



Guide to the Building Permit Application Process for Single-Family Dwellings

Pierce County Department of Planning and Land Services

Welcome to the Pierce County Development Center! If you are planning an improvement project on your property, you've come to the right place. County staff are here to help you through the steps and regulations that affect your proposal to make the process as accessible and efficient as possible.

This Guide is your resource for navigating the permit process. It contains information on the steps, requirements, and resources available to you through the course of your project. **Please read it carefully** so that you will know what to expect and what your responsibilities are as a building permit applicant.

An Important Word at the Beginning ...

We cannot stress enough the importance of coming into the Development Center for an Information Session (see the "Single-Family Residential Building Permit Application Process" section) at the beginning of your planning phase. Too often applicants discover issues that affect their project after they have invested time and money in preparation. We want to help you avoid this experience.

This Guide covers only single-family residential applications in unincorporated Pierce County.

If your property is located within the boundaries of an incorporated city, you must contact the relevant agency of that city. For commercial or multi-family projects, contact the Development Center at 253-798-3739 to obtain more information and learn permit requirements.

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When Is a Permit Required?

Most construction projects will require approval from Pierce County. In addition, a building permit is only one of the forms of approval that may be needed for your project. Below is a list of the most common projects which require County approval. **THIS IS NOT AN COMPLETE LIST. Please check with Development Center staff before starting work to avoid frustration, complications and penalties in the future.**

Note: Any construction within a potential critical area (as defined by Title 18E of the Pierce County Code) or within 50 feet of a shoreline requires County review and approval, even if the project wouldn't otherwise require a permit. Additional information regarding the presence of critical areas may be obtained through the Pierce County Planning and Land Services website (www.piercecountywa.org/pals) or by contacting the Development Center information line (253-798-3739).

Homes and Attached Decks & Porches

- Building or rebuilding a home
- Placing or replacing a manufactured home
- Building or rebuilding attached decks or porches that are either 1) more than 30 inches high from walking surface to the ground within 6 horizontal feet of the deck/porch; or 2) covered
- Building an addition to an existing home
- **Any construction within a potential critical area or within 50 feet of a shoreline**

Accessory Buildings and Detached Structures

- Building or rebuilding a detached accessory structure larger than 200 square feet (or of any size when there is already an unpermitted detached accessory structure on the property)
- Building or rebuilding detached decks, gazebos, etc., that are larger than 200 square feet (or of any size when there is already an unpermitted detached accessory structure on the property) and are either 1) more than 30 inches high from walking surface to the ground within 6' of the deck/porch; or 2) covered
- Placing a cargo container or mobile home as storage space
- **Any construction within a potential critical area or within 50 feet of a shoreline**

Remodels, Interior Alterations & Change of Use

- Altering the framing or pitch of a roof
- Altering or penetrating the exterior roof or wall sheathing of a structure
- Enlarging or reducing the size of windows, doors, garage doors or skylight openings
- Converting a garage, barn, shop, storage building, unfinished attic or unfinished basement into living space

- Some alterations/remodels (see [Division of Building Safety and Inspections Bulletin #10: Exempt Remodels](#) for more information)

Fences, Rockeries and Retaining Walls

- Rockeries or retaining walls more than 4 feet high from bottom of foundation to top of wall
- Rockeries or retaining walls of any height where a surcharge (an additional load such as a structure or parked vehicle) will increase the load supported by the rockery or wall
- Fences more than 6 feet tall
- **Any construction within a potential critical area or within 50 feet of a shoreline**

Swimming Pools

- Swimming pools (regardless of type) that are more than 24 inches deep
- Swimming pools constructed on site, regardless of depth

Docks & Piers

- Building docks, piers, boat houses, boat lifts, etc., of any size (see [Understanding the Shoreline Regulations for Single Family Development](#) for more information)

Plumbing and Mechanical

- Installing or replacing a furnace, water heater, fireplace, fireplace insert, wood stove, gas range, or other fuel-burning appliance
- Replacing or rearranging plumbing, pipes, valves, traps, drain pipes, waste pipes or vent pipes with new materials
- Removing or replacing a toilet, sink, bathtub, shower or other plumbing fixture with new materials
- Installing lawn sprinkler systems

Site Development

- Clearing more than 6,000 square feet
- Harvesting more than 5,000 board feet of timber for non-personal use
- Excavating, moving or importing more than 50 cubic yards of earth
- Creating new impervious surface (including roads and driveways)
- Improving a driveway onto a public or County road
- **Any clearing, grading, paving, excavating, filling or tree-cutting within a potential critical area or within 50 feet of a shoreline**

Fuel Tanks

- Fuel tanks 125 gallons or more in size

Fire Protection Systems

- Installing, altering or replacing a hardwired and monitored fire alarm system
- Installing, altering or replacing a fire sprinkler system

Gates

- Constructing a gate that restricts access to a dwelling

Electrical

Electrical work and electrical permits are regulated by the State Department of Labor and Industries. Contact the department at 253-596-3800; or, if served by Tacoma Power, call 253-502-8277.

What Doesn't Need a Permit?

Some home improvement projects do not require a permit **provided they are not located within a potential critical area as defined by Title 18E of the Pierce County Code or are within 50 feet of a shoreline**. Below is a list of the most common projects that don't require County approval. Please **note that there are many factors involved in any improvement project, any of which may require that you obtain County approval for your project**. We recommend that you contact the Development Center at 253-798-3739 before starting work to avoid frustration, complications and penalties in the future.

The following resources contain more information on work exempt from permit. Pierce County documents can be obtained at the Development Center or downloaded from the Pierce County Planning and Land Services website.

Building Codes (edition currently adopted by Pierce County)

International Residential Code, 2006

Uniform Plumbing Code (sections 103.1.2.1-2)

International Mechanical Code (section 106.2)

Pierce County Division of Building Safety and Inspection Bulletins

[Bulletin #3: Storage-Accessory Buildings Exempt from Building Permit](#)

[Bulletin #8: Work Exempt from Permit](#)

[Bulletin #10: Exempt Remodels](#)

Attached Decks & Porches

- Uncovered decks not more than 30 inches high from walking surface to the ground within 6 horizontal feet of the deck/porch and not over any basement or story below

Remodels & Alterations

- Painting, tiling, papering, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and other similar finish work

- Some minor remodel activities, provided 1) they don't affect structural components or reduce egress, light, air, energy or ventilation conditions; 2) they don't exceed 500 square feet in a house or 1000 square feet in a garage over a 12 month period; 3) all required permits are obtained for the electrical, plumbing and mechanical work involved with the remodel; and 4) the building being remodeled is not located in a flood hazard or landslide hazard area

- Placing or replacing roofing material on a dwelling, garage or residential accessory building, provided the roof slope exceeds 2” in 12” and the total load of all roof coverings does not exceed 7.5 pounds per square foot
- Re-siding a dwelling, garage or residential accessory building, not including replacement of wall sheathing or moisture barrier
- Replacing windows, provided there is no reduction or enlargement of the window openings

Accessory Buildings and Detached Structures

- Building one detached accessory structure, provided 1) it does not exceed 200 square feet, 2) it is no more than 12 feet high measured from the ground to the midpoint between the eave and the peak of the roof, 3) it is located at least 3 feet from all property lines, and 4) there is no other unpermitted detached accessory structure already on the property

Fences, Rockeries and Retaining Walls

- Rockeries or retaining walls not more than 4 feet high from bottom of foundation to top of wall, provided the grade behind the wall is not higher than the top of the wall, and that do not support a surcharge (an additional load such as a structure or parked vehicle)
- Fences not more than 6 feet high, provided they are not located within the front yard setback

Patios, Sidewalks and Driveways

- Patios, sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches high from walking surface to the ground within 6 horizontal feet and not over any basement or story below

Swimming Pools

- Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep

Play Equipment

- Swings and other playground equipment not associated with an amusement park

Fuel Tanks

- Fuel tanks less than 125 gallons in size

Plumbing and Mechanical Work

- Portable heating, cooling and ventilation appliances and equipment
- Portable evaporative coolers
- Repairing leaks in drain, water, waste or vent pipes; valves; or fixtures; provided that the work does not involve rearrangement or replacement with new material
- Removing stoppages
- Removing and replacing a toilet, sink, bathtub, shower or other plumbing fixture provided that the same fixture is reused in the same location

What Other Factors and Agencies May Affect My Project?

There are many factors to consider when preparing to build a new home, addition, or other home improvement project. Various codes, requirements, and agencies affect the way your lot can be developed. Familiarizing yourself with these elements at the very beginning of the process can save time, expense, and frustration later on. Below is a discussion of the factors to consider and how to find out more about them.

Zoning and Setbacks

Every parcel in unincorporated Pierce County has an assigned zoning category. The zoning of your site governs the kinds of use and development that can be permitted on the property. It also establishes required setbacks and maximum building height. **Parcel zoning and setbacks can change.** Therefore it is important to

contact the Development Center early in the process to determine all the setbacks which will affect your project.

Design Standards

Pierce County Code also contains regulations and restrictions affecting architectural design and/or lot layout in some areas. You can find out if your parcel is affected

by additional standards by contacting the Development Center.

Easements

Many lots contain easements for roads or utilities. Easements must be kept clear of all structures, including eave overhangs, for access and maintenance purposes. In addition, road easements can increase required setbacks. You can identify the presence and location of easements on your property through the recorded plat/subdivision map, Auditor's records, or a title report for your parcel.

Plat Restrictions

Many parcels in Pierce County were created through the platting (subdivision) process. Plats often have conditions and restrictions that affect building placement, height, and disturbance of land and vegetation. If your lot was created by plat, the plat name or recording number will be contained in the parcel's legal description. You can learn about restrictions affecting your lot by obtaining a plat map through the Pierce County Auditor's office or by visiting the Development Center.

Private Covenants and Restrictions

Many properties have private covenants and restrictions as part of a homeowner association agreement. These are binding covenants, but are not regulated or enforced by Pierce County. You can get information regarding private covenants and restrictions in title reports and by contacting your subdivision's homeowner association.

Title Information

Title reports can identify valuable information about legal restrictions, easements, neighborhood covenants, natural buffer areas, and some (but not all) existing building permit violations. Title reports are usually included in the information gathered when property is bought or sold. If not, numerous title companies are listed in the Yellow Pages who can perform this research for you.

Critical Areas

Critical areas in Pierce County include wetlands, critical fish and wildlife habitat, streams, flood zones, steep slopes and aquifer recharge areas. Additional review and approval will be required as part of your building permit application if your site is in the potential hazard/impact area associated with any critical area, as defined by Title 18E of the Pierce County Code. You can obtain information regarding critical areas on your parcel

through the Planning and Land Services website or by visiting the Development Center. For wetland and fish and wildlife questions, you can also contact the Biologist of the Day at 253-798-7005.

Shorelines

Development (including any kind of construction or earthwork) within 200 feet of a saltwater or freshwater shoreline is regulated by Pierce County. For more information on development standards within this zone, see *Understanding the Shoreline Regulations for Single Family Development* or contact the Development Center.

Related Permits and Approvals

Typically a building permit is not the only permit you will need to construct a home, addition, or detached building. Other applications may be required with your building permit application for demolition, site development, propane tanks, fire alarm or sprinkler systems, critical area reviews, plumbing or mechanical work, driveway construction, installing or modifying a septic system, connecting to the sanitary sewer system, land use approval, and critical area review. See "Other Required Permits" in this Guide for more information, and contact the Development Center to determine which related applications will be required with your project.

Surveys

While not required unless specifically requested, surveys can provide important information on the location of property lines, easements, and other features which can clarify site characteristics and prevent disagreements with neighboring property owners.

Department of Labor and Industries

Permits for all electrical work, or to make any modification to a mobile/manufactured home, are regulated by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries. You can contact the Tacoma office of the Department at 253-596-3800.

Other Agency Approvals

Some projects require approval by other governmental agencies. These include the Washington State Department of Ecology, Army Corp. of Engineers, Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, and Pierce County Sewer/Utilities Department. Development Center staff can help you determine whether you need to contact these agencies regarding your project.

Residential Building Permit Application Submittal Requirements

The following documents and materials are required for a complete building permit application where shown. Please remember, however, that these submittal requirements are stated generally; individual projects vary, and therefore specific submittal requirements may vary from one project to another. Development Center staff will be able to tell you what is needed for your particular project.

number of copies Y required P possibly required
 * see "Other Applications and Approvals That May Be Needed" in this [Guide](#)

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS	Residence	Base Plan ^N	Manufactured Home ^R	Detached Garage/Shop/ Carpport/Barn/Shed	Deck/Porch	Demolition	Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ^Y	Mother-in-Law Mobile Home	Swimming Pool	Addition	Remodel	Moved Residential Structure
	Parcel Number ^A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Site Plan ^B	5	5	5	5	4	3	6	5	3	4	3	5
Vicinity Map ^C	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Building Permit Application Form ^D	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Residential Application (Triage) Checklist ^E	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bulletin #55 ^F	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Water Availability Certificate ^G	P	P	P	P	P		P	P		P	P	P
Fire Protection Worksheet ^H	2	2	2	2	2		2	2		2	2	2
Energy Information Form ^I	1			P			1			P	P	1
Construction Drawings ^J	2			2	2		2		2	2	2	2
Structural Engineering Calculations ^K	P			P	P		P		P	P	P	P
Health Department Approval ^L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sewer Utility Approval ^M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Base Plan Worksheet ^O		2										
Base Plan Use Letter ^P		1										
Site-Specific Engineering Letter ^Q		P										
Proof of Ownership ^S			1					1				
Cost (Valuation) of Mobile Home ^T			1					1				
Approved Hauler ^U			1					1				
WAINS Number ^V			P					P				
Notarized Letter of Authorization ^W						1						
Driver's License (or other I.D.) ^X						1						
Accessory Dwelling Unit Affidavit ^Z							1					
Floor Plan ^{AA}							1					
Building Use Affidavit ^{BB}	P	P		P			P			P	P	P
Title Notification ^{CC}	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P	P
Emergency Vehicle Access ^{DD}	P	P	P		P		P	P		P	P	P
Other Applications or Approvals ^{EE}	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Residential Building Submittal Standard Instructions

Obtaining Handouts and Forms

See “Obtaining Handouts and Forms” later in this *Guide*.

A Parcel Number

You can find your parcel number on your tax statement, by contacting the Pierce County Assessor’s office, or through the Assessor’s website at www.piercecountywa.org/at.

B Site Plan

Your site plan must be drawn to meet Pierce County standards. See “How to Draw a Site Plan” in this *Guide*.

C Vicinity Map

A vicinity map is a sketch or map that guides someone from the nearest main road or freeway to your property. It does not need to be drawn to scale and may be included on the same sheet of paper as the site plan.

D Building Permit Application Form

This form provides essential information for processing your building permit application. Complete and submit the version appropriate for your project, either the [Residential Building Permit Application for New Construction](#) or the [Residential Building Permit Application for Additions/ Remodels](#).

E Residential Application (Triage) Checklist

The [Residential Application \(Triage\) Checklist](#) indicates that you have all the documents necessary to begin the application intake process.

F Bulletin #55

[Bulletin #55](#) is a checklist indicating you have a complete plan set. See “How to Assemble a Complete Plan Set” in this *Guide* for more information.

G Water Availability Certificate

A signed and dated [Certificate of Water Availability](#) from the local water district giving the distance to the nearest fire hydrant, the flow rate of that hydrant, and a vicinity map showing all hydrants in the area, is required for parcels smaller than one acre, and is optional for larger lots that have a hydrant within 350 feet of the middle of the lot’s frontage. Water availability certificates are good for three years from the date of signing.

H Fire Protection Worksheet

The [Fire Protection Worksheet](#) indicates how the project

satisfies the Fire Code, either through access to an adequate hydrant, accumulation of fire credits, or exemption. Credits, if used, are delineated on the back of the worksheet and must total 100 percent. (Note that some of the credits involve improvements that require related permit applications.)

I Energy Information Form

A completed Washington State Energy Code Information form is required with the creation of any new heated area (either by new construction or by remodeling of unheated area).

J Construction Drawings

See “Assembling a Complete Plan Set” later in this *Guide* for information on what must be included in your drawings. Those interested in creating their own drawings can refer to [Division of Building Safety and Inspection Bulletin #12: Residential Design Criteria](#) and [Bulletin #21: Residential Applications](#) for more information.

K Structural Engineering Calculations

Engineering calculations are required whenever a structure does not meet conventional light frame construction standards. Structural design drawings, if also required, must be separate from architectural/design drawings. Both calculations and drawings must be stamped by a licensed professional engineer.

L Health Department Approval

Tacoma/Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) approval of a building permit application for submittal will take different forms depending on the type of project. Below is a list of documents that may be required by the Health Department as part of your submittal. You can find out which is needed for your project and obtain the necessary forms by contacting TPCHD (253-798-6500), the Development Center, or by reading the [Environmental Health Program Septic System Application Process](#) handout.

- **Septic Design:** Submitted to TPCHD prior to permit application. Include a copy of the application, stamped “received” by TPCHD, as part of the application submittal packet.
- **Septic As-Built:** A copy of the approved as-built submitted with your application. You can obtain a

copy of your as-built drawing by calling TPCHD at 253-798-6577, faxing a request to 253-798-7663, or through the Department's website at www.tpchd.org.

- [Remodel Application](#)
- [Operation and Maintenance Program Application](#)
- [Operation and Maintenance Evaluation](#)
- [Water Approval](#)
- [Well Test](#)

M Sewer Utility Approval

The Sewer Utility division must approve all building permit applications for projects which connect to the Pierce County sanitary sewer system. Approval is also needed for additions and to demolish buildings served by sewer. For new construction the process begins by submitting a Request for Sewer Information form. For more information or to obtain an as-built drawing of your sewer service, contact the Sewer Utility division at 253-798-2737 or visit the Sewer Utility website at www.piercecountywa.org/pwu.

N Base Plan

Pierce County has pre-approved some building plans. You may choose to purchase the one-time rights to one of these "base plans" from the company which designed and owns the plan instead of submitting custom plans. Doing so alters the building permit application submittal requirements as shown.

O Base Plan Worksheet

These worksheets summarize the plan details and are provided to the purchaser by the base plan owner. They must be completed accurately and submitted in their full-size (8.5 x 14 inches) format.

P Base Plan Use Letter

If you purchase the one-time rights to a base plan, the base plan owner will provide a letter authorizing you to use the design. This letter must be submitted with your building permit application.

Q Site-Specific Engineering Letter

Some base plans must be accompanied by a stamped letter from a licensed engineer certifying that the base plan is adequately designed for use on your parcel. The need for this letter is indicated on the base plan worksheet.

R Manufactured Home

Manufactured homes are pre-engineered and constructed dwellings placed on a site. Using a manufactured home

alters the building permit application submittal requirements as shown.

S Proof of Ownership

Applications to place manufactured homes must include proof of who owns the structure. This proof can take the form of a deed, bill of sale or sale agreement. It must also show the make, model, serial number and dimensions of the manufactured home.

T Cost (Valuation) of Mobile Home

A document showing the cost of the complete mobile home (sales agreement) or current valuation of the mobile home (estimate).

U Approved Hauler

Mobile/manufactured homes may be moved only by haulers registered by the State of Washington and permitted by Pierce County, with a current and valid license number. You may contact the Development Center for a list of approved haulers.

V WAINS Number

Mobile/Manufactured homes may be installed only by certified installers or by the owner. If someone else is installing your mobile or manufactured home, the installer's WAINS number must be included with your permit application.

W Notarized Letter of Authorization

Pierce County will receive demolition permit applications only from the property owner(s) or from someone specifically authorized by the owner(s) to obtain the permit. Authorization letters must mention the applicant's name and the building(s) to be demolished. They must also be signed by all of the property owners and notarized.

X Driver's License (or other I.D.)

Applicants for demolition permits must provide proof of identity, either as property owner or authorized agent. A copy of the applicant's identification will be included in the application submittal.

Y Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

Accessory Dwelling Units have unique requirements in addition to the submittal requirements for the structure to be used as an ADU. (See the [Accessory Dwelling Units](#) handout.) These requirements include a site plan and a floor plan no larger than 8 ½" x 14" and a notarized Accessory Dwelling Unit Affidavit. Development Center staff will review your proposal to

ensure that it satisfies all of the code requirements for ADUs. Then you will need to record the Affidavit with the site plan and floor plan and return a copy of this recording to the Development Center to complete your application.

Z Accessory Dwelling Unit Affidavit

A completed, signed and notarized affidavit must be included in your application for an ADU.

AA Floor Plan

Every application for an Accessory Dwelling Unit must include a copy of the unit's floor plan in a size that can be recorded. The Auditor requires documents no larger than 8 ½" x 14" with one inch of clear margin on all sides.

BB Building Use Affidavit

Private garages and carports larger than 1,000 square feet and agricultural buildings associated with a single family residential home require a [Building Use Affidavit](#) form. The form must be signed, notarized, recorded with the Auditor's office and included with your building permit application submittal.

CC Title Notification

Certain critical and/or resource area conditions, when they pertain to a particular parcel, must be indicated on the title of the property. Development Center staff will be able to tell you whether this is necessary for your project. When applicable, a [Critical Area and Natural Resource Land Title Notification](#) form must be signed, notarized, recorded with the Auditor's office, and included in your building permit application submittal.

DD Emergency Vehicle Access (EVA)

The emergency vehicle access is defined as that portion of your driveway or property access that is more than 150 feet from all portions of the house and extends all the way to the private or public road. The EVA must meet certain requirements and be accurately and completely shown on your site plan. For more information about EVA requirements, contact the Development Center or the Fire Protection Bureau at 798-7179.

EE Other Applications or Approvals

In most cases, projects that require a building permit will also need one or more related applications. Please examine the "Other Reviews That May Be Needed" section in this *Guide* and be prepared for the possibility that additional applications and fees may be involved with your proposal.

How to Draw a Site Plan

The site plan is a map of your entire parcel drawn to an engineer's scale, showing all existing and proposed structures (above or below ground) and other information needed to review your project. Below is a guide and checklist for drawing a site plan according to Pierce County standards. An example and list of the items that must be included on the plan is shown on the following page. A septic designer, architect, or other professional may prepare your site plan. You may also draw your own. Whether you prepare it yourself or have someone do it for you, you are responsible for its accuracy and completeness.

1. Determine Lot Shape and Dimensions

The Assessor's Office can provide you with a parcel map with the lot's shape and at least some of its dimensions. If your lot was created by plat (subdivision), the Auditor's Office can provide you with a copy of the plat map showing the lot's precise shape and dimensions.

2. Select Size and Scale

Site plans should show the entire parcel on a single sheet of paper at a scale that allows easy reading of all the details on the plan. It is best to use a standard paper size to make reproduction simpler. For lots too large to show clearly on a standard sheet of paper, the following options may be used:

- Continue the site plan on a second sheet of paper, indicating a clear "match line" on each sheet where the two pieces fit together or attaching the sheets firmly together at the joint.
- Use a "break line" to represent where a portion of the lot line has been artificially shortened to fit the page. When used, break lines must not artificially shorten any portion of the parcel that is relevant to the project.

The plan must also be drawn to scale, which means that distances in the "real world" correspond to distances on the site plan (e.g., one inch on the paper equals twenty feet on the ground). In addition, Pierce County requires the use of an **engineer's scale** on site plans. Whereas a traditional ruler divides an inch into eighths or sixteenths, an engineer's scale divides an inch into multiples of tens or hundreds (1"=10', 1"=20', 1"=30', 1"=40', 1"=50', 1"=60').

3. Identify Parcel Features

Use plat maps, Auditor's records, title reports, site investigation, etc., to identify any of the following features on your parcel:

- Easements
- Natural Buffer Areas (N.B.A.)
- Critical areas and/or critical area buffers
- Shorelines (ordinary high water mark - OHWM), streams, water features, and/or drainage swales
- Adjacent streets
- Structures
- Topographical contours

4. Draw the Site Plan

Include all of the items in the following checklist (where relevant), making sure to **label each feature** and **show all relevant dimension(s)** of each.

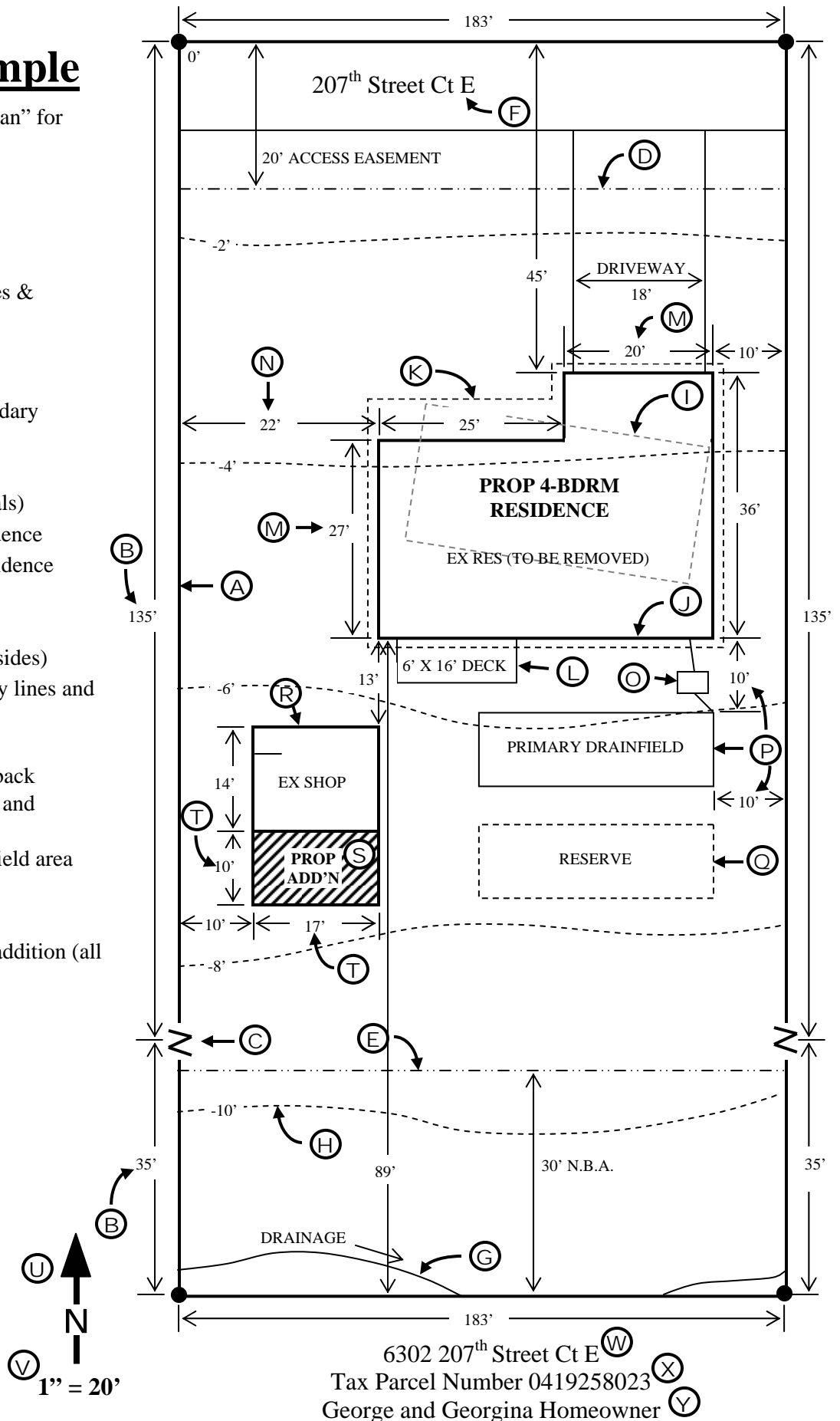
- g **Property lines**
Indicate the length of each line. Where break lines are used, indicate the length on each side of the break.
- g **Easements**
Label and show the width
- g **Natural Buffer Areas**
Label and show all dimensions
- g **Critical areas and/or critical area buffers**
Label and show all dimensions
- g **Shorelines, water features, streams, drainage swales**
- g **Existing structures**
Show and label all buildings, retaining walls, bulkheads, etc., and buildings to be removed
- g **Proposed structures**
Show and label all buildings, additions, remodel areas, etc., indicating length and width for each. **Indicate setback distance** (from property lines) **and separation distance** (from other buildings) for each structure
- g **Driveways**
Show and label location and width, both existing and proposed
- g **Proposed retaining walls and/or rockeries**
Show length and height measurements
- g **Proposed bulkheads**
Show length and height measurements
- g **Septic system components**
Show and label septic tank, primary drainfield, reserve drainfield area and pipelines, with dimensions and distances from buildings and property lines
- g **Sewer service (line and connection)**
- g **Water service (line and connection)**
- g **Topographical contour lines**
Show at two-foot vertical intervals. If elevations aren't known, designate a "zero elevation" point as a starting reference
- g **Streets adjacent to the property**
- g **North arrow**
- g **Parcel number**
- g **Scale indicator**
- g **Property owner's name**

Site Plan Example

See "How to Draw a Site Plan" for further information

Legend

- A Parcel line/boundary
- B Parcel line length (all sides & segments)
- C Break Line
- D Easement boundary
- E Natural Buffer Area boundary
- F Street name
- G Drainage course
- H Contour line (at 2' intervals)
- I Footprint of existing residence
- J Footprint of proposed residence
- K Drip/eave line
- L Deck footprint
- M Building dimensions (all sides)
- N Distance between property lines and all proposed structures
- O Septic tank
- P Septic drainfield with setback distances (from residence and property lines)
- Q Reserve/secondary drainfield area
- R Existing building
- S Proposed addition
- T Dimensions of proposed addition (all sides)
- U Fuel tank
- V North arrow
- W Scale indicator
- X Site/parcel address
- Y Parcel number
- Z Property owner



Assembling a Complete Building Plan Set

Whether you design your own plans, buy them, or hire someone to create them for you, the following documents are required for a complete plan set. Construction drawings and engineering calculations must be prepared according to the current building code adopted in Pierce County for one- and two-family dwellings, which is the 2006 International Residential Code. As the applicant you are responsible for making a complete submittal and will assert that all of the required plan set documents are present by including a completed copy of [Department of Building Safety and Inspections Bulletin #55: Building Plans/Documents Checklist](#) with your application submittal.

Construction Drawings

- Foundation Plan
- Floor Plan (required for each floor level)
- Framing Plans (all floor and roof areas)
- Building Elevations (all views)
- Building/Wall Section Detail(s) (as needed)
- Stair and Guardrail Details (both interior and exterior)
- Structural Detail Sheets
- Engineering Calculations

Engineering Calculations and Drawings

- Engineering Calculations (must include design criteria for soil bearing capacity, snow load, wind speed and exposure, and frost depth, and be stamped and signed with site-specific address on cover sheet)
- Engineering Structural Plans/Detail Sheets (must be stamped and signed)

Special Building Methods/Materials (as indicated by the engineer)

- ICC Research Reports
- Additional Engineering
- Special Inspections (include relevant special inspection/structural observation forms)

Other Reviews That May Be Needed

In most cases, projects that require a building permit will also need one or more related applications. As an applicant, please be prepared for the possibility that additional applications and fees may be involved with your proposal. The following are some of the most common applications. When additional documentation and/or materials are required for submittal, the submittal standard listing the required information is cited.

Obtaining Handouts and Forms

See “Obtaining Handouts and Forms” later in this *Guide*.

Residential Site Development Permit

This permit covers general site work as well as the inspections for erosion control and storm drainage control. A Site Development Permit is required for the creation of any new impervious area, including structures, driveways, and swimming pools. The Site Development Permit application must be submitted and fees paid at the time of building permit application unless otherwise required. For more information, see the [Guide to Single-Family Residential Site Development](#) or contact the Development Engineering division at 798-7155. No additional documents are required for this permit.

Driveway Approach Permit

A Driveway Approach Permit is required for each driveway access to a County road. This requirement pertains even when the access already exists, if no driveway approach permit was previously obtained. The Driveway Approach Permit application must be submitted and fees paid at the time of building permit application. For more information, see [Guide to Single-Family Residential Site Development](#) or contact the Development Engineering division at 798-7155. No additional documents are required for this permit.

Residential Fire Alarm Permit

A Residential Fire Alarm Permit is required to install a monitored alarm system in a residential dwelling or accessory structure, even if the system is not required to meet fire credits. For more information see Requirements for a Monitored Fire Alarm System or contact the Fire Protection Bureau at 798-7179. No additional documents are required to apply for this permit.

Residential Fire Sprinkler System Permit

A Residential Fire Sprinkler Permit is required to install a fire sprinkler system in a residential dwelling or accessory structure, even if the system is not required to meet fire credits. Sprinkler permits are obtained by a contractor licensed to design and install fire sprinkler systems. For more information contact the Fire Protection Bureau at 798-7179.

Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG Tank) Permit

An LPG Tank permit is required to install a fuel tank 125 gallons or more in size. Applications for LPG tank permits must include a completed copy of the [Pierce County Fire Prevention Bureau Application for International Fire Code Permit](#) form and three copies of a site plan showing the proposed location of the tank. Installation details are also required for tanks to be placed underground. For more information contact the Fire Protection Bureau at 798-7179.

Plumbing/Mechanical Permits

Plumbing and Mechanical Permits are typically included with the building permit when it is known at the time of application that plumbing or mechanical features will be installed. Sometimes, however—as in the case of a bathroom remodel or the installation of a lawn sprinkler system—a Plumbing or Mechanical Permit will be required that isn’t accompanied by a building permit. These permits can be obtained at the Development Center or online through www.piercecountywa.org/pals. For more information see the [Mechanical-Plumbing-Fire Submittal Standard](#) or contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Sewer Permit

A Sewer Permit is required to connect to the sanitary sewer system. For more information contact the Sewer Utility Division of the Public Works Department at 798-2737.

Infiltration Trench Permit

An Infiltration Trench Permit is required when Development Center staff determine that an infiltration trench is mandatory to handle the storm water runoff from new construction. When required, you must submit three copies of the [Single Family Residential Infiltration System Application Worksheet](#) at the time of building permit application. For more information see [Single Family Residential Infiltration System Design Guide](#) or contact the Development Engineering Division at 798-7155.

Gate Permit

A Gate Permit is required to construct a gate across a residential driveway, private road, or shared access. The gate must also be constructed according to Pierce County standards. For more information see [Gates: Permitting, Design & Inspection Guide](#) or contact the Development Engineering Division at 798-7155.

Accessory Dwelling Unit Permit

An Accessory Dwelling Unit Permit is required, in addition to a building permit for the structure itself, when a second dwelling is proposed on a single parcel. Accessory dwelling units are subject to size and location limits by Code. For more information, contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Mother-in-Law Mobile Permit

A Mother-in-Law Mobile Permit is required to place a temporary structure for use as a mother-in-law dwelling. Since mother-in-law units are temporary dwellings these permits must be renewed annually and are limited to mobile homes. Other restrictions also apply. A recorded Mother-in-Law Affidavit must also be included with a mother-in-law permit application. For more information, contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Land Use Application

In some situations a proposed project requires special land use approval. Development Center staff will be able to tell you during the pre-application phase (see “Single-Family/Duplex Residential Building Permit Process” in this *Guide*) whether a land use application is required for your project.

Administrative Design Review

An Administrative Design Review is a type of land use application. Construction of or alteration to structures in urban residential zones in the Gig Harbor and Graham Community Plans require design review in addition to regular permit process. If your project is located in these areas, contact the Development Center for more information at 798-3739.

Land Use Affidavit

An affidavit must be recorded with the Pierce County Auditor’s Office for some types of projects. A copy of the recorded affidavit must also be included with your building permit application. Development Center staff will be able to tell you during the pre-application phase (see “Single-Family/Duplex Residential Building Permit Process” in this *Guide*) whether a land use affidavit is required for your project.

Shoreline Application

All construction is regulated in the shoreline zone, which extends 200 feet from the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of Puget Sound or freshwater lakes, and includes any wetland areas and/or wetland buffers that extend beyond the standard zone. In addition, there is a 50-foot shoreline buffer/building setback along shorelines. Any construction within the buffer/setback zone (such as docks, floats, piers, etc.) requires special approval. For more information contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Wetland Application

A wetland application may be required due to the project’s proximity to mapped wetland indicators. There are several different levels of formal wetland review, some of which must be performed by an outside consultant while others may be performed by Pierce County Staff. A list of approved private wetland biologists qualified to prepare such reviews is available at the Development Center. For more information and submittal requirements, see the [Wetland or Critical Fish and Wildlife Habitat Area Applications Submittal Standard](#) or contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Fish and Wildlife Application

A fish and wildlife application may be required due to the project’s proximity to mapped surface water or other indicators. There are several different levels of review, some of which must be performed by an outside consultant while others may be performed by Pierce County Staff. Lists of approved private wildlife and fisheries biologists qualified to prepare such reviews are available at the Development Center. For more information and submittal requirements, see the [Wetland or Critical Fish and Wildlife Habitat Area Applications Submittal Standard](#) or contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Flood Review

Projects proposed in a potential flood hazard area (as defined by Title 18E of the Pierce County Code) may require flood review applications in addition to the building permit application. When required, five copies of a study prepared by a licensed surveyor or civil engineer (as required) must be submitted with, or prior to, your building permit application. For more information contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

Storm Drainage Plan Review

A storm drainage plan may be required with the building permit application for projects where topography, soil

type, and/or project size indicate the need for one. Development Center staff will be able to determine the need for a storm drainage plan during the pre-application phase (see “Single-Family/Duplex Residential Building Permit Process” in this *Guide*). For more information, contact the Development Engineering Division at 798-7155.

Geotechnical Assessment

A Geotechnical Assessment is required when the project is located within a potential landslide or erosion hazard area as defined by Title 18E of the Pierce County Code. A geotechnical assessment may also be required when there is a question about the ability of the underlying soils to support the structure. Geotechnical assessments must

be prepared by a licensed geotechnical engineer and submitted (four copies) to Pierce County with, or prior to, your building permit application. For more information contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

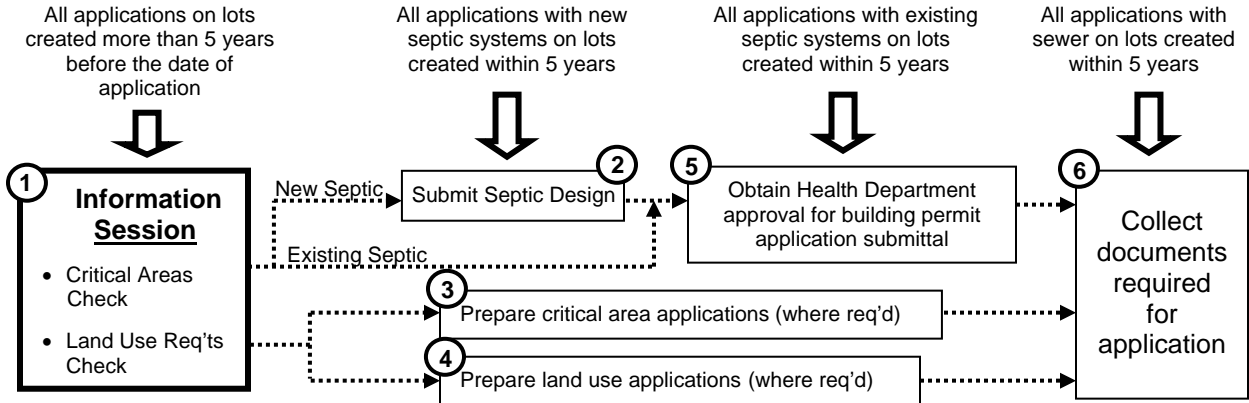
Mine Hazard Area Assessment

A Mine Hazard Area Assessment is required when a project is located in a mine potential hazard area as defined by Title 18E of the Pierce County Code. Mine Hazard Area assessments must be prepared by a licensed geotechnical engineer and submitted (four copies) to Pierce County with, or prior to, your building permit application. For more information contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

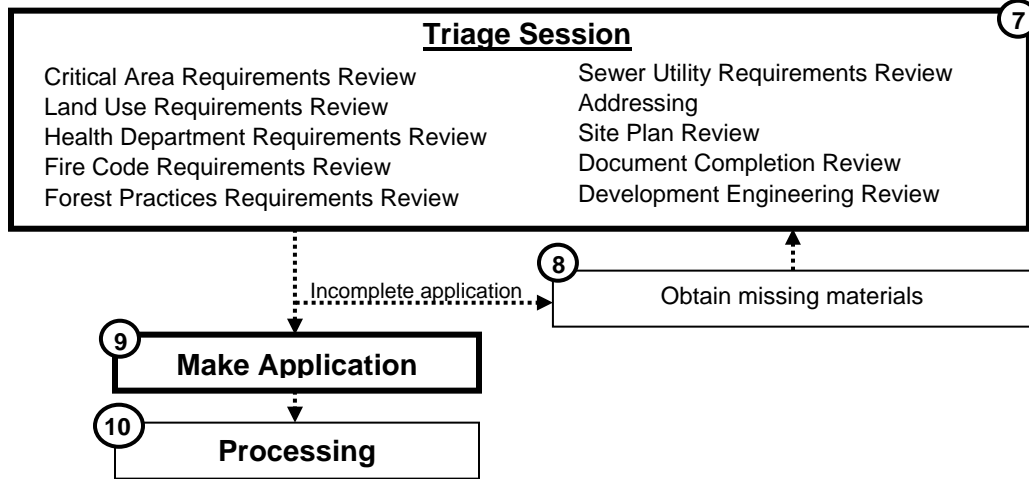


Single Family Residential Building Permit Application Process

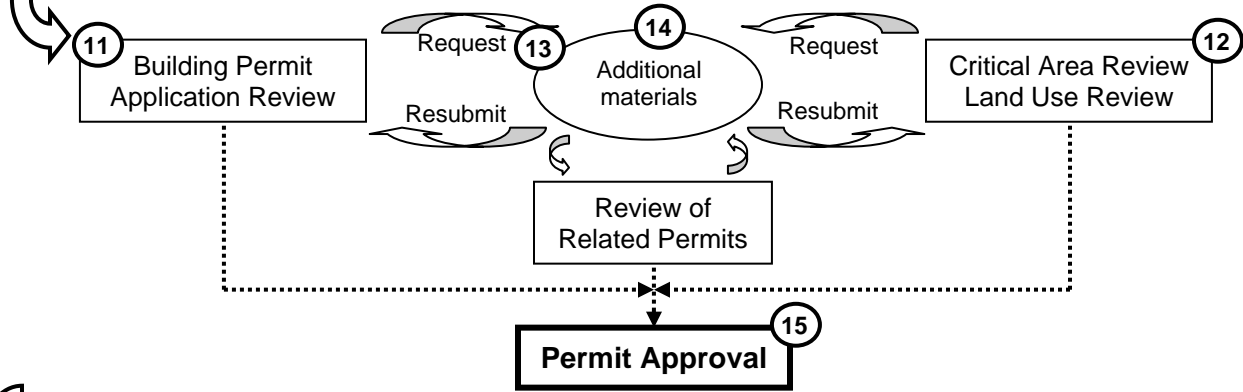
PRE APPLICATION



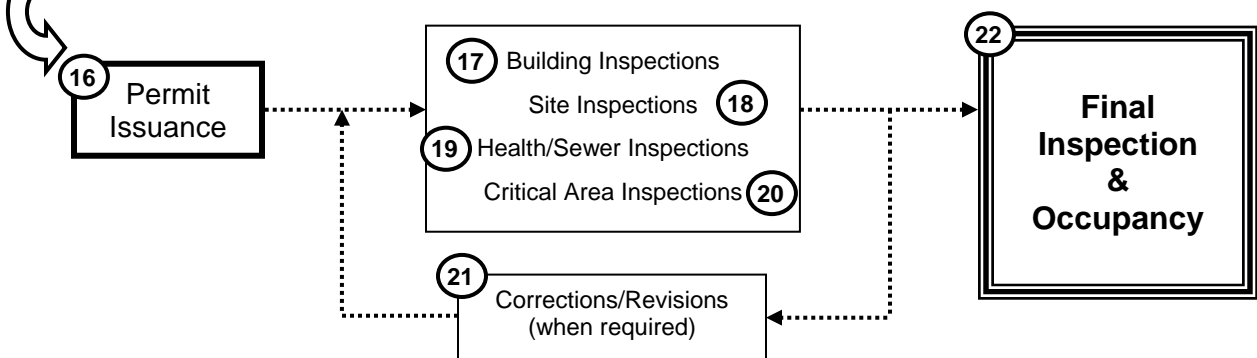
APPLICATION INTAKE



APPLICATION REVIEW



CONSTRUCTION



Residential Building Permit Application Process Chart Instructions

Getting Started

Your starting point in the building permit application process is partially determined by the age of your lot. This is because much of the review involved in determining and satisfying many of the development requirements for these lots is accomplished in the subdivision process which creates the parcels. You can determine your parcel's age by contacting the Development Center or the Assessor/Treasurer's Office. The four "entry options" are as follows:

- i. Parcels more than five years old.** Older lots require the highest degree of review to determine permit requirements. Therefore it is highly recommended that you begin your improvement process with an "Information Session" to examine all of the issues which may affect your project.
- ii. Parcels five or fewer years old which require a new or modified septic system.** Constructing a new house on a lot without a septic system, or adding bedrooms to a house with an existing septic system, requires a septic design. Submitting the septic design to the Health Department is the first step in these cases.
- iii. Parcels five or fewer years old using septic systems which do not need modification.** Any project that expands a building or driveway on a lot with a septic system requires an as-built drawing of the septic system with the building permit application submittal.
- iv. Parcels five or fewer years old which are served by sewer.** Parcels served by sewer do not need Health Department approval for application. Begin by gathering the materials required for your permit application and proceed to the application intake phase.

Obtaining Handouts and Forms

See "Obtaining Handouts and Forms" later in this *Guide*.

1. Information Session

An Information Session is a meeting with a Permit Technician at the Development Center. In this meeting, Pierce County staff look into every aspect of your project to determine whether the project is affected by critical areas or has special land use requirements, identify permit application requirements, and answer any questions you may have. These sessions are intended especially for applicants with parcels created more than five years in the past, but are available to anyone. There are currently no appointments available for these sessions.

2. Submit Septic Design

For projects involving the construction of new or altered septic systems, a septic design must be submitted to the Health Department by a licensed septic engineer, along with a copy of the parcel's critical area checklist. (You can obtain the critical area checklist at <http://yakima401.co.pierce.wa.us/CriticalAreas/>.) A copy of the design (with a "received" stamp from the Health Department) must be included with your building permit application submittal. If the project is affected by critical areas, bring the septic design into the Development Center to be reviewed and approved for submittal to the Health Department.

3. Prepare Critical Area Applications

When it is determined in the Information Session that the proposal is affected by critical areas, Technical Support staff will indicate which reviews are needed and the submittal requirements for each. These applications must be submitted at the same time as your building permit application. For more information, see "Other Applications That May Be Needed" in this *Guide*.

4. Prepare Land Use Applications

Some projects will require additional land use approval. When it is determined in the Information Session that such approval is required, Technical Support staff will indicate which applications are needed and how to submit them. These applications must be submitted along with your building permit application. For more information, see "Other Applications That May Be Needed" in this *Guide*.

5. Obtain Health Department Approval for Building Permit Application Submittal

All building permit applications not served by sewer require Health Department approval for submittal. **Note that this approval is for submittal only; it is not an approval of the building permit itself.** This approval can be obtained as part of the pre-application stage by

bringing your site plan and Health Department paperwork to the Development Center for review by Technical Support staff, or as part of the application intake stage Triage Session. For more information on Health Department requirements for building permit applications, see the [Environmental Health Program Septic System Application Process](#) handout.

6. Collect Documents Required for Application

Refer to “Requirements for a Single-Family/Duplex Building Permit Application” in this *Guide* for a list of the documents that must be included in your permit application submittal. In addition, refer to “Other Permits/Applications That May Be Needed” for a list of documents required for the preparation of supporting applications, when required.

7. Triage Session

When all required documents and materials have been collected, come into the Development Center and sign in with the receptionist for a Triage Session. In Triage your submittal is checked for completeness by a Permit Technician and is examined by all of the relevant Technical Support divisions for any additional requirements that could affect your proposal.

8. Obtain Missing Materials

If anything is missing from your application submittal, the Permit Technician and/or Technical Support staff will instruct you on what must be done to make the submittal complete. You will also be given a project-specific submittal standard that lists all of the requirements. Once these materials have been gathered, come back to the Development Center receptionist to be triaged again.

9. Make Application

When your application submittal is complete, the permit fees for your project will be calculated, your submittal packet will be taken in as a drop-off application along with a check to cover the fees, and you will be given a receipt. Your application will then be placed in the processing queue.

10. Processing

Permit applications are processed in the order they are received. When your application comes to the front of the processing queue, and if all of the necessary materials are present, the relevant permit applications are generated and are assigned application numbers. At this point the applications are assigned “accepted” status. Copies of the permit applications, along with a cash register receipt, will be mailed to you, left at the front counter for pick-up, or kept with the submittal packet to be picked up with the

issued permits, according to how you designate at the time of submittal.

Then the applications are sent to the relevant departments for plan approval. From this point on in the process, you can view the status of your permit applications through the County’s website (www.piercecountywa.org/pals) or through the Permit and Application Status System (PASS) by calling 798-4900. For more information about PASS see [Division of Building Safety and Inspections Bulletin #33: Permit and Application Status System](#).

11-13. Building Permit Application Review Critical Area/Land Use Application Review Review of Related Permits

Once your applications have been processed they are assigned to Pierce County staff for review. If additional information or materials are needed by the reviewer, you will be contacted and a “request for information” will be linked to the application as well. Reviewer comments can be viewed online through the County’s website (www.piercecountywa.org/pals). The different reviews take different lengths of time. In addition, some permits cannot be approved until others have received approval.

14. Additional Materials

When a reviewer asks for design changes or more information, or if you decide to make an alteration to your plans after submittal, you will need to submit the relevant documents to Pierce County as a re-submittal. In some cases there will be a re-submittal fee. You can bring the materials to the Development Center or arrange an alternate delivery method with the reviewer who requested the materials.

15. Permit Approval

After all reviews associated with a particular permit application are completed, the application’s status is changed to “approved.” For some applications—such as critical area reviews—this is the end of the process (though these reviews may result in additional requirements applicable to other permit applications). For other applications, such as building permits, the process continues through issuance and construction. Keep in mind that different permits associated with your project may be approved at different times, so check the status of your permit applications regularly through the County’s website (www.piercecountywa.org/pals) or through (PASS) by calling 798-4900.

16. Permit Issuance

Permit applications remain in approved status until they are issued to the applicant, either in person over the

Development Center counter, or through the mail. All fees must be paid before permit issuance. The method of issuance is selected by the applicant and is noted on the Building Permit Application form. At this time you will receive job site copies of the permit(s), site plan, and/or construction drawings that are associated with each issued permit. These job site documents must be posted in an accessible location at the site. Once a permit has been issued, the work approved by that permit may begin.

17. Building Inspections

It is the applicant's responsibility to call for inspections at the appropriate stages in the construction process. The building permit indicates the telephone number to call for the first inspection. Building inspectors are assigned by area; you can find your inspection area on the cover sheet of the issued permit. For more information on when to call for inspections, see [Division of Building Safety and Inspections Bulletin #32: Applicant's Responsibility for Inspections](#). For additional important information about inspections for manufactured homes, see [Division of Building Safety and Inspections Bulletin #22: A Guide to Building Permits for Manufactured Homes](#).

18. Site Inspections

Site development permits, driveway approach permits, and wetland and wildlife reviews (among others) involve site visits. You are not required to take any initiative to set up site visits for wetland or wildlife reviews. For site development and driveway approach permits, the first visit will happen automatically when you call for the first building inspection. After that you will need to call the site inspector directly to set up subsequent site inspections. The number to call for these inspections is printed on the site development permit. For more information about site work and site inspections, see [A Guide to Single-Family Residential Site Development](#).

19. Health/Sewer Inspections

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) permits and inspections are independent from the Pierce

County building and permit process. If you are proposing to dig a well for potable water, the drilling must be completed and lab tests performed prior to issuance of your building permit. Permits to install your drainfield and dig your well are issued through TPCHD. Please refer to the [Environmental Health Program Septic System Application Process](#) handout to help you through this process. It is important to keep in mind that final occupancy of your building will not be granted until an as-built of the drainfield installation has been turned in by your drainfield designer and accepted by TPCHD.

The Sewer Utility department must inspect and approve your sewer connection before your final building inspection can be approved. For more information, contact the Sewer Utility Department at 798-2737.

20. Corrections/Revisions

In the course of inspections, an inspector may determine that additional work is required before a particular inspection can be approved. When this occurs the inspector will provide a written list of the work that must be performed and will enter the information as a comment on the relevant permit. In some cases these corrections will require a re-inspection and an additional fee.

21. Critical Area Inspections

In some cases a critical area review will impose requirements on the building permit that must be inspected prior to the final inspection of the building.

22. Final Inspection and Occupancy

When all other inspections have been approved, you are ready for your final inspection. (Make sure you are ready before calling for the final inspection or you will be charged a re-inspection fee.)

When the final inspection is approved the inspector will note this fact on the permit, which will release the building for occupancy. The actual occupancy permit can be obtained online or through a written request to the Pierce County Building Department.

Obtaining Handouts and Forms

All of the documents mentioned in this *Guide* (except for the building codes listed on page three), as well as many others, can be obtained at the Development Center. They can also be obtained through the Pierce County Planning and Land Services Department (PCPALS) website (www.piercecountywa.org/pals) following the instructions below:

Submittal Standards

On the PCPALS site, hold your cursor over “Permit & Application Information” in the yellow menu to the left of the page. Move the cursor directly to the right and click on “Submittal Requirements/Checklists.” Then look through the list to find the submittal standard you need.

Division of Building Safety and Inspections Bulletins

On the PCPALS site, hold your cursor over “Permit & Application Information” in the yellow menu on the left side of the page. Move the cursor directly to the right and click on “Handouts and Policies.” Scroll down to the Building Division section.

Informational Handouts

On the PCPALS site, hold your cursor over “Permit & Application Information” in the yellow menu on the left side of the page. Move the cursor directly to the right and click on “Handouts and Policies.” Handouts are listed by division.

Applications and Forms

On the PCPALS site, hold your cursor over “Permit & Application Information” in the yellow menu on the left side of the page. Move the cursor directly to the right and click on “Applications and Forms.” Forms are listed by division.

Regulations

On the PCPALS site, hold your cursor over “Regulations” in the yellow menu on the left side of the page. Pierce County codes and ordinances affecting land use and development are listed by number.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do I discover and/or interpret information on critical areas affecting my parcel? A general description of critical areas affecting your parcel can be obtained through the Pierce County website (www.piercecountywa.org/pals). For more information, or for help understanding the critical areas on your site and how they affect you, contact the Development Center at 798-3739.

I’ve received copies of my permit applications in the mail; can I start work? No. You may not begin work until the application which covers the work has been approved, and the permit issued (as indicated by the absence of the word “application” on the permit paperwork).

How long will it take to review my applications? Different departments and applications have different review times, and all of them vary according on workload. In addition, some applications may depend upon the approval of others. The target timelines for initial reviews are as follows: 60 days for wetland and wildlife reviews, 30 days for Development Engineering reviews, and 14 days for building plan review.

How can I see the status of my permit applications? Pierce County offers two means of checking the progress of permit applications.

1. The Permit Application Status System (PASS): PASS is an automated phone system that can be reached by calling 798-4900 or 798-7290. [Division of Building Safety and Inspection Bulletin #33: PASS](#) contains more information for using this system.
2. Online Permit Information: The Planning and Land Services website (which can be reached through Pierce County's website at www.piercecountywa.org/pals) contains a link to an online system for reviewing the status of applications and permits.

What work can I begin if my site development permit is issued but my building permit is not? You may clear the construction area and perform the approved earthwork in preparation for construction.

How long do I have before my building permit expires? Building permit applications are good for twelve months after acceptance. Once they have been issued, building permits are good for 180 days, and are automatically extended another 180 days after each inspection.

Can I extend a permit? Building permits are automatically extended for 180 days following an inspection. If more time is needed, you may submit a written request for extension to the Building Department giving a reason for the delay.

What can I do if my permit expires? Within 30 days of the permit's expiration, you may submit a written request to the Building Department giving a reason for the delay and asking for an extension. After 30 days the permit is canceled and a replacement permit must be obtained, which involves paying at least some of the permit fees again.

What must I do if I have received a stop work, violation or notice of non-compliance? These notices are removed by complying with code and/or permitting requirements. These requirements are listed on the notice itself. Contact the Development Center at 798-3739 if you have any questions.

Can I change my plans after I've applied for the permit? Yes. Simply submit all revised documents to the Development Center and pay the required fees.

What does it mean when I look at my permit online and see a "hold" on the final inspection? Various departments might place a hold on the final inspection of a structure. This means that these departments need certain documents or information before the final inspection can be approved. If you have questions regarding these requirements, contact the relevant department.

Contact Information

Development Center
253-798-3739

Pierce County Planning & Land Services Website
www.piercecountywa.org/pals

Planner of the Day
253-798-2636

Tacoma Pierce County Health Department
253-798-6500

Biologist of the Day
253-798-7005

Pierce County Sewer Utility Department
253-798-2737

Development Engineering
253-798-7155

WA State Department of Labor and Industries
253-596-3800