

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Getting a Single-Family Building Permit From SDCI

Updated March 16, 2017

This Tip is designed to help you through the construction permit process when:

- You want to remodel your house
- Make an addition
- Convert space to an accessory dwelling unit (ADU)
- Build a completely new house in a single-family zone in Seattle.

It provides general information on how to:

- Apply for your building permit
- What resources and assistance are available at SDCI
- What fees will be charged
- How long the process is likely to take
- How to track permit status
- How the permit is issued
- How and when inspections are initiated

TYPES OF PERMITS FOR SINGLE FAMILY PROJECTS

Subject-to-Field Inspection or Plan Review?

Building permits for single-family projects can be processed as either a subject-to-field-inspection (STFI) permit or a plan review permit. STFI permits need only limited review, have quick turnaround times, and cost less. Plan review permits require more in-depth

review and may include discretionary elements, such as variances, or reviews for shoreline or environmentally critical areas (ECAs).

Examples of projects that typically can be processed as a STFI permit:

- Roof repair
- Foundation repair if the foundation is not designed as a retaining wall
- Demolition
- Ground-level additions up to 750 square feet, with a limited structural beam span
- Structural alterations to an existing house under certain limits
- Detached structures less than 750 square feet with a limited structural beam span
- Certain dormer additions

Examples of types of projects that typically cannot be processed as a STFI:

- Major structural renovation of a house
- Second story addition
- Grading not incidental to construction
- Major ground disturbance in a critical area (such as a steep slope)
- Shoreline substantial development
- Land-use variance
- New house

If you think your project might qualify for STFI, be sure to read Tip 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection Permits*, for more detailed information.

PLAN REVIEW PERMITS

Applying for a Plan Review Permit

Below are seven steps for submitting your application. Step 5 is required unless you are on our Consistently Prepared Applicant list. Our goal is to help you pre-



pare for your application submittal, so that the application materials are complete and accurate. This will reduce the need for correction cycles that will delay our approval.

Step 1. Research and Prepare a Preliminary Site Plan for Your Proposed Project

Find your property information to help plan your project. You can find information on your property online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources/, or in our microfilm library. Refer to Tip 233, *Sources for Property Information* for other resources. Then research the codes to determine building size limits, setbacks, parking requirements, and life/safety requirements. Be sure to research the City's incentive programs that might apply to your project, you can find them online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/greenbuildingincentives/. Finally, if you have questions, please attend a free 20 minute coaching session to answer drainage, land use, geotechnical, or construction permit questions.

Once you've done your research, you should prepare your site plan according to the standards outlined in Tips 103, *Site Plan Requirements*, and 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*. Be sure to show the location and dimensions of all existing and proposed development, the general topography of your site, and the existing level of street and alley improvements in the right-of-ways bordering your site.

If there is an existing buried oil tank on the site that must be removed, you need a permit. For more information, read the Seattle Fire Department's Administrative Rule 34.02.04, *Decommissioning Residential Heating Oil Tanks*, available at www.seattle.gov/fire/FMO/firecode/adrules/AdRule34.02.04.pdf.

Step 2. Submit a Preliminary Permit Application Package

Once you confirm that you have a single-family project requiring plan review in Seattle, you should submit a preliminary application package. You need a separate package for any required land use permits.

You can get the forms for the preliminary application package during coaching or on our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/forms/. The package includes the following:

- Preliminary Application Form
- One copy of the preliminary site plan, meeting the standards of 103, *Site Plan Requirements*, and 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*, as prepared in Step 1

The preliminary application package does not constitute a permit application, but informs City departments that you intend to apply for a permit in the near future. Your permit application packet can be dropped off at SDCI's Applicant Services Center (ASC) counter (see page 4 for details), faxed to (206) 233-7866, or mailed to the ASC at 700 Fifth Ave., P.O. Box 34019, Seattle, WA 98124-4019. In most instances, you can also submit it through our online Project Portal: <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/eplan/>.

The forms ask that you provide owner and applicant information, a project description and project characteristics, and property related information, including the legal description and the King County Assessor's parcel number (APN). After screening the preliminary application for completeness, our staff will provide you with a project number you can use to track your project throughout the permitting process.

We also require a site visit when the project involves ground disturbance. The cost of a site visit can be found in our Permit Fee Subtitle located at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/fees/. We will only conduct a site visit if your project involves ground disturbance.

If your project involves the construction of a new house, we will share your application information with other City departments. They will have the opportunity to inform you of important requirements. For example, required right-of-way and utility improvements or whether the site is in an environmentally critical area (ECA). It will typically take us up to 12 days to identify City requirements.

Once we have determined if there are other requirements for your project, we will mail, email or fax our findings to you. For this reason, we strongly recommend that you submit the Preliminary Permit Application package a minimum of 8 weeks prior to your desired date for project submittal. Submitting the application form early will provide the time necessary to incorporate any requirements identified by other City departments into your project design prior to submittal.

Step 3. Prepare Detailed Plans for Submittal

The City requirements that are sent to you in Step 2 should be incorporated into the project design and plan documentation. You should finalize the detailed plans for your proposed development.

Plan Requirements

- Drawings (see Tips 103, *Site Plan Requirements*; 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*; 106, *General Stan-*

ards for Plans and Drawings; and 303, Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings).

- Plan sets – minimum of three full sets. We require two additional copies of the site plan for new structures. We may require additional plan sets may if your project involves a variance, or a shoreline or ECA review. We will provide that information on a project-specific basis.

Using Licensed Professionals

As an owner you may elect to obtain your own permits. If you choose to prepare your own application materials, we will assist you as much as is reasonably possible. However, we strongly recommend using a professional designer or licensed builder.

Fully prepared applications are required for all plan review projects. Well-prepared plans have a much higher chance of being reviewed quickly and require fewer corrections (unless your project has unusual structural elements or involves variances, shoreline or ECA). For complex structural projects you may need to have your plans stamped by a licensed architect or engineer.

We cannot recommend designers and builders. We suggest you look online, and consult design and construction associations, for information about their services.

Application Forms

You can pick up your application forms at the ASC. Many forms are available online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/forms/. For plan review projects your application consists of your plan sets with supporting documents and the coversheets.

There is no general application form to fill out.

- SDCI Coversheet – plan size 24" x 36", requires owner and project information. Coversheets must be attached to each set of plans.
- SDCI Preliminary Application Form
- Contractor Disclosure Form – required for all construction projects with a value of more than \$5,000, and requires information under Washington State law that it must be posted at the job site (e.g., owner, prime contractor, lending institution, etc.).
- Construction Stormwater Control (CSC) Drainage and Standard Plan – usually required for projects causing 750 square feet or more of land disturbing activity. Projects resulting in 5,000 square feet or more of new or replaced impervious surface

will require a drainage control plan designed by a licensed civil engineer. The issues addressed by the CSC plan include soil stabilization over winter months, sediment retention on-site, prevention of pollution, and construction vehicle access.

- Equipment Sizing Form – deals with Seattle Energy Code requirements. It is needed if your project contains over 500 square feet of new heated space.
- Target UA Calculation Form – required if you are not using the Prescriptive Energy Code compliance standards.
- Financial Responsibility – for projects with earth disturbance or projects without earth disturbance but with a construction value greater than \$50,000.
- Salvage Assessment - required when either the area of work is greater than 750 square feet or project value exceeds \$75,000, and involves some or total demolition. The assessment helps determine which waste materials from your project can possibly be salvaged and reused. You can find more information here: www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/changestocode/constructiondemolitionwaste/.

Step 4. Screening

We require screening prior to submitting your application, unless you are on our list of consistently prepared applicants. We do not require an appointment or fee for this review. This review is to verify the completeness of your plans, forms and other documents before submittal. You must complete steps 2 and 3 prior to screening.

We provide screening in the ASC on a walk-in basis; expect some wait time. In some instances, screening can also be requested through our online Project Portal: <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/eplan/>.

Step 5. Submit Your Street Improvement Engineering Plans to Seattle Department of Transportation

Very few single-family projects will require street or alley improvements. For those that do, your street improvement plans need to be submitted to Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). They must be accepted for review before you submit your construction permit plans to us. **We will not accept construction permit applications for new buildings until the SDOT plan has been accepted.** You must submit street improvement plans to SDOT five days in advance for review. SDOT sends us the date on which

the plans are accepted for review, which must be before your construction permit intake appointment.

Step 6. Intake

Applications for plan review are made by appointment. If you are not on our list of consistently prepared applicants (CPA), you must be screened and approved for intake.

For more information about the CPA list, please see Tip 121, *Criteria for Consistently Prepared Applicant (CPA) Submittals*. CPA's with a sufficient successful intake percentage can bypass screening and call for an intake appointment. Intake appointments may also be scheduled through our online Project Portal: <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/eplan/>. You pay approximately 75 percent of the fee at intake. Intake appointment wait times vary seasonally, from three working days to several weeks. Visit the ASC or call (206) 684-8850 to make an appointment.

FEES

We establish permit fees by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle. The fee subtitle is available from the PRC, (206) 684-8467, or on our fees page at www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/fees/.

REQUIRED REVIEWS AND ESTIMATED TURNAROUND TIMES

For single family plan review projects, we require zoning and building code reviews. Depending on your specific proposal, additional reviews for your project could include ECA, shoreline, or drainage/grading. Turnaround times for initial plan reviews vary throughout the year. The following estimates are useful as general guides only.

- Expedited Review (simple Addition/Alteration): 2 working days.
- Non-complex new home: 2 weeks.
- Complex new home or addition/alteration: 8 weeks

We may reduce some longer review times for projects participating in the Priority Green Incentive Program. For more information, please visit: www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/greenbuildingincentives/.

CORRECTIONS

It is common for reviewers to require corrections on complex projects. Many "corrections" are actually

requests for more information. Comprehensive, well-prepared plans will reduce the need for corrections. We will send correction notices to you by mail, email, or through our online Project Portal, along with the reviewer's name and phone number.

Contact your reviewer directly if you have questions about the requested corrections. Plans needing correction can be either mailed directly to you, accessed through our online Project Portal, or picked up at SDCI Plans Routing, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave.

Once you make the corrections requested and submit your revised plans to SDCI Plans Routing, it will usually take 1-2 weeks for our staff to re-review the project. To keep your project on time, you should plan for more than one round of reviews when you create a schedule for your project.

TRACKING YOUR PERMIT PLAN REVIEW

You can get information about your permit as it is being processed by looking online at <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/permitstatus/> or through our online Project Portal: <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/eplan/>. You can also get construction review status by calling 684-8850 and land use review status by calling 684-8467.

PERMIT ISSUANCE

We issue approved plans at the Plans Routing desk in the ASC. You can pick them up on a walk-in basis. You will be notified by phone or mail when your plans are ready for issuance. We will include any remaining fees that must be paid at issuance. Please do not visit the ASC to pick up your permit until you are notified.

INSPECTIONS

To request a building inspection (for all permits), call the 24-hour inspection request line at (206) 684-8900. Same day inspections are provided for requests made by 7:00 a.m. If you have questions for your inspector call (206) 684-8950.

OTHER PERMITS AND DEPARTMENTS

Mechanical permits - including permits for furnaces or heat pumps, are approved by SDCI. See our "Mechanical Permits" section online for more information at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits/permittypes/mechanical/.

Electrical permits - are required for wiring and service upgrading. You can get one from our Electrical Counter in the ASC.

Health Department permits - for food preparation or handling, the Public Health Department of Seattle and King County is located at 401 5th Avenue, Suite 1100. They will review any application that involves food handling or preparation, as well as changes to bathrooms (we can route your plans for you).

Plumbing and gas piping permits - are issued by the Health Department. You can find information online at www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/plumbing.

Street use permits - Please see www.seattle.gov/transportation/stuse_permits.htm for information about occupation and/or construction in the right of way.

Historic Preservation Program - Approval for any exterior alterations in all Special Review and Historic Districts and for Landmark structures is granted through the Historic Preservation Program of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). In some cases they also review interior alterations and changes of use. There are special restrictions for these structures, and it is important to discuss anticipated changes with DON early in the design development process. For more information, please visit www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/.

Waste Diversion Report - Most projects require you to submit a waste diversion report directly to Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) within 60 days of our final inspection approval. Your waste diversion report should show the quantity and types of materials that were salvaged, recycled, or taken to a landfill. A copy of the waste diversion report and directions for how to submit it to SPU are found here: www.seattle.gov/util/ForBusinesses/Construction/CDWasteManagement/RecyclingRequirements/wasteDiversionReport/.

RESOURCES

The Public Resource Center (PRC) provides informational documents, and codes, and access to current master use permit files. The PRC is also the home of the Microfilm Library, where plans and permit history may be available for your property.

The ASC provides application assistance and intake for all applications, including master use permits, building permits and associated permits such as electrical, furnace, boiler and sign. The ASC includes the Drainage and Site Development Desks.

The PRC and ASC are located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave.

- ASC main phone number: (206) 684-8850
- PRC main phone number: (206) 684-8467
- SDCI Online: www.seattle.gov/sdci

Codes to Help with Single Family Applications

Please be sure to consult the pertinent Tips noted above. Tips offer code information but are not the actual codes. For simple projects, the Tips may provide most or all of the information you need to complete your project. For more complex projects you will need to consult the various codes and Director's Rules.

The codes most often related to a single-family project:

- Seattle Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Ch. 23)
- Seattle Building Code* (2015 international Building Code and Seattle amendments)
- Seattle Residential Code* (2015 International Residential Code)
- Seattle Energy Code* (Seattle supplement to Washington Administrative Code Ch. 51-11)
- Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control (SGDC) Ordinance (SMC Ch. 22.800-22.808)
- Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Ordinance (SMC Ch. 25.09)

* The PRC sells copies of all codes we administer.

Tips to Help with Single Family Applications

Plan Standards

- Tip 103, *Site Plan Requirements* – describes and illustrates the information required on site plans; and includes sources of further information. The purpose of a site plan is to show, to scale, property lines, the location and dimensions of all existing structures, and the location of the proposed work.
- Tip 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines* – provides tips on how to prepare a site plan.

- Tip 106, *General Standards for Plans and Drawings* – provides drawing standards, including quality, scale and size.
- Tip 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwelling Units* – explains the type of information you may be required to supply, depending on your specific project. It includes sample drawings of a site plan, elevation, roof and floor framing, and a section of a house.

Code and General Information

- Tip 116A, *Establishing an Accessory Dwelling Unit*, Tip 116B, *Establishing a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit*, and Tip 117, *Parking Waivers for Accessory Dwelling Units* – provide information about permits for accessory dwelling units.
- Tip 220, *Lot Coverage, Height and Yard Standards for Homes in Single Family Zones* – has information on lot coverage, height limits, and yard requirements.
- Tip 221, *Single-Family Side Yard Easements and Accessory Structure Agreements* – provides information on how to create a side yard easement or agreement with your neighbor because of the closeness of your proposed construction to the property line.
- Tip 303A, *Common Seattle Residential Code Requirements* – outlines a number of typical code items required under the Seattle Building, Energy and Mechanical Codes.
- Tip 312, *Decks, Fences, and Arbors for Single-Family Homes in Seattle* – explains the requirements for decks, fences, and arbors.
- Tip 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection Permits* – describes eligibility and requirements for STFI permits.
- Tip 336, *Sustainable Building and Reuse of Building Materials* - describes how to comply with codes when using salvaged materials.
- Tip 337, *Demolition Permits* - provides information on permitting and other considerations specific to the demolition of structures.

You can get the Tips in person at the PRC, by mail, or on our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources/.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of our **Tips, Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Tools & Resources" page of our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this Tip, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.