

# GUIDELINES FOR Building Permits

## FUNDAMENTALS

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A permit is required as per section 105.1 of the 2013 DCMR 12A, relevant to the intended work in the District of Columbia. Listed below are classifications of permits required depending on the scope of work. For details see section 105.1.1 classification of permits.

- Building permits
- Raze permits
- Trade permits: Electrical, gas, mechanical, plumbing, elevators and conveying systems, and boilers
- Sign permits (subject to Sections 105.1.11 and 3107)
- Foundation and earthwork permits
- Miscellaneous permits: Projection, crane and derrick, after-hours permits and other activities as determined by the code official

## REQUIREMENTS

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When applying for a building permit you must submit the following documents:

- Prepare a [New Building Permit Application](#) which is available online
- Building plans (see Page 2)
- Site-related plans (see Page 4)

Publications, forms and other useful information can be found online at:

[www.dkra.dc.gov](http://www.dkra.dc.gov)

**Find DCRA: 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Washington DC 20024**

Permit Operations Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Homeowner Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, (202) 442-9517  
Building Plan Review, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, (202) 442-8959  
Office of the Surveyor, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, (202) 442-4984  
Office of the Zoning Administrator, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, (202) 442-4576  
Inspection, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, (202) 442-9557  
Office of the Director, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, (202) 442-4400

### Hours of Operation

Mon, Tues, Wed + Friday: 8:30 am — 3:30 pm  
Thursday: 9:30 am — 3:30 pm

*This document is available in alternative formats and languages.  
Please call (202) 442-4601, TTY (202) 123-4567 for more information.*

# BUILDING PLANS CHECKLIST

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When applying for a building permit you must submit 4 copies of your building plans, unless submitting via ProjectDox. The plans must meet the following requirements (section 106 of 2013 12 DCMR A):

## GENERAL

- ☐ Minimum scale of 1/8 inch = 1 foot; fully dimensioned
- ☐ Minimum sheet size: 11 x 17 inches; no pencil.
- ☐ Code year used for the design (see Regulations)
- ☐ Name, address and occupation of the building designer
- ☐ If prepared by a District of Columbia registered architect or professional engineer, the plans must bear the **original** signature, seal and date
- ☐ Building height (see [DC Office of Zoning](#))
- ☐ If you are using a new or unique product or material, you must submit a copy of its evaluation report from a nationally recognized listing agency, such as ICC-ES, ATI or UL, certifying it meets the requirements of the building code. This is required for products such as EIFS, adjustable columns and structural composites

## FIRE PROTECTION

- ☐ Fire sprinkler information

## SHOP DRAWINGS

- ☐ Shop drawings for sprinkler system to be submitted after building permit is issued

## ARCHITECTURAL

- ☐ Complete Building Data Information
- ☐ List of materials used, including wood species and grade, and concrete and steel strength
- ☐ List of design criteria, i.e., live load, dead load, snow load (25 psf), wind speed (90 mph), soil bearing capacity, concrete compressive design strength (PSI)
- ☐ Manufacturer's design specifications for pre-fabricated fireplaces must be attached to the plans
- ☐ Architectural plans(s) showing the dimensions and use of all rooms, including design occupant loads
- ☐ Door Window Schedule
- ☐ Accessibility dimensions and details
- ☐ Building height, number of stories and floor areas
- ☐ Building elevations (all sides)
- ☐ All fire resistance design numbers when fire-rated assemblies are required

- ☐ R-values of building insulation components
- ☐ U-factor of fenestration
- ☐ Partition schedule
- ☐ Floor to ceiling height and height from floor to underside of lowest structural member
- ☐ Any additional details or sections necessary to accurately depict intended construction
- ☐ Firewall configuration
- ☐ Roof Assembly details
- ☐ Reflected ceiling plan
- ☐ Demo Plan
- ☐ Existing Conditions

## STRUCTURAL

- ☐ Foundation plan
- ☐ Footing schedule
- ☐ Framing plan, cross sections and details showing all wall stud sizing & spacing & floor joist sizes & spans for each level and roof
- ☐ Connection details
- ☐ Roof live load
- ☐ Engineered Framing Specs
- ☐ Details for fired rated structural elements
- ☐ Flood hazard requirements, base flood elevation, certification flood-proofing & damp-proofing

## **ELECTRICAL**

- ☐ Floor plans showing luminaries, receptacles, branch circuits (and home-runs), panels, equipment and battery packs
- ☐ Symbol legend
- ☐ Panel schedule to include:
  - ✓ Panel size, phases and voltage
  - ✓ Breaker/fuse and conductor sizes
  - ✓ Indicating if MCB (main circuit breaker) or MLO (main lug only)
  - ✓ If MLO, indicate the size of the overcurrent protection
  - ✓ If MCB, indicate sizes. Feeder conductor sizes and insulation types
  - ✓ Clear, evident and specific circuit identification directory
- ☐ Equipment schedules
- ☐ Riser diagrams to include:
  - ✓ Size of feeder conductors and insulation types, conduits and overcurrent protection
  - ✓ Connections and sizes of emergency/stand-by generator

- ✓ Size of motors
- ✓ Main grounding at the service

- ☐ Photometric for egress lighting in entirety
- ☐ Fire-stopping details
- ☐ Exit Signs Flood Hazard

## **MECHANICAL**

- ☐ Duct, piping layout for the HVAC system to include:
  - ✓ Main trunk and branch sizes
  - ✓ Size and CFM of all registers
  - ✓ Location of all equipment and outside air intake and exhaust air opening locations
- ☐ Symbol and abbreviation list
- ☐ Calculations demonstrating compliance with the International Energy Conservation Code
- ☐ Equipment data for the HVAC system to include:
  - ✓ Make and model number, BTU rating for heating and cooling
  - ✓ Total supply and outdoor air capacities of each air handling unit

- ☐ Shaft details flood hazard

## **PLUMBING**

- ☐ Floor plans and riser diagrams showing the location of all plumbing fixtures, sanitary, water, storm and gas piping
- ☐ Identify size, slope and type of piping material and location of all required valves
- ☐ Fixture connection schedule including waste, vent, gas, hot and cold water connection sizes
- ☐ Fire-stopping details
- ☐ Identify all fixture symbols used on the plans and risers. Include backwater values, backflow preventers and other water control equipment
- ☐ Water pipe calculations
- ☐ Jacuzzi/whirlpool tub manufacturer's information showing loading requirements must be attached to the plans

## APPLICABLE CONSTRUCTION CODES

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The District of Columbia adopts the International Codes (I-Codes) published by the International Code Council (ICC), and the National Electrical Code (NEC) published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), subject to any changes, deletions and/or additions to the I-Codes or the NEC as set forth in Title 12 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) (the Construction Codes Supplement).

On March 28, 2014, the District of Columbia adopted 11 of the 2012 I-Codes and the NFPA's 2011 NEC with changes, deletions, and/or additions set forth in the 2013 Construction Codes Supplement and 12 DCMR (Subtitles A through L). The following codes should be reviewed to determine applicability to your project:

- ☐ 2013 DCMR 12
- ☐ 2012 International Building Code
- ☐ 2012 International Residential Code
- ☐ 2012 International Fuel Gas Code
- ☐ 2012 International Mechanical Code
- ☐ 2012 International Plumbing Code
- ☐ 2012 International Fire Code
- ☐ 2012 International Energy Conservation Code
- ☐ 2012 International Existing Building Code
- ☐ 2012 International Green Construction Code
- ☐ 2012 International Swimming Pool Spa Code
- ☐ 2012 International Property Maintenance Code

## SITE-RELATED PLANS

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The applicant shall provide a site plan whenever the application for permit involves any of the following, pursuant to section 106.1.13:

- Erection of a new *building* or other *structure*.
- Addition to an *existing building*.
- Permanent construction outside the footprint of *existing buildings*.
- Construction or alteration of projections into public space.
- Erection of retaining walls.
- A major substantial improvement activity (as defined by 21 DCMR Chapter 5) or a land-disturbing activity or regulated by 21 DCMR Chapter 5.
- *Demolition* or razing of existing *structures* or *buildings*.
- Installation or replacement of underground utility service connections.
- Installation or replacement of site drainage systems.
- Path of the *exit discharge* to the *public way*.
- Construction in whole or in part in a *Special Flood Hazard Area* as established in Section 1612.3 of the *Building Code*.

The *code official* shall be authorized to establish minimum requirements for submittal of site plans and maximum overall size of plans acceptable for review. These limits shall also apply to zoning compliance review plans submitted pursuant to Section 106.1.12.

**106.2.1 Site Plan Information.** The applicant shall show upon the site plan: completely dimensioned and drawn to a scale indicated numerically and graphically, the site, and its orientation to the North. Also, as applicable: location of all existing and new construction on the site, distances from property lines, established street grades, and proposed finished grades. As well, features required to comply with 21 DCMR Chapter 5 including: location of utility service lines and connections thereto (with dimensions and all appurtenant features of such connections), flood hazard areas, floodways, and *design flood* elevations. For *raze* or *demolition*, the site plan shall identify the *structures* or portions thereof to be demolished and the location and size of all existing *structures* and construction that are to remain on the site.

### Problem Soils

Soil types with high water table, expansive or marine clays, or other behavioral issues are considered problem soils. If your building/addition is to be constructed on a problem soil, you may need to have your foundation designed by a licensed professional engineer. To learn more about soils in DC and to view DC soils maps, go to the [USDA](#) website. To determine if you have problem soils on your property contact [Department of Environment \(DDOE\)](#).



## PERMIT PROCESS

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When applying for a building permit, bring the required documentation (listed on pages 2-3) to the Permit Operations Center. DCRA staff will direct you through the multiple-agency review process. Any projects involving additions, change of use, or interior work more than 1000 square feet shall be filed for review.

## TRADE PERMITS

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Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing permits can be issued only after the building permit has been issued. You may apply in-person or online at [Trade Permits](#).

**\* \* \* Are you using your existing HVAC system? \* \* \***

If yes, your new addition may overload your existing equipment.

Ask your HVAC contractor to perform a load calculation to verify its capacity.

## REVIEW TIMELINES

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The average review time for a file job is between 14 to 30 business days from the date of filing and payment of filing fee, depending on the complexity of the job.

If all of the required documentation is provided during the initial submission, the average homeowner processing their permit through the homeowner center should experience a 1 to 2 day turnaround.

## POSTING PERMIT

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The permit, or copy of, shall be kept on the work site and displayed at a location visible from the street until the completion of project (see 2013 12 DCMR A 105.1.9).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### **1. How many bathrooms are required in a restaurant?**

**Answer:** The number of bathroom fixtures required is based on the number of seats in the restaurant. See Chapter 4 of the 2012 International Plumbing Code.

### **2. How many seats can I have in a restaurant with only one bathroom?**

**Answer:** The maximum number of seats (including patrons and employees) can be 15. The bathroom shall be accessible without going through the food preparation area.

**3. Is seating allowed in a Deli?**

**Answer:** No seating is allowed in a Deli. Seating is permitted only in a restaurant.

**4. Where and how far do a commercial kitchen exhaust and/or a garage exhaust terminate from the property (lot) lines?**

**Answer:** Please refer to Chapters 4 and 5 of the 2012 International Mechanical Code and the 2013 DCMR 12. You may also call (202) 442-8959 for more details.

**5. What are the ventilation requirements for a smoking lounge?**

**Answer:** Smoking lounges require an outdoor airflow rate of 60 CFM/person. For additional requirements on ventilation rates, see Chapter 4, Section 403 of the Mechanical Code.

**6. Is a ductless dryer permitted in DC?**

**Answer:** A Listed and Labeled Condensing (ductless) clothes dryer is permitted and shall be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions.

**7. Where can the condensate from appliances be disposed?**

**Answer:** To an approved plumbing fixture or disposal area in accordance with manufacturer's installation instructions. For additional requirements on specific appliance condensate disposal, see Chapter 3, Section 307 of the Mechanical Code.

**8. Can a garage drain connect to a storm sewer?**

**Answer:** Yes. However, it needs to be reviewed by DCRA, DC Water, and DDOE.

**9. Can the waste discharge from a swimming pool or a spa or a hot tub be connected to a storm sewer?**

**Answer:** No. The waste discharge shall be connected to a sanitary sewer through indirect connection.

**10. What are the current construction codes in the District of Columbia?**

**Answer:** The current construction codes for D.C. are the 2012 International Building Code, 2012 International Mechanical Code, 2012 International Plumbing Code, 2012 International Fuel Gas Code, 2012 International Energy Conservation Code, 2011 National Electric Code (NFPA 70), 2012 International Fire Prevention Code, 2012 International Residential Code - One and Two Family Dwelling Codes with 2013 D.C. Supplement (DCMR 12).

**11. Where can we get a copy of the 2013 DC Construction Codes Supplement?**

**Answer:** You can obtain a copy of 2013 DC Construction Codes Supplement from the Office of Documents located at 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW Washington, DC 20001, by phone (202) 727-5090, or from the DCRA website: [www.dkra.dc.gov](http://www.dkra.dc.gov). Combined published version online.

**12. What are health notes?**

**Answer:** Health notes are a list of specifications to be met in compliance to the DC Health Regulations and must accompany all food establishment plans and permit applications. You may contact the DC Health Dept. at (202) 442-9039 for more details including plan reviews.

**13. Can a fireplace be installed in a bed room?**

**Answer:** Yes, it is subject to provisions of Chapters 3 and 9, of the 2012 International Mechanical Code.

**14. Can we locate a metal chimney on the exterior of a building?**

**Answer:** A metal chimney can be installed on the exterior of the building subject to its Listing and Manufacturer's installation instructions. Refer to chapter 3 and 8 of the 2012 International Mechanical Code.

**15. What are the requirements for obtaining a Building permit?**

**Answer:** You need to submit 4 sets of plans unless submitted via projectdox. Along with civil drawings duly sealed and signed by an architect or professional engineer, who is registered in DC for all projects except one and two family dwellings. If the building is new or an exterior addition is being built to an existing building, you need to submit a plat from our DC Surveyor's Office showing the footprint of the new building. **(OR)** The foot print of the existing building with the proposed addition, including all set back dimensions from lot lines. Refer to section §106 of 2013 DCMR 12A for more details.

**16. What work is exempt from obtaining a permit?**

**Answer:** Please refer to section 105.2 of the 2013 DC Construction Code Supplement for details. Visit our website [dcra.dc.gov](http://dcra.dc.gov) for more details.

**17. What is the permissible hours allowed for construction?**

**Answer:** In accordance with section 105.1.2 of 2013 DCMR 12A, construction hours are from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday, excluding legal holidays.

**18. What is the review time on a file job?**

**Answer:** All required DCRA reviews will be completed in 14 to 30 business days respectively from the date of filing, depending on the complexity of the job. Learn more about review times online



at: <http://dcra.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcra/publication/attachments/TargetReviewTime.pdf>

#### 19. What work can be done with an online postcard permit?

**Answer:** Follow the instructions listed on the DCRA website for Postcard Permits (Building, Plumbing, Mechanical or Electrical). <http://dcra.dc.gov/service/permits-postcard-permit>

#### 20. How long is the permit valid?

**Answer:** Any permit issued shall become null and void if the authorized work is not begun and inspected pursuant to Section 109 within one year after the permit is issued, or if the authorized work is suspended, abandoned or not inspected pursuant to Section 109 for a period of one year. In determining whether work has been suspended or abandoned under this Section 105.5, including exceptions thereto, the code official shall have the right to request documentation from the permit holder and to inspect the premises, including any building or other structure, for which the permit has been granted. For additional information see Chapter 1, Section 105 of 2013 12 DCMR A.

#### 21. When is a plat required?

**Answer:** The applicant shall provide an official building plat issued by the D.C. Office of the Surveyor, in duplicate or by electronic submission, with applications for permit involving any of the following:

1. Erection of a new *building* or other *structure*.
2. Addition to an *existing building*.
3. Permanent construction higher than 48 inches (1219 mm) above grade, outside the footprint of *existing buildings*.
4. Construction or alteration of projections into public space.
5. Erection of retaining walls higher than 48 inches (1219 mm).
6. Establishment of a new parking lot, regardless of the amount of work involved.

For additional information see Chapter 1, Section 106 of 2013 DCMR 12 A.

A surveyor's plat can be ordered from the DC Surveyor's Office located at 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Third Floor, Washington, DC 20024. They can be reached at (202) 442-4699.

#### 22. What is a Structural Certification?

**Answer:** A Structural Certification is a form executed by a professional structural engineer, who is registered in the District of Columbia to certify that the structural portion of the plans submitted are in compliance with the structural requirement of the current applicable construction codes. The code official is authorized to accept the structural portions of the plans thus certified at the code official's discretion.

#### 23. What is the frost depth for DC?

**Answer:** The frost depth for DC is 2 ft. 6” inches per the 2013 DCMR 12A, §1809.5.

**24. What is the wind load for DC?**

**Answer:** Design wind loads shall be determined in accordance with Chapters 26-30 of the ASCE 7 – Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures. For more information on design roof loads, see Chapter 16 sections 1607 and 1609 of the Building Code.

**25. What is the snow load for DC?**

**Answer:** Design snow loads shall be determined in accordance with Chapter 7 of the ASCE 7 – Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures. For more information on design roof loads, see Chapter 16 sections 1607 and 1608 of the Building Code.

**For information on DCRA’s affiliated agencies within the permitting process please visit the appropriate websites:**

- District Department of Transportation  
<http://ddot.dc.gov/>
- District Department of the Environment  
<http://green.dc.gov/>
- District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority  
<http://www.dcwater.com/>

**For inquiries on Zoning submittals or reviews please refer to the Office of the Zoning Administrator by visiting the DCRA website: <http://dcra.dc.gov/service/zoning-certificates-occupancy> or by telephone at (202) 442-4576.**