

PERMITS & APPROVALS

A PERMIT EXPEDITER SERIES BY PERMIT ADVISORS



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Permits

Now that we understand the city and construction basics, we can begin to explore the most important factor of the permitting process: the permits. There are various types of permits and which one you need for your project depends on the Scope of Work.

For a tenant improvement you may only need a Building Permit and an Electrical permit, but for a Ground Up you may need Building, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, etc. Understanding the different types of permits and when and why they're needed can prevent delays and errors in submitting plans. It would be a waste of time to submit for a Mechanical permit if you only need a Building permit approved. Before we touch upon permits, however, let's talk a little bit about Approvals.



Approvals

The term approval is commonly utilized throughout the industry in reference to varying degrees/stages of the construction process. The most important key to understand is that there will be a multitude of potential approvals required throughout the permitting process and that this is rarely a singular term. For example, it is entirely possible a set of Construction plans get reviewed and approved by a Jurisdiction, but a Permit is never obtained/issued by the city. In this scenario has the “permit” been approved?

Conditions of Approval

Often approval will come with conditions. These could be conditions an expeditier negotiated to expedite the process while supplemental items are still outstanding, or some type of limitations on the scope that you need to be aware of. In the former case, these conditions may define some additional deliverables that need to be met in order for final sign-off of the construction. In the latter it may just be guidelines that need to be met throughout the construction process. You need to be sure any unique conditions applied to the approval are anticipated and explicitly communicated to your team in case this would impact their progress once you receive the approval.

Your municipality’s Zoning Ordinance may contain some uses of land that are permitted by right and do not require any additional approval by the municipality. The Zoning Ordinance may also include conditional uses of land that are generally acceptable uses but require a certain level of control by the municipality. The provisions of the Zoning Ordinance that set forth the conditional uses generally also set forth specific standards and criteria that the municipality follows in deciding whether to grant or deny a conditional use. An example of a conditional use might be the cutting of trees in an area zoned for conservation, so long as the tree cutting is part of an approved forestry plan. The municipal governing body, not the ZHB, hears and considers applications for conditional uses. Once a conditional use application is received by the municipality, the governing body will hold hearing on the request and take evidence from the applicant in support of the conditional use request. Affected parties such as adjacent landowners may participate in the hearings as protestants and offer evidence against the proposed conditional use.

Zoning Approvals

Your municipality may also have a Zoning Ordinance that governs specific land uses throughout your municipality. The Zoning Ordinance regulates how land may be used. It is possible that a proposed development needs all provisions of your municipality's Zoning Ordinance and does not need to undergo any of the procedures to seek special approval to move forward with the plans. However, more than likely, there is some zoning-related approval that must be met for the development to proceed.

The proposed development may require what is known as a **zoning variance**. A variance is a deviation from the existing standards and requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. It is a quasi-judicial approval to use land in a manner that is otherwise prohibited. Variances may be granted where there are unique circumstances with respect to a particular property that inflict unnecessary hardship on the applicant.

Zoning variances must be reviewed and considered by a municipality's Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB). An application for a variance is made to the ZHB, and the ZHB holds hearings on the request, at which evidence is presented by the applicant in support of the variance request. Protestants (such as adjacent landowners) may also appear before the ZHB during the hearing and present evidence or public comment against the variance.

Permits (Cont'd)

This is a brief overall of basic permits found in jurisdictions. Some of these requirements may not be the same in your own jurisdiction. Research is recommended to get the full knowledge of what you need to submit and which permit to apply to.

Building Permits

Building Permits are required for new constructions, additions, alterations, and demolition/removal of a building or structure.

Building plans shall be filed and approved by the Department (as a Building Plan Check) before any permit is issued for the following:

- New building or structure
- Addition to building
- Structural alteration to building or structure
- Interior modification and change of floor plan
- Change of use and/or occupancy
- Parking layout change
- Use-of-land, such as recycling deposit center, open air storage, outdoor temporary events
- Signs and sign structures
- Fences, retaining walls and shoring plans

Permits (Cont'd)

Electrical Permits

Electrical Permits are required for any electrical work.

Electrical plans shall be filed with and approved by the Department (as an Electrical Plan Check) before any permit is issued for work related to the following:

- Theaters or motion picture theaters
- Places of assembly
- All health care facilities within the scope of Article 517 of the C.E.C.
- A new building or an addition to a building if the computed area exceeds 30,000 square feet (2,787 m²), any installation if the total load exceeds 400 amperes, or the installation of equipment rated 600 amperes or more. The computed area shall be the sum of the areas on each floor bounded by the outside surfaces of the exterior walls and shall include floor areas beneath building projections which extend more than 6 feet (1829 mm).
- All electrical installations over 600 volts.
- Installation in locations classified as hazardous locations, unless otherwise satisfactory to the Department.
- Projects which include the installation of exit signs, egress lighting or security lighting. Installation of a complicated electrical system as determined by the Department, such as, Emergency, Legally Required Standby, Fire Alarm, and Gas Detection Systems, except for the following:
 - The addition of strobe power supplies and their attached devices connected to any existing fire control unit or panel.
 - The installation of special extinguishing, central station monitoring systems, dialers, and their attached devices.
 - The addition of any fire warning devices connected to an existing programmable fire warning system.
 - Installation of lighting fixtures weighing more than 300 pounds.
 - Installation of electrical devices, equipment and lighting systems subject to the California Energy Code

Permits (Cont'd)

Elevator/Pressure Vessel Permits

Elevator/Pressure Vessel Permits are required for the installation or modification of any elevator, lift, dumbwaiter, or escalator.

Except for repairs, plans for installation or modification of any elevator, lift, dumbwaiter, and/or escalator shall be filed with and approved by the Department before any permit is issued, as part of an Elevator/Pressure Vessel Plan Check.

Fire Sprinkler Permits

Fire Sprinkler Permits are required for the installation or modification of any fire sprinkler system.

Fire sprinkler plans shall be filed with and approved by the Department (as a Fire Sprinkler Plan Check) before any permit is issued for work listed below:

- Class H Standpipes
- Standpipes: Wet, Dry, or Combination (Class I, II, III)
- Fire pump systems
- Fire hydrant systems
- Hand hose systems connected to fire sprinkler piping
- Monitor nozzle systems
- Fire sprinkler systems

Exceptions: Plan check is not required for the following:

- Raising or lowering of sprinklers due to change in ceiling height
- Replacing of sprinklers of the same type orifice size and temperature rating
- Relocation of sprinklers in previously occupied buildings or tenant spaces

Permits (Cont'd)

Grading Permits

Grading Permits are required for any grading work in the hillside grading area, removal and re-compaction, or backfill.

Grading Plan Checks are performed by both the Structural Plan Check and the Grading Sections. Grading plans submitted together with building plans are reviewed by structural plan check engineers, unless substantial site grading for cut and fill are shown on plans. The Grading Section is responsible for reviewing grading-only plans for: tract grading, mass grading, slope repairs, landslides and substantial cut and fill jobs in hillside areas. All grading plans are submitted to the Coordinating Section.

Grading Plan Checks are required before any permit is issued for the following:

- Slope repairs
- Landslide repairs or removal
- Tract Grading
- Mass Grading
- Site preparation
- Removal and recompaction for building pads
- Basement excavations for new buildings in Hillside area
- Pool excavations for new pools in Hillside area
- Retaining walls cuts, backcuts, and backfill

Permits (Cont'd)

Express Grading Permits

Grading permits which do not require the checking of plans, do not remove lateral support from the public way or from an adjacent structure, and do not require a soils investigation report (i.e., removal of underground storage tanks and removal of recompaction which do not change grading contours) may be issued at the grading counter. Provide a plot plan which shows the area of work. Go directly to the grading counter at Metro or Van Nuys offices.

Note: Submit one copy of soil and/or geology reports along with Department approval letters with all plans submitted for plan check. This copy is in addition to the three copies that are submitted directly to grading counter for report review.

Mechanical HVAC Permits

Mechanical HVAC Permits are required for any installation or modification of heating/cooling systems, smoke control systems, hood and ventilation systems, or engineered water heater/heating appliance vents.

Plans shall be filed with and approved by the Department (as an HVAC Plan Check) before any permit is issued for work listed below is started:

- Installations where the aggregate BTU/H input capacity is 500,000 BTU/H (2299.3 L/W) and over, for comfort heating, or for comfort-cooling, or for absorption units for commercial applications
- Installations where the system BTU/H input capacity is 500,000 BTU/H (2299.3 L/W) and over for comfort heating, or for comfort cooling, or for absorption units for residential applications
- Smoke-control systems
- Any comfort-cooling compressor or refrigeration compressor for any system which contains any Group B refrigerant
- Any commercial cooking hood and ventilation system
- Product conveying ventilation systems
- Engineered water heater/heating appliance vents

Permits (Cont'd)

Plumbing Permits

Plumbing Permits are required for any installation or modification of drainage systems, waste and vent systems, fuel gas piping, potable water piping, rainwater piping, lawn sprinkler system, and subsurface drainage piping on swimming pool water circulating systems.

Plans shall be filed with and approved by the Department (as a Plumbing Plan Check) before any permit is issued for work listed below:

- Drainage systems.
- Drainage and vent systems for a building or structure involving fixtures that discharge 217 or more drainage fixture units.
- Drainage pumps and ejectors.
- Combination waste and vent systems.
- Fuel gas piping with any of the following:
 - Systems having more than 10 outlets.
 - Medium pressure gas systems.
 - High pressure gas systems.
 - Methane gas extraction systems.
- Potable water piping with any of the following:
 - Systems requiring a 2-inch or larger supply.
 - Systems designed from the procedure in Section 610.5 of the Uniform Plumbing Code.
 - **Exception:** Plan check is not required for existing systems, that are added to or altered, with branch lines that serve less than 20 fixture units and sized by Table 6-4.
- Rainwater piping systems with more than 10 interconnected rainwater or overflow drains, or a rainwater pump.
- Special water piping systems for reclaimed water piping.
- Lawn sprinkler systems required for irrigation of cut-and-fill slopes in hillside areas.
- Subsurface drainage piping.

Permits (Cont'd)

Plans submitted for all new construction, addition, alteration that increase the building's conditioned volume, or alteration with a valuation greater than \$200,000 for a building permit will also be separately reviewed for compliance to the **Green Building Code**. For building plans being submitted to regular plan check, please provide an additional set of plans. This additional set of plans will be routed internally to the Green Building Division for plan check. Approval from the Green Building Division will be required prior to issuance of the Building Permit.

Temporary Special Events (TSE)

Temporary Special Events (TSE) are a temporary use of building, property, or public way for the express purpose of allowing it to be used on a limited basis.

Permits are required for temporary special events within the City that are not more than 5 days.

The following qualify as a TSE, provided they have a maximum duration of 5 consecutive days:

- Tents or canopies, larger than 450 square foot, on a residential property.
- Tents or canopies, larger than 12 feet in length or width, on a commercial property.
- Stages or platforms more than 30 inches above grade (structures higher than 30 inches intended for live loads require approved engineering prior to inspection).
- Grandstands or bleachers.
- Structures higher than 12 feet.



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ABOUT US:

Permit Advisors was founded over a decade ago by Roy Hasson and has grown to be one of the leading providers in FULL-SERVICE permit expediting and entitlement services in the United States. We understand that building permits can be one of the most tedious and nerve-wracking parts of any construction project. We are here to take that stress off our client's hands and to manage every aspect of the process.

From detailed research and due diligence to quality control on all plans and documents to ensure your submittal package is 100% ready for review, we provide the best solutions to any issue that may arise during the plan-check process. The relationships that we have developed in thousands of municipalities help us succeed where other firms may experience delays.