

# Seattle Permits

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

## Side Sewer Permits in Seattle

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This Tip provides information on how to get a side sewer permit for any work on side sewers and service drains. It includes information on when you need to get a permit, the types of available permits, and when you need to hire a Registered Side Sewer Contractor. It also includes some information on criteria for using Seattle's system if you are outside of the city limits.

### When is a Side Sewer Permit Required?

The City of Seattle requires that you get a side sewer permit before beginning any work on all side sewers and service drains, including new installations, alterations, additions, repairs, pipe lining, pipe bursting, capping, relocations, removals, and conditional and temporary dewatering work. You can make emergency repairs without having a permit in advance, but you must submit a permit application through the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections' (SDCI) [permit portal](#), no later than on the next business day after you start repairs.

For information on side sewer design and construction requirements, please see the Seattle Side Sewer Code (Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Ch. 21.16) and SDCI Director's Rule (DR) 4-2011, *Requirements for Design & Construction of Side Sewers (Drainage & Wastewater Discharges)*.

A side sewer permit will cover all proposed side sewer work located on private property and within the public right-of-way, if applicable. You can get side sewers permits for both sanitary and drainage discharges and you may include both on the same permit application.

Side sewers and service drains, whether located on public or private property, are owned, installed, operated, and maintained by the owner, operator, or occupant of the parcel served.

### What is the Difference Between a Side Sewer & Plumbing?

A side sewer consists of the pipes and fixtures located outside of a building footprint. Any pipes and fixtures located inside the building footprint are considered plumbing and are covered by the Seattle Plumbing Code. Foundation drains are not side sewers.

### Definitions

For side sewer permit purposes, the following definitions are used:

- **Onsite Stormwater Management Best Management Practices (OSM BMP)** – A required drainage facility or feature associated with the development site and uses infiltration, dispersion, storage, or evapotranspiration to minimize stormwater runoff.
- **Applicant** – The primary contact person, who may be the property owner, property owner's agent, side sewer contractor, or registered side sewer contractor. The applicant will receive all billing associated with the permit issuance and inspections.
- **Financially Responsible Party** – The individual or firm responsible for paying all fees associated with the side sewer permit.
- **Owner** – The individual or firm that owns the property for which the permit will be issued.
- **Side Sewer** – A privately owned and maintained pipe system designed to convey wastewater and/or drainage water to the public sewer system or approved outlet. This includes the pipe system up to, but not including, the tee, wye, or connection to the public main.
- **Service Drain** – A privately owned and maintained side sewer which conveys only stormwater runoff, surface water, subsurface drainage, and/or other unpolluted drainage water. Service drains include, but are not limited to, conveyance pipes, catch basin connections, downspout connections, detention pipes, and subsurface drainage connections (footing/foundation drains) to an approved outlet.



- **Temporary Dewatering** – The temporary removal of groundwater from a project site. All temporary dewatering equipment and material must be removed prior to closing the Temporary Dewatering permit.

## What Type of Side Sewer Permits are Available?

- **Side Sewer Permit for Repair** – required anytime there is a pipe or an external sewer fixture (clean out, yard drain, etc.) that needs to be repaired or replaced. If the scope of work includes work in the public right-of-way, then an RSSC must be the applicant for the side sewer permit. SDCI does not require a site plan for a routine repair to an existing private side sewer system.
- **Side Sewer Permit for Addition or Alteration** – required anytime you need an addition and/or alteration to the existing side sewer and/or service drain connection. This work may or may not be associated with construction or a grading permit. Examples include adding a catch basin to an existing service drain or extending a sanitary side sewer to a new building addition. If the scope of work includes work in the public right-of-way, then an RSSC must be the applicant for the side sewer permit.
- **Side Sewer Permit for New Construction** – required when you need side sewer work that is associated with an approved construction permit for a new building. If the scope of work includes work in the public right-of-way, then an RSSC must be the applicant for the side sewer permit. Please refer to the section “Other Necessary Information” as you usually need to submit additional documents before these permits are approved and issued. SDCI cannot issue side sewer permits for new construction until the associated building permit has been issued.
- **Side Sewer Permit for Dewatering** – required anytime a project will discharge groundwater to a public combined sewer main. If the scope of work includes work in the public right-of-way, then an RSSC must be the applicant for the side sewer permit.

## How to Apply for a Side Sewer Permit

The side sewer permit application processes vary depending on the type, size, and complexity of the project. For most new building construction, you must implement Onsite Stormwater Management (OSM) Best Management Practices (BMP's) to the maximum extent feasible on private property. SDCI will review and approve these OSM features with the construction permit and permit and inspect them under the side sewer

permit. The basic process for obtaining a side sewer permit from SDCI is described below.

### Submit Side Sewer Permit Application Online

Complete an online application for a side sewer permit at the [Seattle Services Portal](#).

For help, please read the [How to Apply for a Side Sewer Permit help article](#).

If the side sewer work is associated with a construction permit, you must provide the approved and issued construction permit number with the side sewer permit application. Enter the project number into the description of work and/or enter the related construction permit number in the appropriate section of the side sewer permit application.

### Is There Work in the Right-of-Way?

If the side sewer work impacts an arterial roadway, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) requires an approved traffic control plan. See SDOT Client Assistance Memo (CAM) 2110, *Steps to an Approved Traffic Control Plan*, and SDOT CAM 2111, *Checklist for Traffic Control Plan Submittal*.

### Other Necessary Information

When you apply for a side sewer permit, the reviewer will let you know if any of the following documents are required. These documents are available online at our [Stormwater website](#).

- **Side Sewer Release and Indemnification Agreement** (SMC 21.16.210, 21.16.240, 21.16.250, and 21.16.270) – use whenever the side sewer or construction will not meet standards of the code as authorized under SMC 21.16.
- **Memorandum of Drainage Control (MDC)** (SMC 22.807.020) - use whenever drainage is installed as required with new construction. The MDC summarizes the terms of the drainage control plan, including any known limitations of the drainage control facility, an agreement by the owners to implement those terms, and authorizes City personnel to enter the property to inspect the facilities.

The following documents may be required. However, they will not be recorded with King County Records and Elections.

- **Temporary Sewer Connection Agreement** (SMC 21.16.110) – use whenever a temporary sewer connection permit is granted. This agreement permits temporary connection to a City facility located downstream until a

City main is constructed in front of the your parcel. You will then be required to reconnect to the new main.

- **Out of City Sewer Agreement** (SMC 21.20.020 and RCW 35.67.310) – use whenever the City agrees to connect an out-of-city property to the City sewer system.
- **Special Sewer Connection Charge Contract** (SMC 21.24.030) –establishes an agreement between the property owner and the City for installment payments to be made by the property owner to the City for their prorated cost of City mains.
- **Certificate/Attestation of Mailing Notification** (SMC 21.16.240C) –use when the number of buildings or dwelling units using an existing side sewer increase.
- **King County Sewer Use Certification Sewage Treatment Capacity Charge Form** (King County Code No. 28.84.050.0.1) – All homeowners and building owners in King County’s service area (i.e. all Seattle Public Utility Combined and Sanitary Sewers) whose home or building was connected, reconnected, or had a new service established to a sewage facility served by King County on or after Feb. 1, 1990 must pay a King County Capacity Charge.
- **Side Sewer Evaluation and Certification Form** (SMC 21.16.240A) – use when an existing side sewer for a new or converted building or dwelling unit is being reused.

SDCI’s side sewer construction and inspection fees are based on SMC 21.16.071. For more information, contact the SDCI Drainage & Sewer Desk staff at (206) 684-5362 or [SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov](mailto:SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov). For more information regarding fees, please visit [SDCI’s Side Sewer Program website](#).

## Permit Duration

Side sewer permits are valid for 18 months, unless you renew them or make prior arrangements with SDCI. You may extend the permit by sending a request to [SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov](mailto:SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov) prior to the permit expiration date. If you don’t renew your permit, SDCI will not conduct any additional inspections. This may delay the final approval of other SDCI related permits you may have, including building permits, and may potentially result in an enforcement action.

## Inspection Process for Side Sewers

In order to comply with the side sewer permit conditions, all sanitary and drainage pipes must be inspected by a SDCI site inspector prior to being covered. The pipe must be uncovered, bedded to the spring line, and holding a

pressure test (if applicable) in order to pass the inspection. You must have an as-built drawing to pass the final inspection. See Tip 504, *Side Sewer As-Built Plan Requirements*, for Side Sewer as-built plan requirements. When the work is ready for an inspection, you must schedule an inspection by calling the 24-hour inspection request line at (206) 684-8900 or by scheduling online at the [Seattle Services Portal](#). You must be available to meet with the SDCI site inspector during regular business hours when requested.

SDCI does not typically schedule inspections after business hours or on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. In special circumstances, such as large projects where work must be inspected after hours due to site constraints or road closures, you may request overtime inspections at least 72 hours in advance. If allowed, SDCI will schedule those inspections based on inspector availability.

## Scheduling an Inspection

SDCI provides same-day inspections for requests received before 7:00 a.m. through the SDCI 24-hour inspection request line, (206) 684-8900, or the customer support line (206) 684-8950, or online at the [Seattle Services Portal](#). On the day of the requested inspection, the SDCI inspector will attempt to contact the caller to confirm an approximate time for completing the inspection.

SDCI will schedule inspection requests received after 7:00 a.m. for the following workday. For emergency repair inspections or to cancel an inspection, please call customer support at (206) 684-8950, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Be sure to have the permit number and address available when calling.

## Requirement for Coordination with SPU and SDOT in the Right-of-Way

For new side sewers, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) will core tap the existing main while the RSSC completes the pipe extension from the connection. See [SPUs Core Tap webpage](#), for more information. After all the work is completed and approved, the Applicant/Contractor must complete the pavement restoration. (See SDOT CAM 2601, *Pavement Restoration for Utility Service Connections*, and SDOT CAM 2602, *Becoming a Registered Pavement Restoration Contractor*).

You are required to get an (SDOT street use permit for use of the right-of-way when applying for a side sewer permit. SDCI collects the SDOT permit fee as part of the SDCI side sewer permit fees. You can pay your fees online, by

phone at (206) 386-9780, or in person at the SDCI cashier, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave., Seattle WA 98124.

You are required to get a utility major permit for utility work that results in 100 or more contiguous lineal feet or 300 or more cumulative lineal feet of ground disturbing activity in the right-of-way. Please refer to SDOT CAM 2600, *Utility Permit Requirements and Forms*.

After receiving the issued SDOT street use permit for use of the right-of-way, the RSSC must contact SDOT at (206) 684-5270 or [SDOTJobStart@seattle.gov](mailto:SDOTJobStart@seattle.gov) at least two business days before starting work in the right-of-way. If the side sewer work is on an arterial street, the RSSC must submit a traffic control plan to SDOT for review and approval. The RSSC should expect the plan review for the traffic control plan to take at least 10 business days.

### Requirement for As-Built Plans

You must submit documentation of what was constructed for the side sewer project. You must have the site inspector's approval of the as-built plan prior to finalizing a side sewer permit. For instructions on how to prepare as-built plans, refer to Tip 504, *Side Sewer As-Built Plan Requirements*.

### Property Located Outside the City of Seattle That Could Be Serviced by Seattle City Utilities

A property located outside the city limits may be allowed to connect to a Seattle city main if the non-city jurisdiction does not serve the property or the City's mains are more accessible than the local jurisdiction's mains. Before SDCI will approve a connection, the property owner must contact SPU to receive their approval. Contact the SDCI Drainage Desk at (206) 684-5362 or [SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov](mailto:SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov) if you need to connect to a Seattle main and are located outside of the city limits.

### Key Side Sewer Contacts

**Application Information:** Contact the SDCI drainage & sewer review desk at (206) 684-5362 or email [SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov](mailto:SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov). Visit our [Side Sewer Permit site](#) for additional information.

**Inspections:** Call the SDCI inspections support line at (206) 684-8950 or visit the [Seattle Services Portal](#) online.

**Technical Information:**

- SDCI Drainage & Sewer Review Desk, (206) 684-5362 or [SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov](mailto:SideSewerInfo@seattle.gov)
- SDOT Job Start Notification, (206) 684-5270 or [SDOTJobStart@seattle.gov](mailto:SDOTJobStart@seattle.gov)
- SDOT Street Restoration, Street Use Counter, (206) 684-5283
- SPU Core Tap, (206) 615-0511
- SPU Non-Permitted Drainage or Sewerage Complaints, (206) 386-1800
- Seattle-King County Public Health, (206) 296-4932

## Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of SDCI Tips, Director's Rules, and Forms are available on the "Resources" page of our website at [www.seattle.gov/sdci](http://www.seattle.gov/sdci). Paper copies of these documents 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.