

Seattle Permits

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

Demolition and Deconstruction

Updated March 27, 2024

You need a demolition permit to remove structures, including accessory structures with a roof area (including overhangs) of more than 120 square feet. (See the Seattle Building Code (SBC) Section 106 and the Seattle Residential Code (SRC) Section 105 for specific requirements.) Demolition generally means the removal of the entire structure, although in some cases the foundation may remain to stabilize a site.

Instead of demolition, you may use alternative methods to remove a structure to minimize the amount of construction waste you send to a landfill.

- Relocation moves an entire structure to a new location
- Deconstruction is the process of carefully dismantling a building so the building materials can be reused

Demolition of Housing

Seattle's Land Use Code contains regulations protecting housing from demolition.

- We discourage housing demolition when the demolition is to clear the site for a small institution, a major institution, a telecommunications utility, or a public school
- We prohibit demolition of housing to make way for non-required parking
- We allow housing demolition only if one of the following criteria is met:
 - The structure has not been used for rental housing during the prior six months
 - We have accepted a permit application to establish use or to change use
 - We have issued a permit to relocate the structure to be used as a residence on another lot
 - You have an approved Waste Diversion Plan along with a complete building permit application for

which no other reviews are required (see Director's Rule 4-2009, Demolition Permit with a Waste Diversion Plan)

- We have ordered the demolition for health and safety reasons under the housing or building code (sometimes called an abatement order) and you do not need additional reviews

Housing Deconstruction Permit Incentive

Sometimes you must wait until your construction permit is issued before a demolition permit for housing can be issued. However, you may have the option to use deconstruction and receive a demolition permit to deconstruct before the construction permit is issued. Deconstruction maximizes recovery of reusable building materials. 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.

This incentive gives applicants more time to remove the existing structure in order to salvage and recycle building materials. Salvaging reusable building materials reduces the amount of construction waste sent to landfills and reduces the demand on natural resources.

To qualify for a residential deconstruction incentive, you must:

- Reuse a minimum of 20 percent of the building materials, by weight and excluding asphalt, brick, and concrete
- Recycle or reuse a minimum of 50 percent of the building materials, by weight and excluding asphalt, brick, and concrete
- Recycle or reuse 100 percent of asphalt, brick, and concrete
- Submit a Waste Diversion Plan with your permit application and plans on the [Seattle Public Utilities website](http://www.seattle.gov/SDCI)
- Submit a Waste Diversion Report that identifies the actual rates of salvaged and recycled materials when deconstruction is complete

www.seattle.gov/sdci



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For questions regarding details of these rules or permit process, please contact our permit specialists in the [Applicant Services Center](#) (ASC), or visit our [residential deconstruction website](#).

Rat Abatement

In order to comply with Seattle Building Code 3303.15 and Seattle Residential Code R107.12, a pest control company must begin rat abatement at least 15 days before you start any demolition or any clearing and grading activity within the city. The rat abatement must continue until you start the demolition.

The pest control company must be licensed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture with a Commercial Applicator (CA) license. The pest control company must follow general guidelines from the Washington State Department of Agriculture for applying pesticides.

We require a Rat Abatement Declaration for Demolition Projects form when you submit a demolition application. This form states you understand and will comply with the rat abatement requirements before starting work.

You must provide your SDCI site inspector with a completed Rat Abatement Certification form at your first ground disturbance inspection. This form is completed by the licensed pest control company who provides the rat abatement. It must contain the date the abatement began and the date of the most recent monitoring inspection.

You can search for a licensed commercial applicator on the [Department of Agriculture's website](#).

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

We must assess the environmental impacts of certain public and private development proposals, including demolition, according to the standards of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the Seattle SEPA ordinance. To find out whether your demolition project is subject to SEPA, please reference Tip 208, [When Environmental Review is Required in Seattle](#). If SEPA is required, we must issue a Type II Director's decision as part of a Master Use Permit before we can authorize any demolition. If you have submitted an application for a new development at the same time as you have submitted a demolition application, we may consider them together for purposes of environmental review under SEPA. In this case, we may not allow the demolition until we have completed the SEPA review process for either the construction or demolition.

Demolition in Environmentally Critical Areas

Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) — such as known landslide, potential landslide due to geologic conditions, steep slope, peat settlement-prone, wetlands, or riparian corridors—are defined in SMC 25.09, Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas.

Your demolition project may need to be reviewed under the ECA regulations depending on what type of critical area it is located in. If ECA review would have been required when the building was constructed or if potential impacts to the ECA would occur due to the demolition, such review is required.

Rebuilding Nonconforming Residential Structures

You may rebuild the same type of building you are demolishing even if your residential structure does not conform to the development standards of the zone (for example: required yards, lot coverage and height). We will require you to have a survey by a licensed surveyor to document the current conditions before demolition. For more information, see SMC 23.42.112.

NOTE: We may have greater restrictions that apply to rebuilding nonconforming residential structures in ECAs.

For questions related to nonconforming structures, please consult with our land use staff through 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, you need a Certificate of Approval for alterations (including demolition) from Historic Preservation Program. State Environmental Policy Act policies regarding preservation of landmarks are 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, we may refer the structure to the Landmarks Preservation Board for consideration.

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

Foundation Demolition

You must remove all concrete or masonry floors, foundations, footings, basement walls and retaining walls that are demolished, to 18 inches below ground (final grade). You must break all concrete floors left in place to allow

water to drain through. You may fill holes with soil, concrete, or rocks no larger than 12 inches in diameter. You may not use wood and other organic materials for fill.

Residential Structures with Tenants

As discussed above, there are some restrictions on the demolition of residential buildings within 6 months after tenants have vacated. However, tenants in Seattle have a number of protections and may not be removed from a building unless the regulations are followed carefully. If you are demolishing a residential building with tenants, you must follow the regulations in the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO). You should review the ordinance to ensure compliance as soon as you consider demolishing a building with tenants (see SMC 22.210). See Tip 123, [Seattle's Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance](#), for more information on this ordinance. If you have any questions about TRAO or the tenant relocation hold on your permit, please [submit a request](#) using our online form.

Where to Take Materials

In Seattle, you cannot place asphalt paving, brick, concrete, cardboard, metal, unpainted and untreated wood, or new gypsum scrap in a disposal container either at the job site or receiving facility. These materials must be salvaged or recycled. The deconstruction and salvage assessment helps you identify which of the materials being removed from your building can potentially be salvaged. Local building materials stores work together to encourage used building materials markets through the Northwest Building Salvage Network. Materials that can't be disposed of or salvaged must be recycled. The waste diversion plan will help you select facilities that comply with salvage and recycle requirements.

For a list of facilities complying with Seattle's facility certification program go to the [Seattle Public Utilities' recycling facilities webpage](#).

For more information on the City's material disposal bans visit the [construction and demolition waste management webpage](#).

For comprehensive information about recycling options for different materials, view [King County's "What do I do with..." list](#) or send an inquiry to wastedi-versionreport@seattle.gov.

Inspection Requirements for Demolition Permits

1. **Prior to demolishing or removing a structure**, we require the following inspections:

- **First ground disturbance inspection** (also known as a Temporary Erosion and Sedimentation Control (TESC) Inspection): You must request a first ground disturbance inspection before you do any ground disturbance related to demolition, including construction access and staging areas. See "Requesting Inspections," on the next page.

You do not need to install erosion control measures for this inspection. However, you **MUST** install them prior to any ground disturbing activities. This proactive approach to erosion control helps protect your site from potential damage caused by actions such as grading and vegetation removal. If you have to repair damage caused by the lack of erosion control, your project may be delayed and become more expensive.

- **Pre-construction meeting:** Projects with special inspections require a pre-construction meeting. This meeting may be done in conjunction with the first ground disturbance inspection. If your project has special inspections, our inspection requirements should be clearly shown on the approved plans. Your contractor must schedule a pre-construction meeting with a SDCI structural building inspector by calling (206) 684-8950. Attendees of the pre-construction meeting will include the site inspector, the structural building inspector, the geotechnical special inspector, and the earthwork subcontractor. If the project contains ECA issues such as wetlands, the ECA special inspector must also attend.
- **Side Sewer Capping:** You must have an issued side sewer permit before your side sewer is permanently capped. See Tip 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. A SDCI site inspector must inspect the side sewer capping SDCI before it is covered. See "Requesting Inspections," below.

For more information about side sewer capping, please contact the Drainage and Sewer Review Desk at sidesewerinfo@seattle.gov or at (206)

684-5362. You may also visit the [Side Sewer Permit webpage](#) for additional information.

2. **Following the demolition or removal of a structure:**

- **Final inspection:** We require a final TESC inspection for demolition projects that are not immediately developed. Request a final TESC inspection after you have removed the structure and debris, installed all permanent erosion control measures, and stabilized the site. 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. **Demolition relative to an abatement order:** An order of the Director is not a substitute for a demolition permit and it does not waive any other applicable codes or permits.

- **Final approval for abatement orders:** Once your side sewer permit and the demolition permit have both received final inspection approval from the side sewer and building inspectors, contact the housing and zoning inspector who worked with you during the unfit building abatement action to schedule an inspection so that compliance with the order can be documented. The housing and zoning inspector’s name is located in the Order of the Director document you received.

4. **Requesting inspections:** To request an inspection, call the 24-hour automated inspection request line at (206) 684-8900, or submit your [request online](#).

Utilities

You will need to contact the appropriate municipal and private agencies to learn utility removal requirements for your project. Private utilities to consider, if applicable, include cable, natural gas, telephone, communications, and steam companies. Some common agencies are:

- Seattle City Light: (206) 684-3000
- Seattle Public Utilities (SPU): (206) 684-3000
- Seattle Dept. of Transportation: (206) 684-7623
- Puget Sound Energy: (888) 225-5773
- Call Before You Dig: 811 or www.callbeforeyoudig.org

When coordinating the removal of municipal and private utilities, those agencies may need to get permits from Seattle to do the removal (ex: cutting a service line in the street). You should contact the agencies early in the

process to allow time for them to permit and schedule their work.

Submittal Documentation

We may require some or all of the following documentation when you apply for a demolition permit:

- Pre-Application Site Visit (PASV)
 - SDCI site inspectors will evaluate project site conditions and indicate required submittal information and documentation, if necessary.
- Preliminary Site Plan, per Tip103, [Site Plan Requirements](#)
- Copy of Abatement Order
- Completed Rat Abatement Declaration for Demolition form
- Demolition Plan Set with drainage standard plans
- Drainage Standard Plans for any project with 750 square feet or more of hard surface disturbance
 - Standard Construction Stormwater Control and Soil Amendment Plan
 - Standard Drainage and Wastewater Control Plans
- Salvage Assessment
 - A salvage verifier must fill out the form when your project involves whole building removal. The salvage verifier must be one of the following:
 - An established salvage and reuse retail company
 - Licensed contractor specializing in deconstruction
 - A demolition company with knowledge of local and current salvage retail markets
 - A list of possible verifying agents may be found through resources such as [The Northwest Building Salvage Network](#).

More information can be found at the [Construction and Demolition Waste archived webpage](#).

If your project is located on a site with environmentally critical areas, you may need to submit a Temporary Erosion Control Plan and/or Tree and Vegetation Standard Mitigation Plan.

Tools to assist you in applying for a [demolition permit](#) are available on our web site.

For drawing standards, please reference these helpful Tips:

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

You can also reference our [full list of Tips](#).

Demolition Permit Issuance

We issue all demolition permits as stand-alone permits. Please be sure to schedule a separate intake appointment and provide separate submittal documents for the demolition permit. To apply for a stand-alone demolition permit:

- **Submit a Building and Land Use Pre-Application.** Submit your request for a demolition record number using the [Seattle Service Portal](#).
- **Schedule a demolition intake appointment.** Schedule an intake appointment, through the Seattle Services Portal.
- **Submit your application.** When you are ready to submit your material for your intake appointment, use the Make Changes link next to your demolition record number. Select the Application Intake option and follow the prompts to upload your required documents and submit your application.
- **Pay fees.** SDCI will notify you by email when the application has been processed and fees are ready to be paid. Once you pay the fees, we will send the plans for review.
- **Pay final fees.** When reviews are complete, we will notify you that your permit is ready to be issued and whether you have any additional fees due.
- **Print your permit.** After you pay the final fees, the approved plan set, cover sheet, and permit face will be available in your portal for you to print.

Documentation to be Submitted to SPU After Final Inspection Approval

If your project is greater than 750 square feet, more than \$75,000, or contained demolition, then you should also submit a waste diversion report to SPU within 60 days of our final inspection approval. The report should identify the actual materials produced from your project, their quantity, who the hauler was, and where the materials were taken for reuse, recycling, and disposal. A copy of the [waste diversion report and directions](#) for how you

submit it to SPU is on SPU's website.

Please contact SPU for technical questions on how to fill out the waste diversion plan, salvage assessment at wastediversionreport@seattle.gov.

Hazardous Materials

Federal, state, and local regulations require that all asbestos and other hazardous materials be removed prior to demolition. The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and Washington Department of Labor and Industries require an asbestos survey to determine whether there are asbestos-containing materials in the work area or structure prior to performing any renovation or demolition work.

For more information, contact the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency at (800) 552-3565, (206) 689-4058, or online at www.pscleanair.org or visit [Washington Department of Labor and Industries website](#).

Other helpful resources:

- www.epa.gov/lead
- www.seattle.gov/util/MyServices/Garbage/SpecialorHazardousItems

Lead Abatement Program

In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency's Renovation, Repair, and Painting Rule went into effect. The rule requires contractors to be certified if they are performing renovation, repair, or painting work that disturbs lead-based paint in homes, child-care facilities, and schools built before 1978. Contractors must follow specific work practices to prevent lead contamination. For more information about the federal lead requirements, please visit [EPA's lead website](#).

PCBs in Building Materials

Polychlorinated biphenyls, commonly known as PCBs, are toxic. PCBs can be found in products such as caulk, paint, sealant, and other building materials that were used from 1940-1980. Some materials manufactured after 1980, such as yellow pigments in paints, contain PCBs that are inadvertently created as a byproduct of the manufacturing process. PCBs are a hazardous material. You must use best management practices so that PCBs do not become airborne or come into contact with stormwater. You must dispose of wastes containing PCBs properly. The City of Seattle's Stormwater Manual, Volume 2, Best Management Practice C1.25 and C1.30 describe practices to be

used during demolition, repair, remodeling, and construction. Best Management Practice C1.50 provides information on proper disposal of PCBs.

Additional information on PCBs and their proper disposal can be found on the [EPA PCB website](#).

Salvage and Deconstruction Resources

Salvage is 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).

For detailed information and ideas about integrating salvaged building materials into your construction project, visit the SPU [Construction and Demolition Waste Management website](#).

The King County [Alternatives to Demolition website](#) contains further information on salvage and deconstruction, including: salvage and deconstruction companies, building re-use stores, and a searchable database for construction material recycling.

SDCI Fees

Our permit fees are established by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle available on our [fees webpage](#).

Access to Information

Links to SDCI Tips, Director's Rules, and Forms are available on our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci.