

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

BUILDING PERMITS

What Is A Building Permit and When Is It Required?

A Building Permit is a written document that authorizes certain construction and improvements on a specific piece of property as shown on approved building and site plans. The building permit procedures are established to ensure that all new construction within the Town will be in compliance with generally accepted building standards, as represented by uniform codes of construction. A zoning permit endorsement on the building permit card provides for checking the application against Town zoning regulations.

A building permit must be obtained before you erect, construct, enlarge, alter, move, repair, improve, convert, or demolish any building or structure (including decks over 18 inches high, retaining walls over 4 feet high, swimming pools, and other accessory structures and buildings).

How Do I Apply and How Much Does it Cost?

Application forms and filing information are available at Town Hall, 765 Portola Road, from the Building Department. An application requires a filing fee, plan check fees, inspection fees, and sometimes a fee and/or deposit for professional services. The costs vary based on the value of the proposed improvements and the inspections and plan reviews that will be required (e.g., Health Officer, Town Geologist, Town Planner).

Before plans can be processed, the application must include at least 3 copies of your building plans and the required fees and deposits. When processing is finished, one set of the signed plans will be returned to you as the OFFICIALLY APPROVED JOB COPY that must be kept at the site during the life of the project. Building plans and supporting data must be prepared according to the requirements contained in the UNIFORM BUILDING CODE, UNIFORM FIRE CODE, UNIFORM MECHANICAL CODE, UNIFORM PLUMBING CODE, NATIONAL ELECTRIC CODE, and State Building Codes. Typically, applications will include the following:

1. Name, address and telephone number of preparer.
2. Plot plan.
3. Foundation plan.
4. Floor plan.
5. Exterior elevations.
6. Cross sections.
7. Framing plans.
8. Lighting plans.
9. Engineering calculations certified by a registered civil engineer.
10. Title 24, State Energy Calculations.
11. Soils and/or geotechnical report.

How Is A Building Permit Processed?

Building permit review includes plan checking for compliance with the building code, plumbing code, and electric code. If a septic tank sewage disposal system is proposed, the plans will be subject to San Mateo County Health Department review and approval. Zoning Ordinance compliance is verified by the Planning Manager or the Town Planner. Checking for compliance with the Town's geologic policies as contained in Town Council Resolution 500-1974 is completed by the Town Geologist. Based on these checks, additional data may be requested prior to plan approval. In particular, it is possible that the Town Geologist may require additional data to verify compliance with Town policy. The preparation of this data is the responsibility of the applicant.

How Long Does It Take and When Can I Pick Up My Building Permit?

It usually takes between 2 and 8 weeks from the time a complete building permit application is accepted for processing and the time it is actually available for pick-up. Processing time will vary with the seasonal work load, the scale of the project, and the complications involved with your project.

Expiration

Unless work authorized by a building permit is started within 180 days of the date of issuance (i.e., the date the applicant is notified the permit is ready for pick-up), the permit will expire and become null and void. Further, if the work authorized by the permit is suspended or abandoned at any time after the work has started for a period of 180 days or longer, the permit will expire.

Any permittee holding an unexpired permit may apply for an extension by explaining "good and satisfactory" reasons why the extension is needed. The permit may be extended by the Building Official for a period of 180 days.

Are There Any Special Concerns I Should Be Aware Of?

Yes. First, if grading and/or vegetation removal is needed for your proposed construction, you may be required to obtain a Site Development Permit. Please refer to the handout on site development permits for further information and requirements.

All proposals for construction of a new residence or guest house as well as additions over 400 square feet, upstairs additions, and any additions on Alpine and Portola Roads must go through an architectural and site plan review process which includes a hearing by the Architectural and Site Control Commission.

The Town has very special and important geologic hazard mapping and application review policies and procedures. These affect all applications to varying degrees.

If you plan to relocate a utility line, or upgrade an existing electrical service, you may have to comply with requirements of the Town's utility line undergrounding policy.

Please check with the Building Official at Town Hall regarding these or other matters than can affect your application PRIOR to preparing any detailed development plans.