

Seattle Permits

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

Demolition

May 26, 2009

Demolition permits are required to remove structures, including accessory structures with more than 120 square feet of "projected" roof area (including overhangs), as specified in the Seattle Building Code (SBC) Section 106 and the Seattle Residential Code (SRC) Section 105. Demolition generally means removal of the entire structure, although in some cases the foundation may remain to stabilize a site. There are alternative methods to remove a structure which minimize the amount of construction waste sent to a landfill. Relocation is used to move an entire structure to a new location. Deconstruction is a process in which the building is carefully dismantled and building materials are removed for reuse.

Demolition of Housing

Many Seattle Land Use Code regulations concerning demolition are focused on the protection of housing. Housing demolition is discouraged when demolition is to make way for a small institution, a major institution, a telecommunications utility, or a public school. Even demolition of housing that is unfit for occupation is carefully regulated. Housing demolition is only allowed if one of the following criteria is met:

- A permit to establish use or change use has been approved (but housing demolition will not be permitted to make way for non-required parking).
- DPD has approved a permit for relocation of the housing within the city or outside the city limits.
- A complete building permit application has been submitted, no other reviews are required, and the Director has approved a Waste Diversion Plan.
- Demolition has been ordered by DPD for health and safety reasons.

Housing Deconstruction

If an applicant demonstrates that a structure containing dwelling units will be deconstructed (see glossary), DPD may issue a demolition permit prior to issuing the associated new construction permit. This incentive provides applicants additional time to remove the existing structure in order to salvage and recycle building materials. To comply with the requirements of SMC 23.40.006, one must first have an accepted construction application. The associated demolition permit may then be issued contingent upon approval of a Waste Diversion Plan. The plan must demonstrate that the minimum building material reuse and recycling percentages meet those identified in Director's Rule DR 4-2009, *Demolition Permit with a Waste Diversion Plan*. Upon completion of deconstruction, a Waste Diversion Report and associated receipts identifying the actual rates of reuse and recycling will be required. Final reuse and recycling rates must meet or exceed the minimum requirements called for in DR 4-2009.

For questions regarding details of this ordinance or permit process, please visit our land use staff and permit specialists in the Applicant Services Center (ASC).

Is SEPA Environmental Review Required Prior to Issuance of My Demolition Permit?

Environmental review is a part of the DPD Master Use Permit process and may be required prior to removing a structure. The environmental impacts of certain public and private development proposals, including demolition, must be assessed by the City of Seattle under the standards of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the Seattle SEPA ordinance. To find out whether a demolition project is subject to SEPA, please reference Client Assistance Memo (CAM) 208, *When Environmental Review is Required in Seattle*. If SEPA is required, a Type II Director's decision as part of a Master Use Permit must be issued before demolition can be authorized. If an application for a new development on the site is under consideration at the same time as the application for demolition, they may be considered together for purposes of environmental review under SEPA, and demolition may not be



authorized until the SEPA review process for either the construction or demolition has been completed.

Demolition in Environmentally Critical Areas

Demolition on a site with environmentally critical areas (ECAs)—such as known landslide, potential landslide due to geologic conditions, steep slope, peat settlement-prone, wetlands, shoreline habitat, or riparian corridors may require ECA review. ECAs are defined in SMC 25.09.

The City's SEPA regulations require environmental review of the demolition of any structure or facility for which its construction would not be exempt (see CAM 208, *When Environmental Review Is Required in Seattle*). Exemptions from SEPA for sites with ECAs are found in SMC 25.05.908C.

Rebuilding Nonconforming Residential Structures

Residential structures that are nonconforming with regard to development standards (such as yards or lot coverage) may be demolished and rebuilt to the same location, size, and bulk. A survey by a licensed surveyor is required to document the current conditions prior to demolition. For more information, see SMC 23.42.112.

NOTE: Greater restrictions may apply to rebuilding nonconforming residential structures in ECAs.

For questions related to nonconforming structures, please consult with DPD land use staff in person in the ASC.

Landmark Preservation

Seattle has designated seven landmark or special review districts and more than 200 individual landmarks of national and local significance. If your site is a designated landmark, or is located in a historic or special review district, a Certificate of Approval is required for alterations (including demolition) to landmarks and buildings within historic districts. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) policies regarding preservation of landmarks are found in SMC 25.05.675.

NOTE: If your building appears to meet the criteria for landmark designation, but is not currently designated as a landmark, the structure may be referred to the Landmarks Preservation Board for consideration.

For more information, please contact staff at the Department of Neighborhoods at (206) 684-0228.

Foundation Demolition

Per the Seattle Building Code (SBC), all concrete or masonry floors, foundations, footings, basement walls and retaining walls that will not remain in place must be removed to 18 inches below final grade. All concrete floors to be left in place must be broken in order to allow water to drain through. Holes may be filled with soil, concrete or rocks no larger than 12 inches in diameter; wood and other organic materials may not be used.

Residential Structures with Tenants

At the earliest consideration of demolition of a building with tenants, regulations in the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO) should be reviewed to insure compliance (see SMC 22.210). See CAM 123, *Seattle's Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance*, for more information on this ordinance. For assistance, consult TRAO staff at (206) 684-7979.

Inspection Requirements for Demolition Permits

1. **Prior to demolishing or removing a structure**, the following inspections are required:
 - **First ground disturbance inspection** (also known as a Temporary Erosion and Sedimentation Control (TESC) Inspection): Prior to any ground disturbance related to demolition, including construction access and staging areas, the permit holder must request a first ground disturbance inspection by notifying DPD. See "Requesting Inspections," on next page. Erosion control measures do not need to be installed for this inspection, but **MUST** be installed prior to any ground disturbing activities. This proactive approach to erosion control helps protect the site from potential damage caused by actions such as grading and vegetation removal. Having to repair damage caused by the lack of erosion control may delay and add expense to a project.
 - **Pre-construction meeting:** Projects with special inspections require a pre-construction meeting which may be done in conjunction with the first ground disturbance inspection. If your project has special inspections, the inspection requirements should be clearly shown on the approved plans. The contractor must schedule a pre-construction meeting with a DPD structural building inspector by calling (206) 684-8860. Along

with the site inspector, the structural building inspector will request that all responsible parties, including the geotechnical special inspector and earthwork subcontractor, attend the pre-construction meeting. If the project contains other ECA issues such as wetlands, the ECA special inspector must also attend.

2. Following the demolition or removal of a structure:

- **Final inspection:** Demolition projects that are not immediately developed require a final TESC inspection. After the structure and debris have been removed and all permanent erosion control measures are installed and the site is stabilized, request a final TESC inspection. When the site inspector has approved the permanent erosion control measures on the site, e.g. hydroseed, plantings, gravel, etc., contact the building inspector for final approval of the demolition permit. See “Requesting Inspections,” below.

3. Inspections relative to abatement: An order of the director is not a substitute for a demolition permit or a waiver of any other applicable code or permits.

- **Side Sewer Capping:** A side sewer permit must be issued before a side sewer is capped. See CAM 503, *Side Sewer Permits in Seattle*, for more information on obtaining a side sewer permit. The side sewer must be capped as close to the property line as possible without interrupting service to any other building. The end of the pipe must be completely filled with concrete for a minimum length of 12 inches. The side sewer capping must be inspected by a DPD site inspector prior to covering. See “Requesting Inspections,” below
- **Final approval for abatements:** When both the side sewer permit and the demolition permit have been finalized, notify the housing and zoning inspector directly for an inspection. The housing and zoning inspector’s name is located in the Director’s Complaint notice.

4. Requesting inspections: Call the 24-hour automated inspection request line at (206) 684-8900. To request an inspection online go to: www.seattle.gov/dpd/Permits/Inspections/Requesting_an_Inspection/default.asp.

Submittal Documentation

In order to submit for a demolition permit, DPD may require some or all of the following documentation:

- Pre-Application Site Visit (PASV)
 - DPD site inspectors will evaluate project site conditions and indicate required submittal information and documentation, if necessary.
- Preliminary Site Plan, per CAM103, *Site Plan Requirements*
- Copy of Abatement Order
- If a project is located on a site with Environmentally Critical Areas, it may be necessary to submit a Temporary Erosion Control Plan and/or Tree and Vegetation Standard Mitigation Plan.

For project-specific guidance, please contact a permit specialist (See “Helpful Resources,” on next page.)

Copies of the PASV, TESC and Tree and Vegetation Standard Mitigation Plan may be found on DPD’s web site: www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications/Forms/Building_Permit/default.asp.

For drawing standards, please reference these helpful CAMs:

- CAM 106, *General Standards for Plans and Drawings*
- CAM 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*
- CAM 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection (STFI) Permits*

CAMs can be found at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/cams/.

Utilities

You will need to contact the appropriate municipal agencies to learn utility removal requirements for your project at:

- Seattle City Light: (206) 684-3000
- Seattle Public Utilities: (206) 684-3000
- Seattle Dept. of Transportation: (206) 684-5283
- Puget Sound Energy: (888) 225-5773
- Call Before You Dig: (800) 424-5555 or www.callbeforeyoudig.org

Private utilities to consider, if applicable, include cable, natural gas, telephone, and steam companies.

Hazardous Materials

Federal, state, and local regulations require that all asbestos and other hazardous materials be removed prior to demolition. Prior to performing any renovation or demolition work, an asbestos survey must be performed to determine whether there are asbestos containing materials in the work area or structure, per the regulations of the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) and Washington Department of Labor and Industries (L&I).

For more information, contact the PSCAA at (800) 552-3565, (206) 689-4058, or online at www.pscleanair.org or visit L&I's website at: www.lni.wa.gov.

Other helpful resources:

- www.epa.gov/lead
- www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Garbage

Glossary

Abatement – the process by which a residential building that has been determined to be unfit for human habitation or other use is demolished and removed.

Deconstruction – deconstruction is the selective dismantling of a building in order to maximize recovery of reusable building materials first and to recycle materials second. Reusable materials may include dimensional lumber, lower-value doors, siding, and windows. Materials are typically removed in the opposite order in which they were installed, with a goal of maximizing reuse.

Recycling – transforming or remanufacturing waste materials into usable or marketable materials for use other than incineration (including incineration for energy recovery) or other methods of disposal.

Relocation – the removal of a principal structure in its entirety and moving it from one location to another.

Reuse – the recovery of material for repeated use in the same form. "Reuse" includes materials that are reused at the same location as they are generated.

Salvage – the removal of select materials from a building prior to deconstruction or demolition. Salvage generally applies to recovery of appliances, cabinets, fixtures, flooring and other materials for reuse that require minimal labor to recover and for which the

building envelope does not need to be disturbed for their removal (i.e. no demolition permit is necessary).

Salvage and Deconstruction Resources

Tools to assist the applicant in preparing a Waste Diversion Plan are available in the ASC and on the DPD website at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/Permits/Residential_Deconstruction/default.asp.

The King County Green Tools website contains further information on salvage and deconstruction, including: salvage and deconstruction companies, building re-use stores, a building materials exchange and a searchable database for construction material recycling. Visit www.greentools.us and then click on: "Construction Recycling," then "Deconstruction and Salvage." Resource Venture is a service of Seattle Public Utilities with resources on construction waste recycling and deconstruction. Visit www.resourceventure.org then go to: "Green Your Business," "Green Building," then "Construction Waste Management" or "Deconstruction."

DPD Fees

Permit fees are established by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle available on DPD's fees page at www.seattle.gov/dpd/about or from the Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8467.

Helpful Resources

DPD staff are available to provide coaching related to your project. You can visit in-person at the ASC on Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.; and Tuesday, Thursday from 10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. The ASC is located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave. You may also call the ASC and speak with a permit specialist, Monday to Friday from 1:00 - 4:15 p.m. at (206) 684-8850.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)** and other helpful publications are available on our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications. Paper copies of these documents are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Avenue in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.