

Legal Research Report: USCIS Form I-90 Application to Replace and Renew Permanent Resident Cards

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FINDINGS

COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL RESEARCH REPORT: USCIS FORM I-90 APPLICATION TO REPLACE AND RENEW PERMANENT RESIDENT CARDS

Executive Summary

Form I-90, the Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card, remains one of the most frequently filed immigration forms in the United States, particularly among lawful permanent residents whose green cards approach expiration or who have experienced loss, theft, or damage to their physical proof of status[1][4]. This comprehensive report addresses the complete spectrum of the I-90 process, including eligibility determination, filing procedures, current fee structures reflecting changes effective as of April 2024, the present processing timeline extending to 27.5 months for renewals and 23 months for replacements (with 80% processing benchmarks), and the automatic 36-month extension of card validity granted upon proper filing effective as of September 10, 2024[4][14][17]. The report emphasizes critical distinctions between lawful permanent residents and conditional permanent residents, the latter category of which must file Form I-751 (Petition to Remove Conditions on Residence) or Form I-829 rather than Form I-90[1][3][4]. For Northern California practitioners, this analysis incorporates local implementation considerations including USCIS processing office jurisdictions, San Francisco Asylum Office and immigration court procedures where relevant, and California state law implications affecting green card holders. The research identifies moderate to high risk levels associated with delays in current processing, significant practical considerations regarding biometrics appointments and evidence submission, and limited but meaningful opportunities for fee waivers for qualifying applicants. Strategic decision-making frameworks address whether to file online or by paper, timing considerations relative to travel plans, and remedial options available following application denials or rejections.

Eligibility Requirements and Foundational Distinctions

Who May File Form I-90 and Critical Exceptions

The threshold determination for Form I-90 eligibility rests on a binary classification under immigration law: whether an applicant holds lawful permanent resident status or conditional permanent resident status[1][4][47]. Lawful permanent residents, defined as individuals who have been granted permanent residence without time-limited conditions, are unambiguously eligible to file Form I-90 for purposes of renewal, replacement, or correction of their Permanent Resident Cards[1][4]. This eligibility encompasses permanent residents regardless of how they obtained their status, whether through immediate relative sponsorship under the immediate relative classification, employment-based immigration, diversity visa lottery, refugee or asylee status conversion, or any other statutory basis[4][47]. However, immigration law imposes a critical exception that directly affects a significant population of green card applicants: individuals issued conditional permanent resident cards, valid for only two years rather than ten years, are explicitly prohibited from using Form I-90[1][3][4][47]. Instead, conditional permanent residents must file Form I-751 to petition for removal of conditions on residence, or in the case of investors, Form I-829, Petition by Investor to Remove Conditions on Permanent Resident Status[1][3][4]. This distinction carries severe consequences: failure to file the appropriate removal of conditions petition within the 90-day window immediately preceding the

conditional green card's expiration results in automatic termination of permanent resident status and potential deportability[3][4].

The conditional residency designation applies most commonly to individuals who obtained permanent resident status through marriage to a United States citizen when the marriage had not been in existence for two years at the time of admission to permanent resident status[1][4][47]. Additionally, investors who obtained permanent resident status under the EB-5 immigrant investor category receive conditional cards valid for two years rather than ten[1][3][4]. Recipients of immediate relative status as spouses of U.S. citizens admitted conditionally, as well as children adopted abroad and admitted as immediate relatives when the adoption had occurred less than two years before admission, also fall within the conditional permanent resident classification[4]. Some permanent residents formerly classified as conditional residents who have had their conditions removed may, in limited circumstances, need to transition from a two-year card to a ten-year card, and these individuals may use Form I-90 once their conditional status has been terminated[1].

Beyond the conditional resident exception, Form I-90 is genuinely available to lawful permanent residents without regard to the basis of their immigration status. An individual who obtained permanent residence through an employer-sponsored petition after years in another nonimmigrant status, a refugee or asylee who adjusted status to permanent residence after one year, a diversity visa beneficiary, a Cuban/Haitian entrant, or any other category of lawful permanent resident may file Form I-90[4][47]. The form instructions and regulations contain no income requirements, moral character investigations, employment verification, or other eligibility gatekeeping mechanisms beyond the fundamental requirement of holding lawful permanent resident status[1][4].

Children and Age-Based Requirements

A specialized provision within the I-90 eligibility framework addresses Lawful Permanent Residents under the age of fourteen. When a child receives a green card before reaching fourteen years of age, USCIS designates that card as a "child green card" and does not require biometrics collection at that time[26][29]. However, under INA § 264(e) and implementing regulations, within 30 days of the child's fourteenth birthday, the young permanent resident must file Form I-90 and comply with fingerprinting, photographing, and signature requirements[1][26][29]. This submission is mandatory and constitutes an alien registration requirement, not merely an optional card replacement procedure[29]. The child must indicate on the Form I-90 whether the existing green card will expire before or after the individual reaches age sixteen[1]. Permanent residents who fail to comply with this requirement within 30 days of their fourteenth birthday face potential consequences including loss of status or impediments to future immigration benefits[1][26][29].

Valid Grounds for Form I-90 Filing and Card Validity Issues

Renewal of Expiring or Expired Cards

The most common ground for Form I-90 filing involves renewal of a Permanent Resident Card that has expired or is approaching expiration[1][4][47]. Green cards issued to lawful permanent residents (not conditional residents) maintain validity for ten years from the date of issuance[1][4][21]. Applicants may file Form I-90 beginning 180 days (six months) prior to the expiration date listed on the lower right corner of the card[1][4][47]. Filing earlier than six months before expiration may result in rejection and return of the application without consideration[21]. The expiration date is critical to calculate correctly, as USCIS systems are programmed to reject early applications, requiring resubmission and causing unnecessary delays[21].

Unlike some immigration forms where timeliness is measured by statutory deadlines, the I-90 renewal window is discretionary in the sense that permanent resident status itself does not expire when the physical card expires[1][4][47]. An individual remains a lawful permanent resident indefinitely unless they voluntarily abandon that status or are removed through deportation proceedings. However, from a practical standpoint, an expired green card creates substantial difficulties: employers struggle to verify employment authorization, TSA and airlines may deny boarding, and the individual loses documentary proof of status for routine interactions with government agencies[1][4]. For this reason, filing Form I-90 to renew an expired or expiring card is strongly recommended within six months of expiration[1][4].

Replacement of Lost, Stolen, Damaged, or Mutilated Cards

Permanent residents who lose, have stolen, or whose green card becomes damaged or mutilated should file Form I-90 for replacement immediately, rather than waiting for the card to approach natural expiration[1][4][7][47]. Unlike renewal applications subject to the six-month filing window, replacement applications for lost or damaged cards have no timing restrictions and should be filed as expeditiously as possible[1][4][7][47]. A "mutilated" card, in USCIS usage, refers to a card that has become unreadable or suffers physical deterioration rendering it unsuitable as identification, even if not completely destroyed[1][4][47]. Permanent residents who discover their cards are worn, faded, or otherwise impaired should file Form I-90 for replacement[1][4][47].

When a green card is lost or stolen, applicants should consider filing a police report, particularly if they intend to claim the card was stolen rather than lost; while not always mandatory, a police report creates documentary evidence supporting the replacement claim[1][10]. The distinction between lost and stolen is primarily evidentiary: if the applicant lost the card through their own carelessness, USCIS still processes the replacement, but if the applicant's story contains inconsistencies or implausibilities, USCIS officers may question credibility[1][4]. Individuals with criminal records should consult an immigration attorney before filing a replacement application, as the biometrics appointment triggered by I-90 filing may result in FBI background checks revealing prior arrests or convictions[1][10][46].

Correction of Card Information and USCIS Errors

Form I-90 serves as the vehicle for correcting information printed on a Permanent Resident Card when that information is inaccurate[1][4][19][47]. Common examples include misspelled names, incorrect dates of birth, wrong country of birth, or other biographical data errors[1][4][19][47]. The assignment of responsibility for the error-whether attributable to the applicant's original submission or to USCIS error in manufacturing the card-determines the filing fee obligation[1][4][19]. If USCIS made the error (for example, the applicant submitted a correct Form I-485 with correct name spelling, but USCIS printed the card with a misspelling), the applicant may file Form I-90 without paying the filing fee[1][4][19][22]. Conversely, if the applicant originally submitted their name spelled incorrectly and USCIS printed exactly what was submitted, the applicant must pay the standard filing fee to correct the error[1][4][19][22].

A critical tactical consideration emerges if an applicant discovers a misspelling immediately after their green card interview or very shortly thereafter: rapid notification to the interviewing USCIS officer may enable correction before the card is manufactured[19][22]. In one documented case, an applicant discovered a name misspelling at the interview itself, contacted USCIS during the three-month interim period before the card would normally be mailed, and successfully obtained correction without needing to file a separate I-90[19][22]. Once the card has been received and a substantial period has passed, filing Form I-90 becomes the only remedy[1][4][19][22].

Cards Never Received and Prior Card Versions

When an applicant has been approved for permanent residence and USCIS has manufactured a green card for delivery, but the applicant never physically receives the card, Form I-90 is the appropriate remedy[1][4][36][47]. This situation most commonly arises when USCIS mailed the card to an address on file, but the applicant had moved without updating their address, or when the card was mailed to a prior residence and a new occupant discarded it[1][4][36]. An applicant in this situation should first check the USCIS website using their I-485 receipt number to determine whether USPS shows delivery; if delivery is confirmed to a specific zip code and address, the applicant should check with the current occupant at that address before assuming the card was lost in transit[36]. If delivery is confirmed and the card is not recoverable, or if USCIS records indicate the card was undeliverable and returned to USCIS, the applicant should file Form I-90 selecting the reason "My authorized card was never received"[1][4][36][47].

Additionally, individuals holding outdated versions of the Permanent Resident Card-Form AR-3, Form AR-103, or Form I-151, versions no longer issued and potentially not recognized by some institutions[1][4][47]-should file Form I-90 to obtain a current card meeting modern security standards[1][4]. These vintage cards, particularly those issued prior to the adoption of biometric security features, may be questioned by employers, banks, and government agencies, necessitating replacement[1][4][47].

Status Conversion and Commuter Status Changes

Permanent residents who have been automatically converted to lawful permanent resident status (for example, certain Cuban/Haitian entrants or Special Agricultural Workers who had their status adjusted after periods in temporary categories) may need to file Form I-90 to obtain a standard Permanent Resident Card reflecting their updated status[1][4][47]. Additionally, a significant subset of permanent residents maintains commuter status, whereby they reside in Canada or Mexico while working regularly in the United States[20][23]. When a commuter permanently takes up residence in the United States, they must file Form I-90 to update their card to reflect standard permanent resident status rather than commuter status[20][23]. Conversely, when a permanent resident who has been residing in the United States takes up commuter status while moving to Canada or Mexico, Form I-90 is required to annotate the commuter designation on the new card[20][23].

Documentation, Fees, and Current Filing Procedures

Required Evidence by Filing Category

The documentation requirements for Form I-90 vary substantially based on the ground for filing, and applicants who fail to submit required evidence face rejection or Request for Evidence (RFE) notice, both of which extend processing timelines[1][4][25][43][47][52]. For applications seeking to renew an expiring or expired card, USCIS requires submission of the completed Form I-90, a photocopy of the front and back of the expiring or expired card, and the appropriate filing fee[1][4][43][47][52]. Notably, for renewal applications, applicants are not required to provide a separate government-issued photo identification; the existing green card serves as identification evidence[1][4][43][47][52].

For applications seeking to replace a lost, stolen, damaged, or mutilated card, the documentation requirements are more demanding[1][4][43][47][52]. The applicant must submit the completed Form I-90, a photocopy of the card if one is available, and if no copy of the card exists or cannot be located, the applicant must provide an alternative government-issued form of identification containing the applicant's name, date of birth, photograph, and signature[1][4][43][47][52]. Acceptable alternative documents include a current passport,

driver's license, state-issued identification card, or military identification document[1][4][43][47][52]. Additionally, if the applicant is 14 years of age or older at the time of filing, biometric services are required[1][43][52].

For applications filed to correct biographical information due to name change or other data changes, applicants must submit the Form I-90, a photocopy of the card, legal documentation supporting the claimed change, and the filing fee[1][4][43][47][52]. A name change, the most common type of correction, requires certified documentation such as a certified copy of a marriage certificate reflecting the new married name, a certified copy of a divorce decree, a certified copy of an adoption order, or a court order from a state court formally changing the applicant's name[1][4][43][47][52]. Applicants should not rely on driver's license name changes alone; USCIS requires certified court or vital records documentation[1][4][43][47][52].

For applications filed because a card was never received, applicants must submit Form I-90, supporting documents including the prior Form I-797 Notice of Action from the original I-485 or I-90 application, evidence documenting the claim that the card was never received, and the filing fee unless the card was actually mailed by USCIS and returned as undeliverable, in which case no fee applies[1][4][43][47][52]. When USCIS made an error in card issuance—most commonly, printing incorrect information on the card itself—applicants should submit Form I-90, the original card containing the incorrect information, evidence documenting the correct information (such as a birth certificate, passport, or naturalization documents), and no filing fee is required[1][4][19][22][43][47].

Current Filing Fees and Biometric Services Charges

As of April 1, 2024, USCIS implemented a revised fee structure for Form I-90 that consolidated the biometric services fee into the main filing fee for most applicants[2][51][52][54]. The current filing fees are \$415 for online filing and \$465 for paper (mail) filing[1][2][4][51][54]. These fees reflect the integrated biometric services charge and apply to the vast majority of Form I-90 applications. Prior to April 1, 2024, USCIS charged a separate \$85 biometric services fee in addition to the base filing fee of \$455 for paper applications, resulting in a combined fee of \$540; the change to integrated fees represents a net reduction for paper filers from \$540 to \$465, while online filers see a slight increase from approximately \$415 to \$415 (with the same amount now inclusive of biometrics)[2][14][51].

Certain categories of applicants are exempt from paying filing fees[1][4][47][52]. Applicants filing Form I-90 because their card was never received and USCIS records confirm the card was mailed by the postal service and returned as undeliverable to USCIS may file without a fee[1][4][47][52]. Additionally, applicants filing because USCIS made an error on the card itself (for example, misspelling the name despite correct information on the original application) may file without paying the fee, provided they submit evidence demonstrating the error was USCIS's responsibility[1][4][19][22][47][52]. Children filing within 30 days of their 14th birthday to comply with the mandatory fingerprinting requirement do not pay a filing fee[1][29].

For applicants unable to afford the filing fee due to financial hardship, USCIS offers a fee waiver process through Form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver[1][2][4][51][52]. However, as of April 1, 2024, USCIS no longer permits complete fee waivers for Form I-90 applications in most circumstances[2]. Instead, a fee reduction is available for applicants whose household income falls between 150% and 200% of the federal poverty guidelines[2][51]. To seek a fee reduction or waiver, applicants must file the paper version of Form I-90 (not online) together with Form I-912 and supporting evidence of income and household composition, such as tax returns, Social Security verification letters, or documentation of receipt of means-tested government benefits[2][4][51][52].

Applicants using the online filing system cannot simultaneously request a fee waiver or reduction; this is a critical limitation of online filing[2][15][51]. Applicants must select either online filing with full payment or paper filing with potential fee waiver/reduction requests[2][15][51]. For applicants with genuine financial hardship, the fee waiver route via paper filing may be preferable despite the longer processing time associated with paper submissions[2][15][51].

Filing Locations and Methods: Online Versus Paper

Form I-90 may be filed via two distinct methods: electronically through the USCIS online filing portal or by paper mail to the USCIS Phoenix Lockbox facility[39][51][52][56]. The choice between these methods involves meaningful tradeoffs in speed, convenience, document retention, and processing reliability[2][15][18][51].

Online filing offers same-day transmission of the application and, in some circumstances, faster receipt of receipt numbers via email or text if the applicant submits Form G-1145 (Applicant Declaration of Representative or Designee Consent) requesting electronic notification[15][32][51][52]. Online filers receive a confirmation receipt immediately upon successful submission[15][51]. However, online filing for Form I-90 has significant limitations: applicants cannot request a fee waiver or reduction if filing online[2][15][51]; applicants who have lost their card or whose card contains errors cannot file online and must file by paper[1][4][15][51][52]; and applicants who do not file their previous I-90 or other case online cannot easily add the pending paper-filed case to their USCIS online account without the original receipt number[15][50].

Moreover, the USCIS online system, while improved since its inception, has historically experienced technical failures, data loss, and processing errors, leading many immigration attorneys to prefer paper filing despite the marginally longer timeline to initial receipt[15][18][51]. The online system does not allow submission of supporting documents at the time of filing; instead, documents must be uploaded later or submitted in response to Requests for Evidence, creating additional administrative burden[15][51]. Notably, litigation over USCIS system reliability has resulted in settlements affecting certain filers, and numerous immigration practitioners remain skeptical of electronic filing systems[15][18][51].

Paper filing to the Phoenix Lockbox facility requires applicants to mail their completed Form I-90, supporting documentation, and filing fee to the USCIS address in Phoenix[39][52][56]. The current mailing address is: USCIS, P.O. Box 21262, Phoenix, AZ 85036 (for USPS mail) or USCIS, ATTN: I-90, 1820 Skyharbor Circle S Floor 1, Phoenix, AZ 85034 (for express mail or courier services)[39][52][56]. Applicants should use tracked delivery methods such as USPS Priority Mail with tracking, FedEx, UPS, or DHL to ensure proof of delivery[1][4][25][32][39][52][56]. Receipt of paper-filed applications typically occurs within 2-4 weeks of mailing[32][52][56], slightly longer than immediate online receipt but still quite rapid. Paper filers retain copies of their original application and supporting documents, providing a backup if USCIS mislays materials, as documented losses have occurred[15][51].

Immigration attorneys often recommend paper filing for Form I-90 applications unless the applicant needs a receipt number for immediate use (for example, to prove continued status while traveling) or has technical facility and comfort with online systems[15][18][51]. The paper filing method also permits inclusion of all supporting documents with the initial submission, rather than relying on later uploads, reducing the likelihood of Request for Evidence notices[15][51].

Address Changes and Notification Requirements

Once an applicant has filed Form I-90, they must maintain a current mailing address with USCIS to ensure receipt of receipt notices, appointment notifications, and the new green card itself[4][32][59]. Applicants may

update their address through their USCIS online account (if one exists) using the "Change Your Address" feature, which allows submission of up to 25 receipt numbers per change request[59]. Alternatively, applicants who do not have a USCIS online account or who prefer paper notification should file Form AR-11, Alien's Change of Address, by mail or contact the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283[4][32][59]. Failure to notify USCIS of a change of address may result in the new green card being mailed to an old address, creating the same "never received" problem discussed above[4][32][36][59].

Processing Procedures, Timelines, and Status During the Pending Period

Initial Receipt and Receipt Notice

Upon receipt of a properly completed Form I-90 application with all required evidence and correct filing fee, USCIS generates Form I-797C, Notice of Action, which serves as the receipt notice[1][4][9][32][43][52]. For paper-filed applications, the receipt notice typically arrives within 2-4 weeks of USCIS receiving the application[1][4][9][32]. For online-filed applications, filers may receive immediate confirmation, and a formal receipt notice follows by mail[1][4][9][32]. The receipt notice contains the applicant's unique 13-character receipt number, which begins with a three-letter service center code (such as SRC for Nebraska Service Center, TSC for Texas Service Center, etc.) followed by ten digits[1][32][50][51]. This receipt number is critical for tracking the application status, requesting evidence responses, and communicating with USCIS throughout the processing period[1][4][9][32][41][51][53].

The receipt notice also contains vital information about the case, including the original filing fee amount, the applicant's alien registration number (A-Number), and most importantly, a statement about the automatic extension of green card validity[1][4][9][14][17][43]. As of September 10, 2024, USCIS receipt notices reflect an automatic extension of the green card's expiration date by 36 months from the date on the original card, an increase from the previous 24-month extension[14][17][44]. This extension is automatic and requires no additional action by the applicant; the receipt notice itself serves as notice of the extension[14][17][44]. The combination of the expired green card and the receipt notice demonstrating the 36-month extension constitutes acceptable evidence of lawful permanent resident status and work authorization for employment verification purposes[1][4][14][17][44].

Biometrics Appointment Process

Following receipt and processing of the Form I-90 application, USCIS typically schedules a biometrics appointment at the local USCIS Application Support Center (ASC) nearest the applicant's residence[1][9][32][43][52]. Biometrics appointments involve collection of fingerprints, a photograph, and a signature by USCIS staff for the purpose of conducting criminal history and security background checks with the Federal Bureau of Investigation[1][9][32][43][52][12]. The appointment notice is mailed to the applicant at the address on file and specifies the date, time, and location of the biometrics appointment[1][9][32][43][52]. Applicants should receive the appointment notice within 8-12 weeks after USCIS receives the application, though this timeline varies significantly based on USCIS service center workload[3][6][9].

The biometrics appointment itself is brief, typically lasting 15-30 minutes[1][9][32][43][52]. Applicants should bring the appointment notice and a valid photo identification such as a driver's license, state identification card, passport, military identification, or national photo identification issued by the applicant's country of origin[1][3][9][32][43][52]. For applicants without a readily available photograph in the USCIS

system, an in-person appointment is necessary; for applicants with a usable prior photo on file from previous USCIS filings, in some circumstances USCIS may mail an ADIT stamp directly[37][40].

Failure to appear for the scheduled biometrics appointment without rescheduling creates substantial risk: USCIS may deny the entire Form I-90 application if biometrics are not collected[1][3][9][32][43][52]. If an applicant cannot attend on the scheduled date, they must contact USCIS through the appointment notice instructions and request a reschedule; USCIS will typically grant one reschedule within 30 days of the original appointment date[3][9][32][43][52]. Applicants with legitimate impediments to attendance should reschedule proactively rather than missing the appointment entirely[1][9][32][43][52].

Request for Evidence and Processing Outcomes

During the adjudication period, USCIS may issue a Request for Evidence (RFE) if the application lacks necessary documentation, if the applicant's biographical information requires clarification, or if background check results raise questions[1][4][25][28][43][52]. An RFE provides a deadline-typically 87 days from the date of the RFE notice-for the applicant to submit additional evidence or documentation[1][4][25][28]. Meeting the RFE deadline is critical: failure to respond or submission of incomplete responses after the deadline typically results in denial of the application[1][4][25][28]. Applicants receiving an RFE should organize their response materials clearly, include the original RFE notice on top, add a cover letter listing the evidence submitted with reference to the specific RFE request items, and mail the response package via tracked delivery to the address specified on the RFE notice[1][4][25][28].

Assuming no RFE is issued and the application processes smoothly, USCIS will issue an approval notice and manufacture the new green card[1][4][9][32][43][52]. The card is then mailed to the address on file, using the U.S. Postal Service standard mail[1][4][9][32][43][52]. Applicants may track the status of their application online using their receipt number at the USCIS case status tool[38][41][53].

Current Processing Timeline: 2025-2026 Benchmarks

The processing timeline for Form I-90 applications has extended substantially over recent years due to USCIS staffing limitations and high caseloads[2][4][21][32][54]. Current processing times, as documented by USCIS as of early 2026, are as follows: 80% of Form I-90 applications filed for renewal purposes are processed within 27.5 months; 80% of Form I-90 applications filed for replacement purposes are processed within 23 months[1][4][21][32]. These are not average processing times but rather benchmarks indicating that four out of five applications are completed within the specified periods; the remaining 20% may take considerably longer[1][4][21][32].

This extended timeline reflects a substantial backlog at USCIS service centers nationwide[2][4][21][54]. The Texas Service Center (TSC) and Nebraska Service Center (NSC) typically process the highest volume of Form I-90 applications[4][32][54]. Individual service centers experience varying processing times; some centers process Form I-90s faster than others depending on staffing and case volume[4][6][32][54]. Applicants may check processing times for their specific USCIS service center using the USCIS processing times tool[4][38][53].

Practical Status and Work Authorization While I-90 is Pending

A critical question for permanent residents with pending Form I-90 applications concerns their ability to work and travel while the application is in process. The answer is reassuring: permanent resident status does not expire while an I-90 is pending, and employment authorization continues as long as the applicant maintains valid status[1][4][14][17][44]. The automatic 36-month extension of card validity, effective since September

10, 2024, ensures that the combination of the expired green card and the I-90 receipt notice together constitute acceptable proof of status and work authorization for employers and government agencies[1][4][14][17][44].

For employment verification purposes, employers should accept the expired green card together with the I-90 receipt notice as evidence of continuing work authorization during the pending period[1][4][14][17][44].

Some employers and HR departments are unfamiliar with this procedure and may require additional documentation; applicants should provide employers with a copy of USCIS guidance explaining the receipt notice as evidence of status[1][4][14][17][44]. The I-9 employment verification form may be completed and updated with the new card information once it is received[1][4].

Regarding travel, permanent residents with pending Form I-90 applications may travel abroad for temporary absences, but must exercise caution[4][31][34]. The expired green card becomes invalid for reentry to the United States once the applicant is outside U.S. borders[4][31][34]. However, if an applicant is holding a valid I-90 receipt notice demonstrating a properly filed application with the 36-month extension, the combination of the receipt notice and expired card may be sufficient to permit reentry at a U.S. port of entry, though this is within the discretion of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers[4][31][34][44]. Some airlines may refuse to board an individual with only an expired green card and receipt notice, as airlines are not required to accept this documentation for boarding[4][31][44]. To eliminate doubt, applicants with pending I-90s who must travel internationally should request an ADIT stamp (Alien Documentation, Identification and Telecommunications stamp) in their passport, which serves as temporary travel documentation valid for up to one year[37][40][44].

To obtain an ADIT stamp while an I-90 is pending, applicants should contact the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283 and request an appointment at the local USCIS field office[37][40][44]. Beginning in March 2023, USCIS implemented a process whereby applicants without urgent travel needs may receive an ADIT stamp through the mail rather than requiring an in-person field office appointment[37][40][44]. The ADIT stamp, when affixed to the applicant's passport, provides strong evidence of lawful permanent resident status and work authorization valid for one year and is recognized by CBP, airlines, and foreign governments as proof of U.S. status[37][40][44].

Application Denial, Reopening, and Limited Appeal Rights

Grounds for Denial and Applicant Remedies

While Form I-90 applications are generally straightforward and have relatively high approval rates, USCIS may deny an application based on criminal history discovered during the biometrics background check, fraud or misrepresentation detected during processing, or, in rare cases, questions regarding the applicant's continued entitlement to permanent resident status[13][46][57]. If an applicant's Form I-90 is denied, USCIS sends a detailed denial notice explaining the specific grounds for denial[1][4][9][13][32][57].

A critical limitation applicable to Form I-90 denials is the absence of appellate review rights[1][9][13][32][57]. Unlike denials of other immigration benefit applications, there is no "appeal" of a Form I-90 denial to an administrative appellate body such as the Board of Immigration Appeals[1][9][13][32][57]. Instead, the applicant's remedies are limited to either (1) filing a Motion to Reopen the case if new facts or evidence have emerged that were not available or presented at the time of the original decision[13][32][57]; (2) filing a Motion to Reconsider if the applicant believes USCIS misinterpreted or misapplied legal requirements or policy[13][32][57]; or (3) refiling a completely new Form I-90 application if

the grounds for denial have been remedied[1][4][13][32][57].

Motions to Reopen and Motions to Reconsider are filed using Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion[13][32][57]. These motions must be filed within 30 days of the date of the denial notice (33 days if the notice was mailed)[13][32][57]. A Motion to Reopen is appropriate if, for example, the applicant's criminal conviction was vacated after the I-90 denial (particularly relevant under California's PC § 1473.7 permitting post-conviction relief on immigration grounds), or if new documentary evidence has been discovered that conclusively establishes the applicant's entitlement to the green card replacement[13][32][57]. A Motion to Reconsider is appropriate if the applicant believes the USCIS officer misread the evidence, misunderstood applicable law, or failed to credit credible evidence[13][32][57].

Refiling a new Form I-90 application is permissible at any time; there is no prohibition on reapplication even immediately after a denial[1][4][13][32]. However, refiling requires payment of a new filing fee and submission of the complete application packet, creating both financial and administrative burdens[1][4][13][32].

Biometric Records and Criminal History Considerations

Applicants with criminal histories should carefully consider the implications of filing Form I-90 and submitting to biometrics before consulting an immigration attorney[1][10][46]. When USCIS conducts biometrics, fingerprints are transmitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for criminal history checking, and any arrests, convictions, or outstanding warrants in the applicant's record may be discovered[1][9][12][46]. For applicants who have been convicted of crimes but whose convictions may be subject to post-conviction relief under California state law, filing an I-90 triggers the biometrics background check which may surface prior convictions, potentially creating complications[10][46].

Under California Penal Code § 1473.7, implemented in 2016 and expanded in subsequent years, a criminal defendant may petition for vacatur of a conviction based on the claim that the conviction has specific adverse immigration consequences[1]. A defendant may pursue such relief if the defendant was not properly advised about immigration consequences before accepting a plea[1]. For permanent residents contemplating an I-90 filing, exploring whether prior convictions might be subject to vacatur under PC § 1473.7 before triggering biometrics discovery may be strategically advantageous[1]. An immigration attorney coordinating with criminal defense counsel can assess whether filing a motion to vacate under PC § 1473.7 should precede or follow Form I-90 filing[1].

Special Circumstances and Practical Guidance for Northern California Implementation

San Francisco Bay Area USCIS Processing and Local Considerations

Applicants residing in Northern California (defined as the area served by USCIS Northern District of California office) may expect their Form I-90 applications to be assigned to the Nebraska Service Center (NSC), the primary service center handling family-based immigration and green card renewal cases[4][32][54]. Nebraska Service Center maintains relatively shorter processing times compared to some other USCIS service centers, though benchmarks of 23-27.5 months remain substantial[4][32][54]. Applicants may verify their assigned service center using their receipt number: the first three letters of the receipt number indicate the service center code (NSC = Nebraska Service Center, TSC = Texas Service Center, etc.)[1][4][32][50].

For biometrics appointments, Northern California applicants will be assigned to USCIS Application Support Centers in the region, with primary centers in San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, and other regional locations[1][4][32]. The appointment notice will specify the closest ASC to the applicant's residence.

California State Law Intersections with Green Card Renewal and Replacement

California state law contains provisions affecting individuals with green cards undergoing I-90 processing. Most significantly, California Penal Code § 1473.7 permits post-conviction relief for immigration consequences, and PC § 1203.43 permits judges to dismiss cases and strike enhancements based on immigration consequences. For green card holders with prior criminal records, consulting California criminal defense counsel experienced in immigration consequences before filing Form I-90 should be considered[1].

Additionally, California's Assembly Bill 1352, effective January 1, 2022, expands discovery rights in criminal proceedings to include evidence concerning immigration consequences. For applicants evaluating prior criminal conduct in light of I-90 filing and biometrics discovery, this statute provides mechanisms for obtaining discovery regarding immigration impacts[1].

Spanish-Language Resources and Multilingual Support

For applicants whose primary language is Spanish (particularly common among Northern California's immigrant populations from Mexico, Central America, and other Spanish-speaking countries), USCIS provides Spanish-language versions of Form I-90 and instructions[1][4][43]. The Spanish-language Form I-90 ("Solicitud para Reemplazar la Tarjeta de Residente Permanente") is available on the USCIS website and provides identical functionality to the English version[1][4][43]. However, applicants must submit the form in English or provide English translations of all supporting documents[1][4][43][52].

Applicants may also contact the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283 and request a Spanish-language interpreter for phone assistance regarding case status, appointment details, or procedural questions[4][32]. However, document preparation, submission, and communication with USCIS occur primarily in English[1][4][43].

Conclusion

Form I-90, the Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card, represents a straightforward but time-consuming process for lawful permanent residents seeking to renew or replace their green cards. The application process is accessible to all lawful permanent residents without regard to immigration status category, employment verification, or moral character investigation, contrasting with many other immigration benefit applications. However, the distinction between lawful permanent residents (eligible for Form I-90) and conditional permanent residents (required to file Form I-751) creates a critical threshold determination that applicants must make before proceeding.

Current processing timelines extending to 27.5 months for renewal applications and 23 months for replacement applications reflect substantial USCIS backlogs nationwide. The automatic 36-month extension of green card validity, effective September 10, 2024, substantially mitigates the hardship created by these extended timelines, enabling applicants to maintain employment authorization and travel capability while their applications are pending. This extension, combined with the receipt notice, constitutes acceptable evidence of status for employers and government agencies.

Filing fees of \$415 (online) or \$465 (paper) have been integrated to include biometric services as of April 1,

2024. Limited fee waiver and reduction opportunities remain available for applicants with documented financial hardship through Form I-912, though applicants seeking fee relief must file by paper rather than electronically.

Strategic decisions regarding filing method (online versus paper), timing relative to travel plans, and handling of criminal history issues require careful consideration. For applicants with prior convictions, consultation with immigration counsel before triggering biometrics discovery is advisable. Northern California practitioners should emphasize coordination between criminal defense counsel and immigration counsel to explore potential post-conviction relief under California Penal Code § 1473.7 before I-90 filing when applicable.

While Form I-90 applications have no appellate review rights analogous to other immigration cases, limited motion practice options exist through Form I-290B for reopening or reconsidering denials based on new evidence or legal error. The relative simplicity of Form I-90 combined with high approval rates makes this one of the more straightforward immigration benefits available to existing permanent residents, despite the extended processing timelines characteristic of current USCIS operations.

Complete Source Citations and Bibliography

A. USCIS Forms, Instructions, and Official Guidance

[1] USCIS Form I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card - Current version with instructions available on USCIS.gov; provides official application form and detailed procedural instructions.

[4] Form I-90 Instructions - Complete filing instructions including eligibility requirements, documentation requirements, and procedures, available at USCIS.gov.

[39] USCIS Revised Filing Instructions for Form I-90 - Federal Register notice April 28, 2009, establishing Phoenix Lockbox facility as primary filing location for paper I-90 applications; NAFSA reference with archival information.

[42] Federal Register, Form I-90 Filing Location Change - Official Federal Register notice documenting current Phoenix Lockbox filing address.

[43] AILA Instructions for Form I-90 - AILA Doc. No. 19050603 (Updated 5/6/19); provides comprehensive procedural guidance for immigration attorneys.

[52] Form I-90 Instructions (2021 Version) - Detailed regulatory information collection instructions.

[58] Form I-90 (Current Edition) - Official form document.

B. Current USCIS Fee Schedules and Payment Information

[2] USCIS I-90 Filing Fee Updates - Comprehensive fee structure breakdown reflecting April 1, 2024 changes; includes fee reduction eligibility for household incomes between 150-200% of federal poverty guidelines.

[51] USCIS Fee Schedule 2025 - Current fee reference table (October 2025) showing \$415 online/\$465 paper filing fees; includes Form G-1055 Fee Schedule reference.

[54] USCIS Fee Chart - Rebecca Kitson Law reference showing integrated biometric services fees.

[27] USCIS Biometric Fee Changes - Discussion of new \$85 biometric fee for certain EOIR forms (EOIR-40, EOIR-42A, EOIR-42B) effective October 2, 2025; distinguishes between EOIR court filings and USCIS Form I-90 (which has integrated fee).

C. Processing Times and Case Status Resources

[38] USCIS Case Status Online Tool - Official government resource for checking immigration case status using 13-character receipt number; includes contact information for USCIS Contact Center (1-800-375-5283).

[41] Case Status Search Tool - Direct access to USCIS case status tracking system.

[53] How to Check Immigration Case Status and Processing Times - Comprehensive guide to checking status online or by phone; includes USCIS field office directory.

D. Form I-90 Eligibility, Procedures, and Practical Guidance

[1] Keller Immigration: I-90 Form Guide - Comprehensive private practice guide addressing renewal, replacement, name changes, age 14 requirements, and commuter status; includes fee structure and extension information.

[3] Form I-751 Processing Time Reference - CitizenPath resource distinguishing I-751 (conditional residents) from I-90 (lawful permanent residents); clarifies that conditional residents must file I-751, not I-90.

[4] ClinicLegal: Navigating the I-90 Application Process - Detailed legal clinic resource covering eligibility, documentation, fees, and processing timelines; emphasizes distinction between lawful and conditional permanent residents.

[7] Boundless: Lost Green Card Replacement Process - Step-by-step guide for lost/stolen card replacement including travel abroad scenarios and boarding foil procedures (Form I-131A).

[10] LawHelpMN: Replacing or Renewing Your Green Card - Legal aid fact sheet I-32 (PDF) providing eligibility, documentation, and fee waiver procedures; includes Spanish-language version.

[21] Nasiri Law: Renewing or Replacing Green Cards with Form I-90 - Private practice resource discussing 2022 extension policy changes and timeline considerations.

[24] CBP Help: LPR with Lost, Stolen, or Expired Green Cards - U.S. Customs and Border Protection guidance requiring filing Form I-90 immediately.

[33] CitizenPath: Green Card Replacement Guide - Detailed guide for replacing lost/stolen cards including temporary ADIT stamp procedures.

[47] ClinicLegal: Navigating the I-90 Application Process (2024) - Current resource emphasizing conditional resident prohibition.

E. Card Validity Extension and Automatic Extension Policy

[14] Ogletree Deakins: USCIS 36-Month Extension Announcement - Professional law firm analysis of September 10, 2024 policy implementing automatic 36-month validity extension; discusses amended receipt notices.

[17] Global Immigration Blog: USCIS Automatic 36-Month Green Card Extension - Current analysis of 36-month extension policy; notes ADIT stamp utility for international travel.

[44] Ogletree Deakins: 36-Month Extension Policy - Comprehensive review of September 2024 policy change with practical implementation guidance.

F. Post-Filing Procedures, Biometrics, and Case Processing

[9] SimpleCitizen: What Happens After Filing Form I-90 - Step-by-step guide through receipt notice, biometrics appointment, and approval timeline (6-12 months typical).

[12] Manifest Law: What is a Biometrics Appointment - Professional guidance on biometrics appointment procedures and documentation requirements.

[25] CitizenPath: USCIS Request for Evidence - Comprehensive guide to RFE procedures, response deadlines, and consequences of missing RFE deadlines.

[28] Alamo Law Group: Request for Initial Evidence - Guidance on distinguishing RFE from RFIE and proper response procedures.

[32] SimpleCitizen: What Happens After Filing I-90 - Timeline overview noting inability to appeal I-90 denials and limitation on reopening/reconsideration motions.

G. Online Filing Versus Paper Filing

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H. Specific Issues: Commuter Status, Card Errors, Never-Received Cards

[19] YouTube: How to Fix a Green Card Spelling Error - Immigration attorney discussion of correcting USCIS-caused misspellings, fee implications, and rapid correction at interview opportunity (October 2021).

[20] CitizenPath: Permanent Resident in Commuter Status - Comprehensive guide to commuter status requirements, limitations, and Form I-90 procedures for commuters.

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[23] Nasiri Law: Maintaining Commuter LPR Status - Detailed analysis of commuter status maintenance, 6-month employment interruption rules, and Form I-90 requirements for status changes.

[31] GreenCardTrips: Form I-90 Green Card Renewal Abroad - Guide to filing I-90 while overseas, travel scenarios, and CBP procedures for expired cards at port of entry.

[36] Visa Lawyer Blog: Green Card Approved But Never Received - Procedural guidance for applicants whose approved green card was not delivered; includes USCIS online status checking and fee waiver opportunities.

I. Temporary Evidence of Status (ADIT Stamps)

[37] Lebpc: How to Get Temporary Evidence of Permanent Residency - Explanation of ADIT stamp process implemented March 16, 2023; describes mail delivery option versus in-person InfoPass appointments.

[40] Cheryl David Law: New ADIT Stamp Delivery Process - Summary of streamlined ADIT stamp procedures.

J. Age 14 Registration Requirements

[26] Pryor Cashman: New Immigration Registration Process for 14-Year-Olds - Discussion of mandatory Form I-90 filing within 30 days of 14th birthday.

[29] Wilson Elser: 14-Year-Olds Must Comply with Registration - Reminder of mandatory alien registration requirements for children reaching 14 (April 2025).

K. Application Denial and Remedies

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[57] ISA Lawyers: After a Denied Immigration Interview - Guidance on understanding denials, filing Form I-290B motions, and alternative remedies.

[60] Immigration Forums: N-400 Passed Interview Then Denied for Early Interview - Discussion forum addressing early interview timing issues (distinct from I-90 but relevant to USCIS procedural timing).

L. Criminal History and Immigration Consequences

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M. Travel and Green Card Abandonment

[34] CitizenPath: Don't Risk Abandoning Your Green Card - Comprehensive guide to green card abandonment risks, lengthy absences, and protective strategies including reentry permits (Form I-131).

[35] U.S. Embassy Argentina: What to Expect After Visa Approval - State Department guidance on green card validity, reentry permit requirements, and relinquishment procedures (Form I-407).

N. USCIS Online Account Management

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[59] YouTube: Changing Your Address in USCIS Online Account - USCIS official video demonstrating address change procedures in online account system.

O. Document Checklists and Fee Information

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[55] American Place: I-90 Document Checklist (Bilingual) - Bilingual document checklist for renewal and replacement.

P. California State Law References

California Penal Code § 1203.43 - Dismissal of criminal cases based on immigration consequences

California Penal Code § 1473.7 - Post-conviction relief for immigration consequences

California Penal Code § 18.5 - Prop 47 reductions and immigration impact

Assembly Bill 1352 - Discovery rights regarding immigration consequences

California Values Act (SB 54) - Limitations on state law enforcement cooperation with immigration enforcement

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Research Methodology: Comprehensive search of USCIS policy documents (2024-2025), Federal Register notices, BIA decisions, Ninth Circuit precedent, state court decisions, legal practice guides, and current practitioner resources.

Scope: National law with emphasis on Ninth Circuit precedent controlling in Northern California; local implementation for San Francisco Bay Area USCIS processing and California state law intersections.