

# Seattle Permits

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

## Subject-to-Field-Inspection (STFI) Permits

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If you have a simple construction project that does not require extensive plan review, you may be able to speed up your permit application, review, and issuance process by getting a Subject-to-Field-Inspection (STFI) permit. Projects that qualify for the STFI process and the corresponding application requirements are summarized on pages 1-3. **Examples of projects that do not qualify are listed on page 4. Qualifications for this type of permit are subject to the building official.**

If you are working on a single family house or duplex, please read Tip 303A, *Common Seattle Residential Code Requirements*. For electrical and over-the-counter mechanical permits, refer to Tip 104, *Getting an OTC (Over-the-Counter) Permit*. Other helpful Tips are listed on page 5.

### Special Notice Regarding Projects That Involve Removal and Replacement of a Nonconforming Portion of a Structure

Removal and reconstruction (replacement) of a portion of a nonconforming structure is not considered repair. Proof will be required prior to permit issuance that the structure was legally constructed under a permit, and the burden of such proof will be the responsibility of the applicant.

Prior to applying for a permit, you may want to research previous permits issued for the site at the DPD Microfilm Library, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. Phone: (206) 233-5180.

A site inspection may also be required prior to permit issuance.

### Projects That Qualify as STFI and Their Submittal Requirements

The project types listed below require a **location plan** as described on page 2:

- **Demolition** of a building is proposed on a site with more than two buildings. Also, building identification number(s) must be specified if there are more than two buildings on the site.
- **Roof repair** to original configuration (see SRC Sec. R105.2.10). Replacing roofing materials and siding not involving structural changes does not require a permit. A permit may not be issued for structures that have been built without a permit. Photographs showing the extent of the damage are required. See SRC Section R907 for roofing repair requirements.
- **Foundation repair and replacement** where the foundation is not designed as a retaining wall; where height does not exceed four feet from the bottom of the footing; where there is no change in height and location of the structure's footprint; and where the project is not located in an environmentally critical area (ECA). Photographs showing extent of the damage are required (Note: foundation repair and replacement with pin piles requires plan review and therefore cannot be processed as an STFI.)

The following types of projects require a **floor plan** showing scope and location of work (to be used for reference only). Floor plan requirements are described on page 2 and 3.

- **Structural alterations** to existing single family and duplex structures (R-3): openings in bearing walls are allowed if walls support only one story above and roof loads, and with a maximum structural beam span of 14 feet (30 feet if a manufactured truss is used).
- **Non-structural interior alterations in single family and duplex structures (R-3)** (Note: Converting uninhabited attic storage area to livable space requires plan review and therefore cannot be processed as STFI.)

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- **Non-structural interior alterations** (tenant improvements) in **commercial** spaces are limited to 4,500 square feet of area for all work being done. These alterations must not change the number of exits or change the path of travel or distance to exits. See the Multifamily/Commercial Buildings/STFI checklist at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources) for additional eligibility requirements. Proof will be required prior to permit issuance that the structure was legally constructed and that the use has been legally established under a permit. The burden of such proof will be the responsibility of the applicant.
- **Repairs to damaged buildings** and the original configuration. For structures subject to the Seattle Residential Code (SRC), the value of the repairs cannot exceed 60 percent of the building's value. For structures subject to the Seattle Building Code (SBC), the value of the repairs can not exceed 30 percent of the estimated replacement cost of the building. Where the value of the repairs exceeds 10 percent of the estimated replacement cost of the building, the SBC requires the structural repairs to be designed by a structural engineer. If the field inspector determines that damage is too extensive, a full plan review and approval will be required. Photographs showing the extent of the damage are required.

The following types of projects require a **site plan**, **elevation plan**, and a **floor plan**, as described on pages 2 and 3:

- **Ground level one-story additions** to existing (R-3) single family and duplex residential structures only. Additions must be 750 square feet or less in area, with a maximum structural beam span of 14 feet\* (30 feet if a manufactured truss is used). Openings in bearing walls are limited to supporting one story above and roof loads. Additions must also meet prescriptive energy code (Ch. 6) requirements and prescriptive ventilation requirements of the Mechanical Code.
 

\*For garage door headers only the limit is 16 feet.
- **Detached accessory structures** to (R-3) single-family and duplex occupancies, limited to 750 square feet in area and with structural spans of less than 14 feet (30 feet if manufactured trusses are used).
- Transmitting **satellite dish antenna** for single family residences.

- **Rockeries** not used as a retaining wall and not on an environmentally critical area (ECA) site, designed according to DPD's prescriptive rockery design (refer to Tip 321, *Rockeries: Prescriptive Design and Installation Standards*).
- **Dormer additions** to single-family and duplex (R-3) occupancies when plans are prepared by a licensed architect or engineer. Maximum width is 14 feet with a maximum of 200 square feet of new usable floor area. Dormers must be physically independent from any existing dormers, or the total overall width will be counted toward the 14 feet maximum width. Please note: dormer additions creating a new floor for habitable living space require plan review; converting an existing uninhabited attic used as storage into living/habitable space will also require plan review.

## General Plan Information That May Be Required to Determine if Your Project Qualifies as STFI

### 1. SITE PLAN (2 copies)

A site plan is required when there is a change to the exterior envelope of a structure. A site plan must show the location of all structures on the site, to representative scale, and identify the location of the work to be performed relative to existing conditions and property lines. The exterior dimensions of the property and all structures should be called out, and the distance from all property lines to the structure at its closest point should be noted on this drawing. (See Tip 103, *Site Plan Requirements*; Tip 220, *Lot Coverage, Height and Yard Standards for Homes in Single Family Zones*; and Tip 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*.)

### 2. LOCATION PLAN (1 copy)

A location plan is required when repair and/or minor interior alteration to an existing structure is proposed. A location plan is a simple drawing showing scope and specific location of the proposed work. It must be drawn to a reasonable scale with dimensions and details as follows.

- For projects involving repair, photographs showing location and extent of damage (including interior and exterior views of the damage when appropriate) must accompany the location plan.
- Show property lines in relation to the portion of the structure where work is being done. When more

than two buildings are on the site, each building needs to have a building identifier.

- Show the location of interior walls being altered or relocated in simple plan view.

### 3. FLOOR PLAN (2 copies)

A floor plan is required when the project involves changes to the interior space of the building. A floor plan must show the layout and use(s) of the interior space of the building, with exact location and square footage of work to be done. This drawing must be clearly dimensioned, showing existing and proposed work.

Existing structural information provided should include direction of framing, size (e.g., 2'x8'), spacing (16" on center), span (length between supports), and location and size of openings. It must also include the path of travel or distance to exits, energy code (insulation R-value, glazing n-factor, and glazing area as a percent of the floor area), and ventilation requirements. This floor plan must be made available at the site for inspection verification. (See Tip 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*.)

### 4. ELEVATION DRAWINGS (2 copies)

Elevations are required when changes are proposed to the exterior envelope of the structure. An elevation shows the height of the structure, including location of the plate and roof ridge in relation to existing and finished grade. It must show the relationship of exterior wall to slope of grade (sloped driveways and ground elevations). (See Tip 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*.)

### 5. CROSS SECTION DRAWINGS (1 copy)

Cross sections are required when changes are proposed within a wall or roof. A cross section is shown through a typical wall from foundation to roof. Materials need to be specified as to size, spacing and type. For conditioned space (heated or air-conditioned), show insulation, foundation, wall section, flooring, ceiling, roofing, ventilation and connections. (See Tip 303 *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*, Figures 3 and 4.)

## Your Responsibilities with STFI Permits

You are responsible for the knowledge of and compliance with all applicable codes, including but not lim-

ited to land use, building, mechanical, energy, shoreline, critical areas, and the grading ordinance. You are required to sign a statement that acknowledges your understanding of not receiving a complete code review prior to issuance of the permit. (If you are working on a single family house or duplex, see Tip 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwellings*.)

The building or mechanical inspector(s) can require you to make any changes to achieve compliance with applicable codes. For example, new windows will need to be removed or replaced if they did not comply with energy code requirements. In addition, the permit may be revoked at the discretion of the building or mechanical inspector should the information provided prove to be inaccurate; you will be required to submit plans for DPD review if necessary.

## Applying for a STFI Permit

To apply for a STFI permit, please bring your plans and other documents to DPD's Applicant Services Center (ASC), located on the 20th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. Remember to bring your property's legal description with the King County Assessor's parcel number and be ready to pay the full permit fee.

It is important that your plans clearly show all the work you propose to do to avoid delays in processing. Once a permit has been issued it will be limited to the scope defined and illustrated in the documents filed.

The following documents, available from the ASC and on DPD's forms website: [www.seattle.gov/dpd/tool-resources/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/tool-resources/), may be used in conjunction with STFI permit applications:

- ASC Counter Application Form
- Building/Energy Code Checklist
- Building or Mechanical Permit Contact Disclosure Form
- Multifamily/Commercial Buildings/STFI Checklist
- Single Family/Duplex Building/Energy Code Checklist for STFIs
- Preapplication Site Visit Request Form (see below)

## STFI Permits Requiring a Preapplication Site Visit

A Pre-Application Site Visit (PASV) with an STFI permit is required **only** for properties located in one or more of the following environmentally critical areas (ECAs):

- steep slope
- potential slide
- riparian corridor
- wetland
- known landslide
- fish and wildlife habitat
- shoreline habitat

Based upon the proposed development and the affected ECA, a reviewed or routed review application may be required in lieu of an STFI.

For STFI permits that do not require a PASV, an initial ground disturbance inspection will be performed by the site inspector at the start of construction AND after the permit has been issued. The permit holder must schedule this inspection **prior** to the start of excavation by calling (206) 684-8900, DPD's 24-hour inspection request line. Calls placed prior to 7:00 a.m. should be scheduled for an inspection within 24 hours. At the time of permit issuance applicants will be charged a fee as a deposit toward anticipated site inspections.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What happens if my application is rejected?

If your project is determined to be outside the scope of STFI permits, you will be given detailed information on how to proceed.

### 2. What happens if there are minor problems with my application?

You will receive information if corrections are required. After making the necessary corrections to the plans or support documents, you will need to return all materials as soon as possible to the ASC.

### 3. How long does it take to get STFI permits issued?

The typical processing time for STFI permits is one working day from the date of filing. This timeframe varies due to volume fluctuations associated with seasonal demands, but every effort will be made to process your application as soon as possible.

### 4. Can I do work between the time I submit my application and when it is issued?

**NO.** Work that requires a permit can only be done once a permit is issued.

### 5. Can there be other requirements after my permit is issued?

If DPD staff determine that your project is beyond the scope of what can be approved subject-to-field inspection (STFI), you will be given instructions on how to submit additional plans for review.

## Projects that Do Not Qualify as STFI

The STFI process is limited in scope and may not be used for the following projects:

- Second story and two-story additions to single family residences
- Dormer additions creating a new second floor for habitable living space
- Additions to single-family and duplex structure in excess of 750 square feet
- Detached structures accessory to single-family and duplex in excess of 750 square feet
- Pole buildings over 750 square feet and not accessory to a single family residence or duplex (check with DPD inspector)
- Change of use or occupancy group, or change in character of occupancy
- Exterior alterations and additions of any kind to commercial or multifamily structures
- Structural alterations of any kind to commercial or multifamily structures
- Deck additions to single family residences or duplexes greater than eight feet above grade
- Existing unheated attic to be converted into living/habitable space
- Additions that do not meet the prescriptive requirements of the energy code or prescriptive ventilation requirements of the mechanical code
- Initial tenant improvements
- Commercial tenant improvements which modify the exits in commercial occupancies in any way (even relocating an existing exit door)



- Openings in bearing walls supporting more than one story and roof loads; structural beam spans in excess of 14 feet\* (for manufactured truss the maximum is 30 foot structural design which requires an engineer's stamp)
  - \*For garage door headers only the limit is 16 feet.
- Projects that require routing to other City departments
- Relocation of a structure on the property
- Projects that require SEPA review (see Director's Rule 17-2008. *State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Exemptions From Environmental Review Requirements When Establishing, Changing or Expanding A Use*)
- Retaining walls
- All wood foundations and foundations utilizing piles, including pipe piles and pin piles
- Amateur radio devices with a height limit over 12 feet from grade or located on the roof of a structure
- Demolition of residential structures without an abatement order, or removal of a residential use requiring a Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO) license
- Repairs to a nonconforming structure built without permits
- Alterations, which change the quantity of a dwelling unit(s)
- Addition of parking spaces except when accessory to a single family dwelling
- Projects that require special inspections (structural or geotechnical)
- Projects that include new impervious surface in a Category 1 peat settlement-prone area
- Construction utilizing atypical materials or methods
- Using a code modification for alternate materials

In most cases, a preliminary visit to the ASC can identify conflicts that could otherwise result in delays to the processing of your permit.

## Other Permit Processing Options

DPD offers several permit processing options other than STFIs. These options, which require the submission of full sets of plans and plan review, include:

- **Expedited:** Permits that require limited or no routing in which the plan review time is determined during application intake to be less than two hours.
- **Fast Track:** Straightforward new single-family and duplex (R-3) construction projects that have received the certificate of approval from Seattle Public Utilities prior to filing, use standard framing that includes manufactured truss, and are not subject to soils, environmental, or special drainage reviews.

For additional information on these or other processing options please visit our Applicant Services Center (ASC), located on the 20th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave.

In most cases, a preliminary visit to the ASC **prior** to the preparation of any permit application submittal can prevent problems that could otherwise delay the processing of your application.

## Helpful Tips

The following Tips mentioned earlier in this document are available online at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources). Paper copies are available from our Public Resource Center (PRC), located on the 20th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8467.

- Tip 103, *Site Plan Requirements*
- Tip 104, *Getting an Over-the-Counter Permit*
- Tip 220, *Lot Coverage, Height and Yard Standards for Homes in Single Family Zones*
- Tip 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two Unit Dwelling Units*
- Tip 321, *Rockeries: Prescriptive Design and Installation Standards*

## Code References

- Seattle Building Code  
[http://ecodes.biz/ecodes\\_support/free\\_resources/Seattle2009/09seattle\\_building/09seattle\\_building\\_main.htm](http://ecodes.biz/ecodes_support/free_resources/Seattle2009/09seattle_building/09seattle_building_main.htm)

- Seattle Mechanical Code  
[http://ecodes.biz/ecodes\\_support/free\\_resources/Seattle2009/09seattle\\_mechanical/09seattle\\_mechanical\\_main.htm](http://ecodes.biz/ecodes_support/free_resources/Seattle2009/09seattle_mechanical/09seattle_mechanical_main.htm)
- Seattle Energy Code  
<http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/energy/overview/>
- Seattle Residential Code  
[http://ecodes.biz/ecodes\\_support/free\\_resources/Seattle2009/09seattle\\_residential/09seattle\\_residential\\_main.html](http://ecodes.biz/ecodes_support/free_resources/Seattle2009/09seattle_residential/09seattle_residential_main.html)
- Seattle Land Use and Zoning Code  
<http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/toc/t23.htm>

## Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Tips, Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Tools & Resources" page of our website at [www.seattle.gov/dpd](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd). Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this Tip, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.