



Obtaining a Building Permit

Handout No: 9
Revised: 2/15/11

BUILDING PERMITS

A Building Permit must be obtained for any demolition, new construction, addition, alteration or repair to a building or structure (including reroofing, fireplaces, swimming pools, hot tubs, retaining walls, carports, covered patios, etc.). Only a licensed contractor, a property owner or an authorized agent of a property owner may obtain a Building Permit. A single Building Permit application can be issued for all work on a project including building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, etc.

NOTE: If you need Planning Department approvals (such as design review, use permit or a variance), you must apply for them before, or while applying for your Building Permit. Check with the Planning Department to see if planning approvals may be necessary for your project.

OBTAINING A BUILDING PERMIT

Building permit applications are available at City Hall or may be downloaded (in PDF form) filled in and printed from the City's web site at <http://www.sonomacity.org/default.aspx?PagelId=413> .

The first step is to fill out a Building Permit Application form. Next, file the application, along with a plan review deposit, with the Building Department at City Hall (No. 1 The Plaza, Sonoma). Your application needs to include three (3) complete sets of plans.

Submitting an incomplete application may cause delays in plan checking. It also may cause us to return your plans due to insufficient information. See the Building Department informational handout titled [Building Permit Submittal Requirements](#) on the City's web site for more information.

APPROVALS TO OBTAIN AND CONDITIONS TO MEET BEFORE A BUILDING PERMIT IS ISSUED

Planning Actions

Any required planning actions, such as design review or use permit, must be complete and conditions of approval addressed.

CALGreen+Tier 1 Checklist and Review

For new buildings only (not additions and alterations), a CALGreen Checklist must be completed and submitted with your building permit plans and documentation. The City of Sonoma has adopted CALGreen+Tier 1 as the minimum green building standard to be met. Sonoma's [CALGreen+Tier 1 Checklists](#) can be found on the City's web site at <http://www.sonomacity.org/default.aspx?PagelId=518> . The CALGreen+Tier 1 Checklist must be completed and reviewed by a City of Sonoma listed CALGreen special inspector, hired by the project applicant, prior to submitting the checklist to the Building Department.

Public Improvement Agreement

This agreement is located on page 4 of the Building Permit application form and is required for all projects, except permits solely for reroofing, ADA upgrades and all solar energy installations, with a valuation exceeding \$40,000 within any two-year period. The agreement provides notification to the owner that public improvements such as curb, gutter, sidewalks, streets, drainage and storm drainage will be required to be provided or repaired as determined necessary by the City Engineer. The owner of the property must sign the agreement and is responsible for the costs of said improvements.

Sonoma County Health Department

Written approval is required when a project involves food-handling establishments, public swimming pools, wells and projects served by septic systems.

Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management, Sanitation Division

Written approval is required in the form of a "Permit Letter" for changes of use, restaurants, industrial waste producers, and new buildings connected to the sanitary sewer system.

School Impact Fee Certification

Certifies that school impact fees have been paid to the Sonoma Valley Unified School District. The School Impact Fee Certification form is provided by Building Department staff prior to issuance of a permit. School impact fees are assessed on new floor area and are paid directly to the SVUSD.

Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Asbestos testing and written authorization from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is required for structural demolition projects and other projects with hazardous air pollutants.

FEES

Most plan check and permit fees are based on the valuation of the project. The Building Department determines the valuation based on published valuation tables and the value of the work, not the actual cost, of all the construction or work that the permit is issued for. This includes all finish work, painting, roofing, electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, elevators, fire extinguishing systems, paving, any other permanent work of improvement or permanent equipment, overhead and profit. Please feel free to contact the Building Department if you need a rough estimate of the building permit fees prior to starting your project.

- **Fees Due When Filing Application**

When you apply for your Building Permit, you will need to pay a plan check deposit (cash or check only). The deposit will be used to pay applicable plan check fees, training fees, administrative and other fees associated with your project.

- **Fees Due When Permit is Issued**

At the time the permit is issued, you must pay the remaining balance of all of the Building Permit fees.

- **Fees by Other Agencies**

Often times other agencies will also collect fees for certain types of construction projects. We recommend that the other agencies be contacted prior to obtaining a Building Permit to determine if additional fees will be applicable. Depending on the circumstances, some fees assessed by other agencies must be paid prior to issuance of a Building Permit, while other fees must be paid prior to use or occupancy of the structure. Typical fees that are not included on the Building Permit are:

- Sewer Connection
- Water Connection
- School Impact
- Electric and Gas Utility Connections
- Telephone and CATV Connections
- Encroachment Permits
- Public Works Inspection
- Use Permits
- Health Permits
- Air Quality Permits
- Business License
- CALGreen Special Inspector

PLAN CHECK

After you have submitted your building permit application along with the necessary plans and other documentation, the plans will be routed to other applicable City departments for review and approval. The purpose of the review is to determine if the plans substantially conform to applicable laws and regulations enforced by the City. Plans for new buildings must be accompanied by a CALGreen+Tier 1 Checklist completed and certified by the owner, design professional and green building special inspector that the design, when implemented will meet CALGreen+Tier 1 requirements. If the plans or other documentation require corrections, you will be notified and a list of required corrections will be provided. Two copies of revised sets of plans and documentation must be submitted for re-review. Once the plans are reviewed and approved, the Building Department will notify you that your permit is ready to be issued.

PLAN CHECK TURNAROUND

The time it takes to approve a set of plans varies depending on a number of factors, such as the complexity of the project, the completeness of the plans and the current workload of the Plans Examiner. The Plans Examiner can provide you with a rough estimate of the plan review turnaround time when you submit your plans for plan check.

ISSUANCE OF BUILDING PERMIT

Building permits may be issued only to:

- a licensed California contractor that is licensed to perform the scope of work covered by the permit; or
- the owner of the property; or
- an authorized agent of the owner of the property.

When your permit is ready to be issued, you will be contacted to come to City Hall, pay the remaining fees, and pick up your permit. If the permit will be issued to an Owner-Builder, the Owner must sign the form in person and complete the Owner-Builder declarations.

Contractors may authorize an employee to sign Building Permits only if this authorization is given in writing. Contractors must present evidence of a current contractor's license (pocket card) and must have a current City of Sonoma business license at the time of permit issuance. An approved copy of the plans and the Building Permit Inspection Record must be kept at the job site.

The following information is required on building permit applications:

- Building Project Identification
 - Job Address
 - Assessor's Parcel Number
 - Owner's Name if Known, Address, Phone
 - Contractor's Name, Address, Phone, License Number and Classification
 - Architect or Engineer Name, Address, Phone, License Number and Class
 - Description of Work
- Licensed Contractor Declaration (if permit is to be issued to Contractor)
- Owner-Builder Declaration and Owner-Builder Verification (if permit is to be issued to the property owner or an authorized agent of the property owner).
- Workers' Compensation Insurance Declaration.
- Construction Lending Agency.
- Asbestos/Demolition/Hazardous Materials Declaration.
- Agreement to Construct Public Improvements (if work is over \$40,000 valuation).
- Indication of type of project (i.e. residential, commercial, etc.).
- Indication of whether project is on public sewer or septic.

TIME LIMITS

You must pick up your permit within 180 calendar days from the date of application.. You may submit a written request for a one-time extension before the 180th day if it can be demonstrated that circumstances beyond the control of the applicant prevented action from being taken. If this period ends without the permit being issued, the plan check fee will be forfeited.

After the permit has been issued, you have 180 calendar days from the date of issuance to start work on your project and call for an inspection by the Building Department. You may submit a written request for an extension on the building permit deadline before the 180th day if it can be demonstrated that circumstances beyond the control of the applicant prevented action from being taken.

INSPECTIONS

At each stage of construction you will be required to call the Building Department for an inspection. The Building Department requires a minimum of one-day advance notice for all inspections. Due to diminished Building Department resources, inspections can currently only be scheduled during the morning before noon. Specific times of the day cannot be scheduled due to variables encountered in the field. The types of inspections required and instructions are listed on the Building Permit Inspection Record provided at the time of the Building Permit issuance.

Inspections for fire sprinkler and other fire suppression systems are conducted by the City's Fire Department. The Fire Department requires one-day advance notice for all inspections.

Inspections for sewer piping located more than two feet outside of a building are conducted by Sonoma County PRMD, Sanitation Division.

Special inspections (including CALGreen documentation and field verification) are performed by individuals pre-qualified by the Building Department and hired by the project applicant or owner.

The Approved Job Plans and the Building Permit Inspection Record must be available to the Inspector at the time of the inspection, otherwise no inspection will be performed.

CHANGES TO PLANS

After a permit has been issued, any changes to the plans must be approved by the Building Department. Two sets of the proposed change(s) must be prepared by the architect, engineer or designer and submitted for review.

SUMMARY OF BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

1. Submit plans to outside agencies such as Sonoma County PRMD, Sonoma County Health Department, etc. if applicable.
2. For new buildings, hire a CALGreen special inspector to assist with the completion and verification of the CALGreen+Tier 1 Checklist.
3. Submit plans and permit application to the City Building Department and pay initial Building Department deposit.
4. The Building Department routes plans to applicable City departments.
5. Plans Examiner reviews plans.
6. Plans Examiner notifies applicant about any changes or corrections that need to be made to the plans.
7. Architect/Designer corrects plans (if corrections are required) and resubmits two sets of revised plans to Building Department.
8. Plans undergo additional reviews and renotifications as necessary.
9. When all corrections are completed and verified, plans are approved and the building permit is ready for issuance.
10. Applicant pays other agency fees (i.e. School Impact, Sewer, Water, etc.), if required.

11. Applicant pays remaining building permit fees and obtains the permit.
12. Applicant proceeds with construction and calls for required inspections.
13. For new buildings, the applicant coordinates CALGreen inspection and documentation verification throughout the duration of the project with a City-listed CALGreen special inspector hired by the owner.
14. The Building Inspector inspects construction of all phases of the project.
15. Applicant obtains necessary written approvals from applicable agencies and City Departments prior to Building Department final approval.
16. Applicant obtains final approval from the Building Inspector, who then signs the Building Permit Inspection Record.
17. Upon completion of the final inspection and sign-off by all applicable departments and agencies, the Building Permit Inspection Record (job card) serves as the certificate of occupancy for the project.