

BUILDING A NEW HOUSE

When designing and building a new house, there are a variety of factors to consider other than just the costs of actual construction. Most of these factors involve the expense of both time and money, and must usually be addressed before a building permit can be issued. The following are questions and circumstances that you should review.

Is My Property An Approved Building Site?

Before applying for a building permit, you should determine if your property is an approved building site. The following circumstances would make your property an approved building site:

1. Your property, as it exists today, was created by a legal subdivision and appears on a recorded parcel map or tract map that makes no statements negating its status as an approved building site. To find this out:

a) Look at an Assessor's Parcel Map showing your property. If your property is a numbered lot on a **numbered** tract map, your property is an approved building site. Be careful not to confuse the Assessor's Parcel Number ("APN") with the lot number. The APN will usually be underlined, the lot number will not. A parcel on a **named** tract map, such as "Lot B of the Crystal Lake Subdivision" is not an approved building site.

b) Look at a parcel map or tract map (for subdivisions) of your property, located in the Public Maps section across from the Planning Counter. Use the directions provided to locate the map for your property. Be sure the parcel map is for a subdivision, not a lot line adjustment or other purpose. Look at the notes and comments regarding your property. Sometimes the notes will indicate whether or not your property is an approved building site. Such a note may say "not an approved site" or "subject to building site approval". Ask a planner to assist you in interpreting the notes.

2. Building Site Approval was previously granted and a building permit was issued pursuant to that approval,

or Building Site Approval was granted within the previous two years and is still a valid approval.

If the property is not an approved building site, then Building Site Approval will be required. Building Site Approval involves distribution of site plans and related materials to various departments and agencies for review and recommendation. These departments will visit the property and review proposed improvements, such as road access, driveway, location of improvements, grading, soil conditions, septic system requirements, water supply, protection of creeks and drainage channels, and fire vulnerability. The agencies will then include conditions, if any, that must be completed prior to issuance of a building permit. For additional Building Site Approval questions or procedures, ask the counter planner, or review the brochure entitled "Building Site Approval".

Where Can I Build On My Property?

Where you can build on your property is determined by zoning setbacks and other factors such as the location of easements, creeks, etc. Every residential zoning district includes specific residential development guidelines. Therefore, it is important to know the zoning district that applies to your property to be aware of the setbacks, height limits, and any other standards or restrictions that may apply. Being aware of these guidelines will assist you in locating the house on the property in a way that conforms not only with the zoning requirements, but with the dimensions of the property as well.

What Else Do I Plan To Do With My Property?

When planning for that new house, it is also important to think ahead about possible future designs for the property. What about that new pool you always wanted? That detached garage? That second dwelling? Development setbacks apply to these structures as well, and it is important to have a good idea of where you can place these additional structures relative to your home. Find out the setbacks, height limits, and any other placement restrictions for these additional structures as part of the design process for your new house.

Who Reviews An Application For A Building Permit?

PLANNING

- Determines whether your property is an approved building site.
- Determines if the plans for your new residence conform to the development guidelines set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Reviews the plans of your residence and other structures to ensure that they meet the applicable setbacks, height limits, and any other development regulations.

GEOLOGY

- Determines if the site on which you desire to build can support development.
- Determines if your property is located in a geologic hazard zone. If it is, a geologic report is automatically required. In addition, other sources of geologic information are reviewed, including geologic reports previously submitted for nearby properties. Then, a decision is made as to whether or not an investigation report must be submitted. Additional requirements may follow, depending on the county geologist's decision.

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (DEH)

- Determines if there is adequate sewage disposal and potable water supply to serve the new residence, prior to issuance of the building permit.

Sanitary Sewer: If the property is served by public sewer, a clearance letter from the sewer district, which states that a sewer permit has been issued, is required.

Septic System: If sanitary sewer is not available and the property will be served by a septic system, clearance from the DEH field office is required. The field inspector must approve the size, design and location of the septic system. Provide 4 copies of the site plan to the DEH inspector for approval. The DEH inspector will keep one copy.

Submit the other 3 stamped copies to the DEH Land Use Senior at the Planning Office for issuance of the septic system permit. Septic permit will be issued at time of building permit issuance

Contact DEH at the following telephone numbers:
Main Office : 408-918-3400
South County Office: 408-779-0631

Water Supply: If public water is available, a water connection clearance letter from the water company is required. If a well or private water system will be used as the source of water supply, approval must be obtained from DEH. A well must have a 50 ft. sanitary seal, and a pump test will be required to demonstrate adequate water production. Contact DEH at (408) 918-3400 for additional information about wells and private water systems.

LAND DEVELOPMENT ENGINEERING

- Reviews the property dimensions and road right-of-ways for accuracy.
- Determines if the lot dimensions drawn on your plans match the dimensions on any recorded maps and/or assessor's maps.
- Determines if any grading necessary for construction requires a grading permit or drainage plan.

FIRE MARSHAL

- Reviews your plans to ensure that there will be adequate access and water on hand in case of fire or other emergency.
- To determine if there is adequate access, the dimensions, location, surface and condition of the access road, driveway and turnaround are reviewed.
- For water supply, the fire marshal reviews the size of the dwelling and attached garage, location and fire flow of the nearest hydrant, and determines if an above-ground water tank, wharf hydrant and/or residential fire sprinkler system are required.

For specific requirements, discuss your project with the fire marshal and review handouts that are available at the Planning Office counter.

ROADS AND AIRPORTS DEPT.

Determines if access to your property will be affected by the new residence.

- Reviews the access to the new residence and determines if a new driveway approach is required.
- Determines if any work will be done in the road right-of-way. If so, an encroachment permit is required.
- Determines if the driveway approach meets current County standards.
- Reviews the site plan to determine if any trees in the right-of-way are to be removed. If so, an encroachment permit is required.

BUILDING INSPECTION OFFICE

- Reviews plans for conformance with the Uniform Building Code, Green Building Ordinance and other codes applicable to construction (such as plumbing, mechanical and electrical installation). Please review the handouts "When is a Building Permit Required?" "Green Building," and other handouts, available at the Building Inspection Office counter.

Fees

Various fees are charged by the reviewing staff and agencies for inspections and issuance of permits. Such fees include those charged for building site approval, geologic report review, other land development permits (such as design review, variance, lot merger, etc.), septic system percolation test, septic system permit, encroachment permit, building plan check, building permit (including plumbing, mechanical and electrical), and school impact fees charged by the local school district(s).

Make sure that you factor these fees into your construction budget. The amount of these fees is available from staff at the Planning Office and Building Inspection Office counters, Dept. of Environmental Health, Roads and Airports Dept, and the Fire Marshal. When you are discussing your project with various staff, be sure to ask about and note the amount of fees for permits and inspections.

*Department of Planning and Development
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