-sidewalk basements will need to obtain a minor sidewalk encroachment permit. Alternatively, property owners can elect to backfill and abandon sub-sidewalk basements. Abandoning of a sub-sidewalk basement may require one or more permits from Public Works and/or the Department of Building Inspection, depending on the scope of work. Permits staff will work with the property owner on what is required.

**C.** Minor Sidewalk Encroachment Permits for sub-sidewalk basements are subject to an application fee and may be subject to an annual encroachment assessment fee per square foot (\$100 minimum).