

Seattle Permits

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

Getting a Single Family Building Permit from DPD

Updated April 19, 2007

This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) 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), or 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 DPD, what fees will be charged, how long the process is likely to take, how to track permit status, how the permit is issued, and 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 types 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
- Variance
- New house

If you think your project might qualify for STFI, be sure to read CAM 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 1 is optional but highly recommended, Step 5 is required unless you are on DPD's Consistently Prepared Applicant list. Step 7 is the application. DPD's goal is to provide you with assistance in advance of your application submittal, so that the application materials are complete and accurate, reducing the need for correction cycles that will delay approval.

1. Coaching - Highly Recommended

This is not required, but is highly recommended for applicants who are unfamiliar with DPD's permit process. No appointment or fee is necessary for this session with a permit specialist; which is available at any time during the preparation of your application. The purpose is to provide you with specific code and application requirements, including fee estimates.

www.seattle.gov/dpd

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City of Seattle
Department of Planning & Development

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Step 2. Research & Prepare a Preliminary Site Plan for Your Proposed Project

The site plan should be prepared according to the standards outlined in CAMs 103, *Site Plan Requirements*, and 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*, and should 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 abutting your site.

If there is an existing buried oil tank on the site that must be removed, a permit is needed. 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 3. Submit a DPD Preliminary Permit Application Package to the Applicant

Services Center

Once you know for sure that you have a single family project requiring plan review in Seattle, you should submit a DPD Preliminary Application package. A separate package is required for any required land use permits.

The forms for the DPD Preliminary Application package can be obtained during coaching or on our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/Forms, and includes the following:

- DPD Preliminary Application Form
- 2 copies of the preliminary site plan, meeting the standards of CAMs 103 & 103A, as prepared in Step 2.

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. The DPD permit application packet can be dropped off at the DPD 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.

Information required in the application include: 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, DPD staff will provide a project number, which will be used in tracking the project throughout the

permitting process. DPD staff will conduct a site visit when the project involves ground disturbance.

For projects involving the construction of a new house, the application information will be shared with other City departments so that DPD and other City departments 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). DPD will notify the applicant of these requirements by mail, email or fax.

It will take approximately 2-3 weeks for City requirements to be identified. 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 this application form early will provide the time necessary to incorporate any requirements identified by City departments into your project design prior to submittal.

Step 4. Prepare Detailed Plans for Submittal

The City requirements that are sent to the applicant in Step 3 should be incorporated into the project design and plan documentation, and the detailed plans for the proposed development should be finalized.

Plan Requirements

- Drawings (see CAMs 103, 103A, 106 and 303)
- Plan sets – minimum of 3 full sets. Two additional copies of the site plan are required for new structures. Additional plan sets may be required if your project involves a variance, or shoreline or ECA review. ASC staff 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, DPD staff 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, and well-prepared plans have a much higher chance of being reviewed more quickly and with 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.

DPD staff cannot recommend designers and builders, but we suggest consulting the Yellow Pages, and design and construction associations, for information about their services.

Application Forms

Forms can be picked up at the Applicant Services Center (ASC), and many are available online. For Plan Review projects your plan sets with supporting documents and the DPD Coversheets constitute your application. *There is no general application form to fill out.*

- DPD Coversheet – plan size 24" x 36", requires owner and project information. Coversheets must be attached to each set of plans.
- DPD Preliminary Application Form
- Building or Mechanical Permit Contact Disclosure Form – required for all construction projects with a value of more than \$5,000, and requires information under Washington state law that must be posted at the job site (e.g., owner, prime contractor, lending institution, etc.).
- Temporary Erosion and Sedimentation Control (TESC) Standard Plan – usually required for projects causing 750 square feet or more of land disturbing activity. (Projects resulting in 5000 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 TESC Plan include soil stabilization over winter months, sediment retention on-site, prevention of pollution, and construction vehicle access.
- Equipment Sizing Form – deals with Energy Code requirements, 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 a construction value greater than \$50,000.

Step 5. Screening

Screening is required prior to submitting your application, unless you are on the DPD list of consistently prepared applicants (CPA). No appointment or fee is required for this review with an experienced reviewer. This review is to verify the completeness of the plans, forms and other documents prior to submittal. Steps 2 and 3 above must be completed prior to screening.

Screening is provided in the ASC on a walk-in basis; expect some wait time.

Step 6. 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, the street improvement plans will need to be submitted to Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and accepted for review, prior to submitting your construction permit plans to DPD. **Construction permit applications for new buildings will not be accepted by DPD until the SDOT plan has been accepted.** Street improvement plans must be submitted to SDOT five days in advance for review. SDOT notifies DPD electronically with the date on which the plans are accepted for review, which must be prior to the construction permit intake appointment.

Step 7. Intake

Applications for plan review are made by appointment. All individuals not on the DPD list of consistently prepared applicants (CPA) must go through, and have screening approved for intake. For more information about the CPA list, please see CAM 121, *Criteria for Consistently Prepared Applicant (CPA) Submittals*, Intake is never guaranteed during a screening session, but it is sometimes possible. Those with a sufficient successful intake percentage on the CPA list can bypass screening and call for intake appointments. Appointments are made for a set time and day, and can last over an hour. Approximately 75 percent of the fee is paid 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

Permit fees are established by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle available from the PRC, (206) 684-8467, or on DPD's fees page at www.seattle.gov/dpd/fees.

REQUIRED REVIEWS AND ESTIMATED TURNAROUND TIMES

For single family plan review projects, zoning and building code reviews are always required. Depending on your specific proposal, additional reviews for your project could include ECA, shoreline, 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: 6-7 weeks

CORRECTIONS

It is common for reviewers to require corrections on complex projects. It's important to note that many "corrections" are actually requests for more information. Comprehensive, well-prepared plans will reduce the need for these corrections. Corrections are sent by mail, 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 or picked up at the Plan Library, located on the 21st floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8169.

Once the applicant makes the corrections requested and revised plans have been submitted back to the Plan Library at DPD, it will usually take 1-2 weeks for staff to re-review the project. *To keep your project on time, it's advisable to plan for more than one round of reviews when creating a schedule for your project.

TRACKING YOUR PERMIT PLAN REVIEW

You can get information about your permit as it is being processed by accessing DPD's online Permit Desk at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits or contacting the Plan Library at (206) 684-8169.

PERMIT ISSUANCE

Approved plans are issued at the Plans Routing desk in the ASC, and can be picked up on a walk-in basis. You will be notified by phone or mail when your plans are ready for issuance, including 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 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 DPD and are accepted at the ASC without appointment unless submitted as part of the use/construction application. See our "Trade Permits" section online for more information at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits.

Electrical permits - are required for wiring and service upgrading and are obtained from DPD's Electrical Counter in the ASC.

Health Department permits - for food preparation or handling, the Health Department is located 2124 Fourth Ave., 4th floor, (206) 296-4632. The Health Department will review any application that involves food handling or preparation, as well as changes to bathrooms (DPD can route your plans for you).

Plumbing and gas piping permits - are issued by the Health Department at DPD's ASC.

Street use permits - SDOT

Urban Conservation certificates - review boards staffed by the Urban Conservation Division of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) must approve exterior alterations in all Special Review and Historic Districts and for Landmark structures. In some cases interior alterations and changes of use are also reviewed. There are special restrictions for these structures, and it is important to discuss anticipated changes with DON early in the process. To reach the Urban Conservation Division, call (206) 684-0228.

RESOURCES

The Public Resource Center (PRC) provides information documents, 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 Applicant Services Center (ASC) provides application assistance and intake for all applications to DPD, 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
- DPD Online: www.seattle.gov/dpd

Codes to Help with Single Family Applications

Please be sure to consult the pertinent CAMs noted above. CAMs offer code information but are not the actual codes. For simple projects, the CAMs 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* (2003 international Building Code and Seattle amendments)
- Seattle Residential Code (2003 International Residential Code)
- Seattle Energy Code (Seattle supplement to Washington Administrative Code Ch. 51-11)
- Washington State Ventilation and Indoor Air Quality Code ((Washington Administrative Code Ch 51-13)
- 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 DPD administers.

Client Assistance Memos (CAMs) to Help with Single Family Applications

Plan Standards

- CAM 103, *Site Plan Requirements* – describes and illustrates the information required on site plans; sources of further information are also provided. 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.
- CAM 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines* – provides tips on how to prepare a site plan.
- CAM 106, *General Standards for Plans and Drawings* – provides drawing standards, including quality, scale and size.
- CAM 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwelling Units* – explains types of information you may be required to supply, depending on your specific project. Included are sample drawings of a site plan, elevation, roof and floor framing, and a section.

Code and General Information

- CAM 116A, *Establishing an Accessory Dwelling Unit*, CAM 116B, *Establishing a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit*, and CAM 117, *Parking Waivers for Accessory Dwelling Units* – provide information about permits for accessory dwelling units.
- CAM 220, *Lot Coverage, Height and Yard Standards for Homes in Single Family Zones* – has information on lot coverage, height limits, and yard requirements.
- CAM 221, *Single Family Side Yard Easements and Accessory Structure Agreements* – helpful if you need to create a side yard easement or agreement with your neighbor because of the closeness of your proposed construction to the property line.
- CAM 303A, *Common Seattle Residential Code Requirements* – outlines a number of typical code items required under the Seattle Building, Energy and Mechanical Codes.
- CAM 312, *Decks, Fences and Arbors for Single Family Homes in Seattle* – explains the requirements for decks, fences and arbors.
- CAM 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection Permits* – describes eligibility and requirements for STFI permits.

The CAMs listed above can be obtained in person at the PRC, by mail, or on our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, 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.