

Seattle Permits

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

Required Predesign Conferences for High-Rise Structures and Buildings With an Atrium

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This Tip explains to designers:

- Why the Seattle Building Code requires a predesign conference.
- The relationship of the predesign conference to the subsequent permitting process.
- The design team's responsibilities in preparing for the conference.
- The team's submittal requirements before and after the conference.

This conference is limited to building design and construction-related issues in the building, mechanical, and fire codes. All land use and energy code issues must be dealt with separately and will not be discussed in this predesign conference.

WHY IS A PREDESIGN CONFERENCE NEEDED?

The predesign conference is required for buildings classified as high-rise structures (SBC 403) and for buildings with an atrium connecting three stories or more (SBC 404).

A predesign conference is a meeting between the project design team and senior professional staff from the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and the Seattle Fire Department (SFD). The goal of the predesign conference is to provide the applicant an opportunity to present City staff with proposed solutions to design challenges. The applicant should be prepared

to have a code-based discussion about the project, its challenges and the rationale for the proposed solutions. All conference agreements are preliminary in nature and are based on schematic drawings and the designers' explanation of the proposals.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PREDESIGN CONFERENCE TO THE PERMIT PROCESS?

The predesign conference is a comprehensive look at the design concept and does not equate to a plan review. The conference develops agreements between the design team and SDCI/SFD to solve significant design challenges before they arise in the permit review process.

Process overview:

1. Applicant uses SDCI's presubmittal conference application to schedule a predesign meeting at least 60 days prior to submission of the building permit application.
2. Applicant submits schematic plan sets and written proposals using the predesign form two weeks prior to the meeting date.
3. Senior City staff review submitted materials before the predesign conference.
4. Thirty-five percent of estimated structural plan review fee is paid prior to meeting time.
5. At the predesign conference, plans and proposals are presented by the design team and discussed with City staff.
6. Applicant submits meeting minutes that document the agreements along with any additional information requested by the City during the conference.
7. City approves agreements in applicant's minutes.
8. Applicant incorporates agreements into the permit plan sets.



9. Building permit application and plans with approved agreements are submitted to SDCI.
10. SDCI begins building plan review process.

All agreements developed in the predesign conference are documented by the applicant and approved by the SDCI and SFD staff who attended the conference. The applicant incorporates the resulting agreements directly onto the plan sets submitted with the building permit application. The plans are then analyzed by SDCI and SFD plan review staff. The plans examiners will review for substantial compliance with all applicable codes.

Be aware that agreements reached with the City in the course of the predesign process are based on the schematic design documents presented at the conference. Any changes in the design that conflict with the agreements and the code may negatively impact the project.

WHAT ARE THE DESIGNER'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PREDESIGN CONFERENCE PROCESS?

Before the conference:

Code Analysis — A thorough analysis of the building and fire codes is required from each of the various disciplines involved in the building design, such as the architect, mechanical engineer, electrical engineer, and those responsible for fire alarm and fire suppression systems. The code analysis must be completed before the submittals are drafted and submitted to the City for the predesign conference.

SDCI and SFD are primarily interested in:

- The designer's vision of how the project will comply with the critical life-safety code provisions.
- Those code provisions that have significant impacts on the design and which are often found to be insufficiently addressed in building designs such as exiting, areas of refuge, intake/exhaust (not HVAC) vent locations, fire areas, smoke control, and transformer and generator locations.
- Those provisions that the design team finds difficult to interpret or that the design team interprets differently than the City.
- Any alternate means of compliance with the code the design team wishes to propose.

Scheduling — The design team must schedule a meeting with SDCI and SFD using SDCI's presubmittal application. The scheduled meeting must occur at least 60 days before a construction application is submitted to the City. Be sure to allow plenty of time to arrange the conference and obtain approval of predesign conference agreements when planning your construction schedule. You may contact the Applicant Services Center (ASC) to make arrangements for the conference — see the "resources" section of this Tip for ASC contact information and the web address for the presubmittal application.

Submittals — The predesign conference proposal form is completed and submitted by the applicant at least 10 days prior to the meeting date. Information from the presubmittal application will be used to determine your permit fees. The fees must be paid prior to the meeting and will be based on the following information:

- type of construction
- the number of stories
- types of occupancies
- total square footage of each occupancy

The "resources" section of this Tip provides information about additional publications that may be helpful in explaining the City's requirements for various components of your project.

During the conference:

The design team will present their design concept using schematic plan sets and written analysis to demonstrate that the project complies with Seattle's Building and Fire codes. **The design team's presentation should focus primarily on their particular areas of concern related to compliance of the design.** The team should also be prepared to describe to staff how the design complies with the codes in the City's primary areas of interest found in the predesign conference form. City staff may ask questions to clarify whether the design proposal is in compliance with City codes. If the design team has additional concerns, the team may obtain guidance from City staff during the conference.

After the conference:

The applicant must document Building Code Section 403 or 404 requirements, code alternates, modifications, and interpretations which are discussed and agreed upon at the conference and in subsequent discussions. The design team will send this documentation to SDCI and obtain written approval of the documentation from both SDCI and SFD. Approvals and subsequent discus-

sions are documented and exchanged electronically using SDCI's predesign conference form.

Documented agreements must be incorporated by the applicant into the plan sets that are submitted to SDCI with the permit application. The documented agreements then become a permanent part of SDCI's project records.

RESOURCES

Additional publications that may be helpful in explaining the City's requirements for various components of your project are listed below. Key SDCI and SFD concerns are explained in detail in the Tips, Director's Rules, and Seattle Fire Department Administrative Rules.

SDCI Tips

- Tip 318, Building Code Presubmittal/Code Interpretation Conferences
- Tip 338, Public and Private Transformer Vaults
- Tip 339, Emergency and Standby Power Systems

SDCI Forms

- Presubmittal conference application (used to request predesign conference) – complete Section 1 only

SDCI Director's Rules

- Joint Rule SDCI Director's Rule 8-2005; SFD Administrative Rule 34.01.04, Use of Protected Above Ground Tanks for Fuel Storage Inside Buildings
- Joint Rule SDCI Director's Rule 17-2005; SFD Administrative Rule 9.08.05, Sprinkler Systems and Fire Alarms for Elevator Machinery Rooms, Hoistways and Pits

SFD Administrative Rules

- 9.03.04, Automatic Sprinkler and Standpipe Systems
- 9.04.04, Emergency Radio Communication Enhancements

SFD Information Bulletins

- 982, High Rise Fire Safety Requirements
- 2001-1, Emergency Operations Plan

QUESTIONS?

For permit application, issuance, and plan review questions, call (206) 684-8600.

Our [Resources webpage](#) has many tools available to assist you in your research and application process. You can also [Send Us a Question](#).

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of SDCI publications are available on [SDCI's website](#).