Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

sdci

Tip 101

Seattle Permits

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

Getting a Single-Family Building Permit From SDCI

Updated May 26, 2022

This Tip 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)
- Build a completely new house in a Neighborhood Residential zone in Seattle.

It provides general information on how to:

- Apply for your building permit
- What resources and assistance are available at SDCI
- What fees will be charged
- How long the process is likely to take
- How to track permit status
- How the permit is issued
- 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 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
- Land-use variance
- New house

If you think your project might qualify for STFI, be sure to read Tip 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection Permits*, for more detailed information.

PLAN REVIEW PERMITS

Applying for a Plan Review Permit

All permits are submitted and issued online at **https://cosaccela.seattle.gov/portal**. Below are seven steps

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for submitting your application. Our goal is to help you prepare for your application submittal, so that the application materials are complete and accurate. This will reduce the need for correction cycles that will delay our approval.

Step 1. Research and Prepare a Preliminary Site Plan for Your Proposed Project

Find your property information to help plan your project. You can find information on your property online at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/resources**. Refer to Tip 233, *Sources for Property Information* for other resources. Then research the codes to determine building size limits, setbacks, parking requirements, and life/safety requirements. Be sure to research the City's incentive programs that might apply to your project, you can find them online at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/green-building**.

Once you've done your research, you should prepare your site plan according to the standards outlined in Tips 103, *Site Plan Requirements,* and 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines.* Be sure to 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 bordering your site.

If there is an existing buried oil tank on the site that must be removed, you need a permit. For more information, read the Seattle Fire Department's Administrative Rule 34.02.07, *Decommissioning Residential Heating Oil Tanks*, available at **www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Fire/Business/AdRule34.02.07.pdf**.

Step 2. Submit a Preliminary Permit Application Package

Once you confirm that you have a single-family project requiring plan review in Seattle, you should submit a preliminary application package. You need a separate package for any required land use permits.

To apply, please visit the Seattle Services Portal online at **https://cosaccela.seattle.gov/portal**. The package includes the preliminary site plan, meeting the standards of 103, *Site Plan Requirements*, and 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*, as prepared in Step 1.

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. Your permit application packet can be submitted through the Seattle Services Portal. (Click the Help tab for more information.)

Provide the 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, our staff will provide you with a project number you can use to track your project throughout the permitting process.

We also require a site visit when the project involves ground disturbance. The cost of a site visit can be found in our Permit Fee Subtitle located at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/codes-we-enforce-(a-z)/fees.** We will only conduct a site visit if your project involves ground disturbance.

If your project involves the construction of a new house, we will share your application information with other City departments. They will 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). It will typically take us up to 12 days to identify City requirements.

Once we have determined if there are other requirements for your project, we will provide our findings to you through the Seattle Services Portal. 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 the application form early will provide the time necessary to incorporate any requirements identified by other City departments into your project design prior to submittal.

Step 3. Prepare Detailed Plans for Submittal

The City requirements that are sent to you in Step 2 should be incorporated into the project design and plan documentation. You should finalize the detailed plans for your proposed development.

Plan Requirements

- Drawings (see Tips 103, *Site Plan Requirements*; 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*; 106, *General Standards for Plans and Drawings*; and 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*).
- Plan sets

Using Licensed Professionals

As an owner you may elect to obtain your own permits. If you choose to prepare your own application materials, we will assist you as much as is reasonably possible. However, we strongly recommend using a professional designer or licensed builder.

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Fully prepared applications are required for all plan review projects. Well-prepared plans have a much higher chance of being reviewed quickly and require 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.

We cannot recommend designers and builders. We suggest you look online, and consult design and construction associations, for information about their services.

Application Forms

You can pick up your application forms at the ASC. Many forms are available online at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/forms**. For plan review projects your application consists of your plan sets with supporting documents.

There is no general application form to fill out.

- Contractor Disclosure Information – required for all construction projects with a value of more than $5,000, and requires information under Washington State law that it must be posted at the job site (e.g., owner, prime contractor, lending institution, etc.).
- Construction Stormwater Control (CSC) Drainage and Standard Plan – usually required for projects causing 750 square feet or more of land disturbing activity. Projects resulting in 5,000 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 CSC plan include soil stabilization over winter months, sediment retention on-site, prevention of pollution, and construction vehicle access.
- Equipment Sizing Form – deals with Seattle Energy Code requirements. It 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 with a construction value greater than $50,000.
- Salvage Assessment - required when either the area of work is greater than 750 square feet or project value exceeds $75,000, and involves some or total demolition. The assessment helps determine which waste materials from your project can possibly be salvaged and reused.

Step 4. Screening

You can submit you application for screening so we can verify the completeness of your plans, forms and other documents before submittal. This helps reduce correction cycles during our reviews. We do not require an appointment or fee for this review. You must complete steps 2 and 3 prior to screening.

We provide screening through the Seattle Services Portal at **https://cosaccela.seattle.gov/portal/**.

Step 5. 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, your street improvement plans need to be submitted to Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). They must be accepted for review before you submit your construction permit plans to us. **We will not accept construction permit applications for new buildings until the SDOT plan has been accepted.** You must submit street improvement plans to SDOT five days in advance for review. SDOT sends us the date on which the plans are accepted for review, which must be before your construction permit intake appointment.

Step 6. Intake

You schedule your intake appointments through the Seattle Services Portal. You pay approximately 75 percent of the fee at intake. Intake appointment wait times vary seasonally, from three working days to several weeks.

FEES

We establish permit fees by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle. The fee subtitle is available on our fees page at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/codes-we-enforce-(a-z)/fees**.

REQUIRED REVIEWS AND ESTIMATED TURNAROUND TIMES

For single-family plan review projects, we require zoning and building code reviews. Depending on your specific proposal, additional reviews for your project could include ECA, shoreline, or drainage/grading.

Turnaround times for initial plan reviews vary throughout the year. The following estimates are useful as general guides only.

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- Expedited Review (simple Addition/Alteration): 2 working days.
- Non-complex new home: 2 weeks.
- Complex new home or addition/alteration: 8 weeks

We may reduce some longer review times for projects participating in the Priority Green Incentive Program. For more information, please visit **www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/green-building**.

CORRECTIONS

It is common for reviewers to require corrections on complex projects. Many "corrections" are actually requests for more information. Comprehensive, well-prepared plans will reduce the need for corrections. We will send correction notices to you by email or through the Seattle Services Portal, along with the reviewer's name and phone number.

Contact your reviewer directly if you have questions about the requested corrections. You can access the plans that need corrections through your Seattle Services Portal.

Once you make the corrections requested and submit your revised plans, it will usually take 1-2 weeks for our staff to re-review the project. To keep your project on time, you should plan for more than one round of reviews when you create a schedule for your project.

TRACKING YOUR PERMIT PLAN REVIEW

You can get information about your permit as it is being processed by tracking it through the Seattle services Portal, **https://cosaccela.seattle.gov/Portal**.

PERMIT ISSUANCE

We issue approved plans through the Seattle Services Portal. You can print your approved plans from the portal.

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 7:00 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 SDCI. See our "Mechanical Permits" section online for more information at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/permits-we-issue-(a-z)/mechanical-permit**.

Electrical permits - are required for wiring and service upgrading. You can get one through the Seattle Services Portal.

Health Department permits - for food preparation or handling, the Public Health Department of Seattle and King County is located at 401 5th Avenue, Suite 1100. They will review any application that involves food handling or preparation, as well as changes to bathrooms (we can route your plans for you).

Plumbing and gas piping permits - are issued by the Health Department. You can find information online at **www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/plumbing**.

Street use permits - see **www.seattle.gov/transportation/stuse_permits.htm** for information about occupation and/or construction in the right of way.

Historic Preservation Program - approval for any exterior alterations in all Special Review and Historic Districts and for Landmark structures is granted through the Historic Preservation Program of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). In some cases they also review interior alterations and changes of use. There are special restrictions for these structures, and it is important to discuss anticipated changes with DON early in the design development process. For more information, please visit **www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/**.

Waste Diversion Report - most projects require you to submit a waste diversion report directly to Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) within 60 days of our final inspection approval. Your waste diversion report should show the quantity and types of materials that were salvaged, recycled, or taken to a landfill. A copy of the waste diversion report and directions for how to submit it to SPU are found at **www.seattle.gov/util/forbusinesses/construction/cdwastemanagement/recyclingrequirements/wastediversionreport/**.

CODES TO HELP WITH SINGLE-FAMILY APPLICATIONS

Please be sure to consult the Tips mentioned in this document. Tips offer code information but are not the actual codes. For simple projects, the Tips 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.

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The codes most often related to a single-family project:

- Seattle Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Ch. 23)
- Seattle Building Code* (2015 international Building Code and Seattle amendments)
- Seattle Residential Code* (2015 International Residential Code)
- Seattle Energy Code* (Seattle supplement to Washington Administrative Code Ch. 51-11)
- Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control (SGDC) Ordinance (SMC Ch. 22.800-22.808)
- Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Ordinance (SMC Ch. 25.09)

* To purchase Seattle Code Books from SDCI, please visit **https://seattlegov.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/1500005435181-How-to-Purchase-Seattle-Code-Books-From-SDCI.**

TIPS TO HELP WITH SINGLE-FAMILY APPLICATIONS

Plan Standards

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

Code and General Information

- Tip 116A, *Establishing an Accessory Dwelling Unit*, Tip 116B, *Establishing a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit,* and Tip 117, *Parking Waivers for Accessory Dwelling Units* – provide information about permits for accessory dwelling units.
- Tip 220, *Lot Coverage, Height and Yard Standards for Homes in Neighborhood Residential Zones* – has information on lot coverage, height limits, and yard requirements.
- Tip 221, *Single-Family Side Yard Easements and Accessory Structure Agreements* – provides information on how to create a side yard easement or agreement with your neighbor because of the closeness of your proposed construction to the property line.
- Tip 303A, *Common Seattle Residential Code Requirements* – outlines a number of typical code items required under the Seattle Building, Energy, and Mechanical Codes.
- Tip 312, *Decks, Fences, and Arbors for Single-Family Homes in Seattle* – explains the requirements for decks, fences, and arbors.
- Tip 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection Permits* – describes eligibility and requirements for STFI permits.
- Tip 336, *Sustainable Building and Reuse of Building Materials* - describes how to comply with codes when using salvaged materials.
- Tip 337, *Demolition Permits* - provides information on permitting and other considerations specific to the demolition of structures.

You can get the Tips on our website at **www.seattle.gov/sdci/resources**.

Access to Information

Links to SDCI Tips, Director's Rules, and the Seattle Land Use Code are available on our website at **www.seattle.gov/sdci**.

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