

Seattle Permits

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

Drainage and Wastewater

Regulation of Development

Updated February, 2005

How does Drainage and Wastewater work in the City?

In the City of Seattle, all proposed development is checked for its impact on existing drainage and wastewater infrastructure. A Master Use, Building or Street Use Permit will not be issued until all concerns regarding drainage and wastewater have been addressed. Infrastructure improvements may be required as a condition of the permit when existing infrastructure is unavailable or inappropriate. The City and King County share jurisdiction and infrastructure in some parts of Seattle, so in some cases a permit may also be required from King County (see King County Drainage and Wastewater Services:

<http://www.metrokc.gov/services.htm>)

Drainage

Drainage refers primarily to the flow of storm water to the sea, a lake or another natural water repository, or to a combined sewer. Drainage can also include relatively clean water from other sources, such as groundwater, that needs to be managed. An excellent description of storm water and drainage control can be found in the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) CAM 501. <http://www.seattle.gov/dclu/camlist/camlist.asp>

Wastewater

Wastewater refers to sewage, such as that released by toilets, bathtubs, commercial applications, or other everyday sources of contaminated water. Not all contaminated water can be disposed of as wastewater in the City or King County sewer system. Water contaminated by petroleum products, certain chemicals or bio-hazardous materials cannot be treated effectively by the County's sewage treatment facilities, and must be pre-treated by a specialized facility, typically on site, or managed in another way.

What is the City trying to achieve in regulating this area?

The City regulates Drainage and Wastewater ultimately for the health, safety and well-being of its residents and public and private property.

Drainage is regulated for several reasons:

- To protect natural resources and public health by reducing erosion and pollution.
- To reduce flooding and property damage by managing the City drainage infrastructure.
- To reduce costs to ratepayers by protecting the integrity of the City drainage infrastructure.

Wastewater is regulated for mostly similar reasons:

- To protect public health and the environment by providing the infrastructure for the safe removal and treatment of household, commercial and industrial wastewater.
- To manage the capacity of City and King County wastewater infrastructure and wastewater facilities.
- To reduce costs to ratepayers by protecting the integrity of the City and King County wastewater infrastructure.

Originally, a combined drainage and wastewater sewer system was used throughout the central areas of the City. Over time, separate storm drains, detention facilities and a variety of drainage systems were constructed.

As City limits were expanded, additional drainage systems were added to the City's infrastructure.

(This memo provides a general introduction only, and is not a substitute for a careful reading of the law and consultation with the City.)

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How does the City regulate drainage and wastewater?

Seattle Public Utilities addresses Drainage and Wastewater through various local provisions in the Seattle Municipal Code:

- 21.16 Side Sewers
- 21.28.280 Drainage and Wastewater Fund
- 21.33.010-.110 Drainage Utility Rates and Charges
- 22.800-.808 Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control, including 22.802.010-.090 Stormwater Drainage and Erosion Control
- 22.904.210 Surface Water Drainage.
- Directors Rules 2002-16,17,26,27

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/codes/sgdcode.htm>

The Seattle Municipal Code is available online. To locate any of the sections listed, please go to <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>

Note: See also King County Code for County regulations

What types of development projects or activities are affected by the drainage and wastewater regulations?

- New or replaced impervious surface or land-disturbing activity, whether on public or private property, or in the public right of way.
- Any projects modifying, relocating, or repairing sewers or drains, or connecting to SPU infrastructure.

In general, what are the developers responsibilities regarding drainage and wastewater?

- Property owners are responsible for properly conveying all stormwater, groundwater and wastewater to an approved discharge location. Detention or treatment requirements may be imposed.
- Any development plans for a property must be adequately communicated to the City in time to be reviewed and approved prior to implementation. Development plans must describe how the property is to be used, estimated wastewater to be generated at the property, and the amount of impervious surface to be added to, or replaced on the property. The plans must detail how any anticipated groundwater, stormwater or wastewater will be treated and removed from the property, including conveying flows received from upstream properties.

Things to consider if you are thinking of buying a property for development.

- Are there stormwater and wastewater pipes adjacent to your property? If not, you may have to pay to extend lines to your property.
- Do the existing stormwater and wastewater lines have the capacity to meet the needs of your proposed project? (Existing stormwater and wastewater lines can normally accommodate flows from one single family home.) In some cases, you may need to pay to increase the capacity.
- Will your planned project produce high flows, dirty or contaminated runoff (a car wash, for example?) If so, you may need to install treatment and/or detention systems on your property or in the right-of-way.

What are the steps of the process?

Normally, the steps will be identical to those of any other Master Use, Building or Street Improvement permit. However, if your project is determined by DPD or Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to have potential drainage or wastewater issues, your project will have to meet the requirements detailed by the City before your permit will be approved. In some cases, King County may require a permit or authorization for your project.

What information will the developer need to provide?

- Project description and plans
- Geological study of project site (if required)
- A description of the street with topological data (i.e. base map)
- A construction stormwater management plan
- Building and street grades
- Curb height
- Estimated generated wastewater
- Area of impervious surface added or replaced

What are the requirements of a construction project?

- Properly treat or dispose of any groundwater displaced during construction (temporary dewatering)
- Properly manage stormwater at the site
- Implement an erosion and sediment control plan
- Implement spill prevention and control to protect water quality

Reduce delay! Things to watch out for that have caused problems in the past.

- Changing the plans after they have been approved by the City reviewers can result in new Drainage and Wastewater requirements.
- Note that DPD Building permits, SDOT Street Use permit and Drainage and Wastewater requirements are all interdependent. Plan changes affecting requirements from one department may trigger changes in another department's requirements.

Contacts:

- **Who to contact first**
The initial contact for a project will normally be Seattle's Department of Planning and Development.
<http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/>
- **Who to contact for specific types of questions**
For sewage or drainage billing questions:
(206) 684-3000
To report a problem with drainage or sewer pipes or other infrastructure, call SPU Dispatch at:
(206) 386-1800
DPD Side Sewer information
sidesewerinfo@seattle.gov
Dewatering questions
(206) 684-5800
For other drainage and wastewater permitting questions: (206) 386-0028
dww.spu@seattle.gov

References

- **Manuals**
2003 Standards Plans and Specifications for Municipal Construction
http://www.seattle.gov/util/Engineering/Standard_Plans_&_Specs/index.asp
- **Other Publications**
DPD Drainage CAMS
<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/camlist/CAMList.asp?Sort=Series#500>
King County Combined Sewer Overflow Program
<http://www.dnr.metrokc.gov/wtd/>
King County Wastewater Treatment
<http://www.dnr.metrokc.gov/wtd/cso/>
King County Code
www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/Code/
SDOT Street Use Permits
www.seattle.gov/transportation/stuse_home.htm