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## **CITY OF PHILADELPHIA LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT GUIDE**

Written by the City of Philadelphia and the  
Building Industry Association of Philadelphia

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# OVERVIEW

This guide discusses the approval process for residential construction or reconstruction on three lots or more in the city of Philadelphia. As this guide makes clear, while you will need to obtain zoning and building permits from the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I), in order to obtain these permits, the Water Department, Planning Commission, Streets Department and, at times, several other departments and boards must also approve and sign off on your site plans.

## Location of City of Philadelphia's Review Agencies and Boards

- District Council Person** in City Hall (if need variance/certificate or change in streets)
- Licenses and Inspections (L&I)** in the Municipal Services Building (Public Service Concourse), 1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd: Zoning and Building are two distinct divisions with differing staff and requirements
- Philadelphia City Planning Commission** at One Parkway, 13th Floor, 1515 Arch Street
- Streets Department** Highway Division in the Municipal Services Building, 9th Floor; Board of Surveyors, Transportation Engineering and Planning Section and City Plans in the Municipal Services Building, 8th Floor
- Fairmount Park Commission** in Memorial Hall, 42nd and Parkside Avenue, for required planting of street trees
- Water Department** at 1101 Market Street, 2nd Floor
- Philadelphia Historical Commission** in City Hall Room 576, if property is on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places or within historic district.
- Accessibility Advisory Board** in Municipal Services Building, 16th Floor: appeals on requirements for accessibility of buildings by the handicapped.
- Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)** Administration office is located in the Municipal Services Building, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor: handles appeals in zoning matters and determines whether to grants variances, certificates, and special use permits.
- Board of Building Standards** in Municipal Services Building, 11th Floor: appeals for variances from Building Code, Electrical Code and Plumbing Code.
- Fire Department**, Fire Code Unit at 240 Spring Garden Street: Where development requires new streets or a deep lot more than 100 ft from a fire hydrant, the Fire Department must approve the location of fire hydrants and fire department vehicle access. For high-rises, must approve fire command center.
- Health Department** located at 1101 Market Street: Must involve where you need to install a new septic system because the lots are located too far from the city sewer system.

- **In order to complete the permitting process, you may need to physically visit each of the offices listed above.** The applicant alone is responsible for physically carrying the plans to each agency counter. Each agency will keep records of its interaction with you, but you are the only one who understands and must keep track of where you are in the process, and what each agency said or requires. At the time that you are provided with your permits, they must be picked up from the counter in person, and the permit fee must be paid at that time. Fees are listed in the Administrative Code at [www.phila.gov/li/codes/AdministrativeCode.pdf](http://www.phila.gov/li/codes/AdministrativeCode.pdf).
- **If you are building or rehabilitating more than 30 units, you can make an appointment with the Large Scale Development Review Team for a meeting with all development review agencies on the last Tuesday of the month.** Make appointments with John Elfrey in the Managing Director’s Office at 215-686-7098. At team meetings, you will be able to meet with senior representatives of all of the agencies in a single room and discuss your project together. While you will still need to obtain all approvals and permits after this meeting, you will have a person from each agency to help you to shepherd your project through the process and to work with you to resolve any issues that arise.
- **Timeframes.** *The Administrative Code Section A-302.1.1 says only that “The code official shall grant or deny a permit application in whole or in part or request further information, within 30 business days of the filing date for commercial construction and 15 business days for residential construction. Reasons for a denial shall be in writing and sent to the applicant. When agreed to by the code official and the permit applicant in writing, the deadline for action shall be extended by the number of days specified in the agreement. Exception: The deadline for action on permits for structures that have been designated as historic or are located in an historic district is extended by the amount of time the application is under review by the Historical Commission.”*

**All timeframes provided for a step in this process are estimates based upon the experience of building industry members in the city.**



## Primary Permits Required to Build or Rehabilitate on Three Lots or More

1. **Subdivision Permit:** A permit is required to create a subdivision. A subdivision is a division of any area of land into three or more lots or parcels for the purpose of conveyance, transfer, improvement, or sale. It is also any development of a parcel of land which involves installation of streets and driveways whether or not dedicated and whether or not the parcel is divided for the purpose of immediate conveyance, transfer or sale. (Zoning Code §14-2102.) The District Surveyor and Regulator must approve lot consolidations and subdivision plans. As required by PA Act 537, Sewage Facility Planning must be completed prior to the issuance of the Subdivision Permit.  
**Two types:**
  - o Formal subdivision plat if new streets (requires action by council)
  - o “Over the counter”—subdivisions on existing streets
2. **Zoning Permit:** A permit granted pursuant to the Zoning Code to allow development or use of a specific project on a specific site under the terms of the permit. Required prior to obtaining building permit.
3. **Use Registration Permit:** A use registration permit is required for every new use commenced on any land or in any structure except for use as a single-family dwelling or place of worship.
4. **Foundation Permit:** An optional permit for the construction of a foundation before the construction documents for the entire structure have been submitted. To obtain a foundation permit, the zoning permit for the entire structure must be issued and the Water Department must approve access to water and sewer. The applicant proceeds at his or her own risk without a guarantee that a building permit will be issued. The foundation may be included with the building permit for the structure.
5. **Building Permit:** A building permit is required to construct, modify, or demolish a structure. It is also needed where repair to a structure involves the cutting away of any wall or partition, the removal or cutting of any structural beam or load bearing support or the removal or change of any required means of egress. (Administrative Code A-301.1.1) To obtain a building permit for new construction or additions 2000 square feet or larger, you must provide a geotechnical study confirming the bearing capacity and integrity of the subsoil.
  - o **Electric, Plumbing and Sewer, HVAC, and Fire Suppression permits** are required prior to construction of systems.
  - o **Certificate of Occupancy**, included within the Building Permit, indicates compliance with permits and construction documents. Certificate must be obtained prior to occupancy of a newly erected building, an addition to a building or a change from one occupancy group to another. The exception is where, in a non-residential building, gross building area is less than 2,000 square feet per floor, or there is no substantial increase in live loads or occupant loads in the areas changed or added. (Administrative Code A-701.1)

**Prerequisite Approvals Required to Obtain Permits:** Philadelphia allows concurrent review with all agencies so several agencies may review your plans simultaneously. Prerequisite approvals typically come in the form of a letter or a stamp on the site plan. Approvals on the site plan are not transferable to an altered or new plan. If you change the site plan in any manner that impacts the building footprint or use of the lot such as the number of units or building height, each agency must reapprove the plan to ensure that the changes still satisfy all necessary regulations. This is especially true if you receive a zoning permit refusal and seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). If the ZBA grants a variance but requires changes to the plans or if the applicant requests changes to plans, their variance may satisfy the requirements of L&I but may not satisfy the requirements of the other development review agencies.

**Accelerated Plan Reviews and Fees:** L&I provides an optional service that is available for applicants who need complex plans reviewed more rapidly than is customary.

**Zoning Permit:** Accelerated time for a set of complex plans is typically two to three (2-3) weeks. If your application is deficient for whatever reason, the review clock restarts upon submission of the proper information. Actual examiner time spent reviewing the document is typically four to eight (4-8) hours for a complex plan. Reviews cost \$ 420.00 for up to four (4) hours, plus \$135.00 for each additional hour. These fees are in addition to the zoning and/or use permit fees.

**Building Permit:** Review time for a set of complex plans is typically three (3) weeks. Accelerated plan reviews can be accomplished in three (3) days or less. The cost for an accelerated review is \$540 for up to four (4) hours of review time, and \$135 per hour for each additional hour. These fees are in addition to the building permit fees. Accelerated review does not include Water Department review and approval.



# ZONING AND/OR USE REGISTRATION PERMIT

Philadelphia's Zoning Code is available online at [www.phila.gov](http://www.phila.gov)

A building permit must be obtained within one (1) year from the date of issuance of the zoning permit or no later than two (2) years from the ZBA decision date. Then the zoning permit will remain valid until construction is completed. In cases where no construction or interior alterations are involved and a use registration permit has been issued, the use permit becomes invalid should the use for which the zoning permit was issued not start within three (3) months from the date of issuance.

**The Permit Services Division of Licenses and Inspections is open from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM for zoning permit applications with the exception of the last Wednesday of the month, when it closes at noon.** The Zoning Unit can be reached by phone at 215-686-2433.



## FIRST STEPS IN OBTAINING A ZONING PERMIT

√ **Defining the Zoning for a Parcel:** Prior to beginning the process, you must know how the parcel is zoned. Currently, you must visit Licenses and Inspections, and they will check a series of maps in their back office to determine all zoning designations and overlays that apply to your property. The zoning map on [www.phila.gov](http://www.phila.gov) does not show recent amendments or overlays that are critical in defining the zoning of a parcel. By the end of 2006, we plan to have online a detailed electronic zoning map that will permit you to view all zoning designations and overlay zones that impact your parcel.

√ **Proving Your Ownership Interest:** To begin the process, you will need either a deed, a current lease, an agreement of sale or a receipt from the sheriff (if the property was purchased from sheriff's sale within the last year.) The deed can be obtained at the Department of Records, located in City Hall, Room 154. You must have proof of ownership of the property prior to or concurrently with City Council approval for streets if this step is required.

√ **Creating Your Plot Plan:** The plot plan shows to scale the size and location of all new construction and all existing structures on the site, distances from lot lines, the established street grades and the proposed finished grades, impervious surface coverage and as applicable, flood hazard areas, floodways, stormwater management controls, environmental controls and design flood elevations; and it shall be drawn in accordance with an accurate boundary line survey. The plot plan must be sealed by a professional surveyor. In addition, all drawings submitted to the Streets Department for review and approval must include a site plan drawn to scale with dimensions of the legal right of way with curb lines and property lines, all existing street furniture including hydrants, streetlight poles, manholes, dimensions of right of ways both proposed and existing, all driveway curb cuts, proposed and existing, and a minimum of two photographs detailing existing conditions at the site. Adequate blank space for all necessary seals of approval must be provided on the plan. We recommend that you use the Streets Department Developer's Checklist.

### **Special Condition Pre-requisite Approvals for Zoning Permit**

#### **1. Planning Commission Approval Needed:**

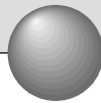
- \* If property requires relocation of lot lines
- \* If property located within the Wissahickon Watershed, Flood Plain, or Special Control District or is greater than 15,000 square feet

#### **2. Water Department Approval Needed:**

- \* If property is within 50 feet of a water and drainage right-of-way
- \* If creates 15,000 square feet of earth disturbance (*Note: If creates >1 acre earth disturbance requires issuance of a NPDES permit from PA DEP before city building permit can be issued.*)

#### **3. Streets Department Approval Needed:**

- \* If there are any encroachments, curb cuts, fences, or underground wires on, over or under the public footway

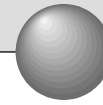


**Planning Commission Approvals Needed to Obtain Zoning Permit:** The Commission must approve all subdivisions, stormwater management plans (only in the Wissahickon watershed) and environmental assessments.

1. All projects involving three lots or more or 15,000 square feet or more should begin the development review process at the **Philadelphia Planning Commission**. The Planning Commission does not provide a formal opinion nor do they issue any permits. L&I, however, looks for their approval stamp on all plot plans and land subdivisions. This includes examining the plot to determine compliance with the Philadelphia Code regarding street layout, topographic and geotechnical conditions, lot sizes, drainage requirements, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, as well as the final landscaping plan. In addition, the Planning Commission performs functions required by the National Environmental Policy Act, conducting environmental analyses of all developments utilizing federal funding and issuing environmental clearances. You should call 215-683-4615 and ask for an appointment with the staff person who covers the district in which you are building.

### **Planning Commission Approvals**

1. Philadelphia Planning Commission
2. Subdivisions Require Planning Commission Approval
3. Obtain Bureau of Revenue and Taxes official address
4. Water Department Approvals



2. **Subdivisions Require Planning Commission Approval:** If a parcel or area of a deeded property is subdivided into three or more parcels, the plot plan must be approved by the Planning Commission in order to obtain zoning and building permits from L&I. Zoning Code §14-2103 states that the Planning Commission the authority to approve or deny subdivision site plans. Subdivision design standards are laid out in Zoning Code §14-2104. Specifications for maps and plats are set forth in Section 14-2105. Submit one set of site plans to the Planning Commission. If Planning Commission verbally states that the area must be rezoned, or you cannot build what you seek in that area, you must submit plans to L&I and obtain a refusal in order to appeal to the ZBA for a variance. Where new streets are needed, a City Council vote is required.
3. **Obtain Bureau of Revenue and Taxes official address:** Once the City Planning Commission signs off, the applicant is required to go to the Board of Revision and Taxes (BRT) and obtain addresses for each of the new buildings and lots. BRT must enter these new addresses into their database before L&I can issue zoning permits for the property. If the project is funded with federal housing money (Community Development Block Grant), the Planning Commission must provide an environmental clearance.

4. **Water Department Approvals Needed to Obtain Zoning Permit re Stormwater Management (New Procedure as of January 2006): If you are proposing an earth disturbance of more than 15,000 square feet, you must have conceptual approval on your stormwater management design.** The Water Department and Planning Commission must jointly approve stormwater plan before you can proceed to final zoning review.
- o The applicant must submit the Existing Resource and Site Analysis (ERSA) map online. Paper submittals may be mailed to the Water Department but will require additional time to process. A complete ESRA package includes the online form, the existing conditions map as specified in the online checklist, a sketch map indicating how you plan to address stormwater management and site photos (one from each face of the parcel with a key to identify location and view.) At this point, Water Department will conduct a conceptual review of the proposed site plan. The status of the project may be checked at [www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org) during review along with forms and requirements. Under the PA Sewage Facilities Act (PA Act 537) sewage facilities planning must be conducted to ensure adequate sewage disposal facilities exist for the proposed project. Full engineering is not required as the Water Department can provide a conceptual approval in order to allow you to proceed with zoning.
  - o Once Water Department provides conceptual approval the plans come back to the Planning Commission for signoff (Stamped plan). Only once Water and Planning stamp your site plan, can you then go to L&I for zoning review.
  - o To obtain final approval on stormwater, applicant must submit a full set of engineering plans.

# Streets Department Approvals Needed to Obtain Zoning Permit:

Approvals required for work involving garages, curb cuts, parking layouts and structures in the public walkway. (Municipal Services Building 9th Floor, Room 940; 215-686-5501, 5503).

1. **Surveying Property: If you are constructing new streets, applicant must submit preliminary plat and plans to Board of Surveyors at the Streets Department.** The applicant may hire Street Department surveyors to fix lot boundaries or hire private surveyor and have a District Surveyor approve the survey.

### Department Approvals

1. **Board of Surveyors at the Streets Department**
2. **Streets Department Highways Division**
3. **Streets Department Traffic Division**

Board of Surveyors must also approve any changes to streets. Applicant may submit electronic CAD files for review. There is no appeals process if you disagree with the Surveyors decision. You must negotiate to a final resolution. Surveys must include the following information: elevations, location of storm drains, street information, location of street furniture, and curb heights. There are several Survey District offices:

District	Surveyor	Office
2	Al Bommentre	S.W. Corner of 11 <sup>th</sup> Street & Wharton Street 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Ph: 685-1865 fax: 685-1861
3	Tom Marro	990 Spring Garden Street 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor 685-3926, 3927, 3928 fax: 685-0354
4	Mark Zeitz	Bustleton Avenue & Bowler Street 685-0350, 0351 fax: 685-0354
5	Herman Ledger	6601 Rising Sun Avenue 685-0585, 0586 fax: 685-0561
7	Karl Kreigh	6448 Woodland Avenue 685-2668, 2669 fax: 685-2661
9	John Parkinson	4000 North American Street 685-3050, 3051, 3053 fax: 685-3062
CP	Bruce Rader	M.S.B. 1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard City Plans Unit / 8 <sup>th</sup> Floor 686-5598, 5567 fax: 686-5182
	Frank Morelli	Survey Bureau Manager

2. **Submit site plan to Streets Department Highways Division.** The developer not the Streets Department constructs any new streets that must be created. Leave one set of plans, and have ten sets stamped and signed for coordination with other review agencies. Highway Division will approve curb cuts and any other encroachment into the right of way.
3. **Submit site plan to Streets Department Traffic Division.** For two or more parking spaces, leave one set of plans, and have ten sets stamped and signed for coordination with other review agencies.

## Licenses and Inspections – Obtaining Your Zoning Permit or Refusal

*All applications must be prepared in ink or typewritten. Even if you know that your plan will not be approved early on in the process, you must still complete the application process.*

### **The following information must be shown on the zoning application form:**

- o Location of Property: Provide the BRT assigned address of the original parcel.
- o Explain any alteration or construction. For example, “construct a one-story addition, 12' x 12', to the rear of the existing structure.”
- o Provide the height in feet and stories of the new building or the existing building and proposed additions.
- o List the present use of the existing building.
- o Detail of demolition (if applicable).
- o List the proposed use of the existing building and of the addition (if any) or the proposed use of the new building.
- o Provide the name, address, and telephone number of the owner(s), architect, engineer, and the name of the person filing the application. If you are not the owner of the property listed on the completed application, you must also submit a signed lease or letter from the owner of the property that authorizes you to file the application. All contracted parties involved in the project must be properly licensed.

If the owner/developer is in the process of obtaining approvals and wants to make a note or adjustment of a detail on the plan so that a review examiner can more easily process the application, a letter from the architect or engineer approving the change is needed.

In addition to the application, you must submit six (6) sets of the plot plan (requirements of which are described under the previous section entitled “Planning Commission Approvals Needed to Obtain Zoning Permit” and shall include, without limitation, scale; metes and bounds of property; all streets, alleys, or driveways bordering the property; curb lines and their distances from lot lines; exterior dimensions of buildings and structures from lot lines and/or existing and proposed dimensions of other buildings and structures on the same lot; location and dimensions of all driveways and curb cuts, if applicable; name and address of property owner and signature of application) and a letter of ownership.

**This process takes approximately three to six (3-6) weeks unless accelerated application is filed, and you pay for accelerated review.**



Note that if you are proposing signs as part of your completed application, you must also submit three (3) photographs showing the subject property and a rendering with dimensions of the sign face. This must be included on the six (6) copies of the plot plan and show the location, sizes and description of all existing and proposed signs. Where the proposed construction is unable to meet the particular and specific requirements as outlined in the Zoning code, you will need to wait for a notice of refusal from L&I so that you can begin process to seek variance. Even if the Planning Commission has already advised the developer of the necessity for this step, L&I will still review and provide an independent evaluation. **This process takes approximately three to six (3-6) weeks unless accelerated application is filed, and you pay for accelerated review.**

## FEES

Fees for zoning reviews are **due upon application**. The costs as of June 2006 are as follows:

1. **Filing Fee for each application (non-refundable)**
  - Zoning Permit applications for One and Two Family Dwellings \$25.00
  - Zoning Permit applications for all other Occupancies \$100.00  
(Fee is per structure or divided lot)
2. **Zoning Permit for each structure**
  - Parcels containing one or two family dwellings \$25.00
  - All other parcels equal to or less than 30,000 square feet \$100.00
  - All other parcels greater than 30,000 square feet \$200.00
3. **Use Registration Permits**
  - One family dwelling or church No Charge
  - For each use in new construction and each use in existing structure \$100.00
  - Accessory Sign \$100.00
  - Outdoor Advertising Sign \$250.00

**Note:** For signs, zoning and use permits must be secured simultaneously. In addition to these fees, a license fee of \$175.00 per face is required.



**Agency Review Fees:** Each department that reviews your plan may charge a separate fee. For example, the minimum price charged by the Streets Department for an initial plan review is \$360.00.

After L&I completes its review of your zoning/use application, you will be issued one of the following: (1) Zoning Permit; (2) Use Registration Permit; (3) Certification of Permit Not Required; (4) Notice of Refusal; or (5) Notice of Referral.

## APPEALING TO THE ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

If L&I issues a Notice of Refusal, you may appeal that decision to the ZBA. The ZBA is authorized to hear and decide appeals in zoning matters in accordance with provisions of Section 5-1006 of the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter and the Zoning Code. All zoning matters are appealed to the ZBA. The appeal must be filed within 30 days of the date of the Notice of Refusal or Notice of Referral. All appeals considered by the ZBA shall be heard in public at such times and locations scheduled

by the ZBA. Administrative Code A-803.3. The ZBA will notify you of the date of your hearing. Hearing dates are also available at [http://www.phila.gov/li/faq/zba/hearing\\_information.html](http://www.phila.gov/li/faq/zba/hearing_information.html)

The appeals process may take three to four (3-4) months. You have the ability to pay for an accelerated hearing, to allow a hearing to occur in three to six (3-6) weeks.



This means that the appeals process may take three to four (3-4) months. You have the ability to pay for an accelerated hearing, to allow a hearing to occur in three to six (3-6) weeks. If you are an entity other than an individual, (i.e. a corporation, partnership or limited liability company), then you must be represented by an attorney at any hearing before the ZBA.

Prior to your hearing, it is recommended that you contact the City Councilperson in whose district your property is located in order to advise the Councilperson of your project and to obtain the names and contact information of the neighborhood organizations in that district. Similarly, the ZBA expects applicants to meet with the neighborhood organization in advance of your scheduled hearing and will continue your case unless and until you have done so.

**Notice Requirements Prior to Zoning Board of Adjustment Hearing:** (1) Display orange zoning posters provided by L&I for 12 consecutive days immediately before the public hearing (including the day of the hearing) in plain view on each side of the property facing a street so that it can be read without going onto the property; (2) Take photographs of the property, including the zoning posters, entire rear and front view and (3) Meet with neighborhood organizations and obtain letters of support.

The Philadelphia Code, Title 14, Section 1805(8) provides that any party may appear before the ZBA. The ZBA traditionally grants wide latitude to permit citizens, businesses, and civic associations the opportunity to be heard by the ZBA and for their concerns to be considered as part of any decision. Typically, the ZBA requires that applicants meet with neighbors and civic associations in an attempt to reach an agreement with respect to any issues. In the event that an agreement is achieved, the ZBA may incorporate that agreement into the decision in the form of a proviso or a condition to any grant of zoning relief.

When the ZBA reaches a decision, you will be notified in writing. If the ZBA rules in favor of a variance or certificate, pick up the “Notice of Decision” issued by the ZBA and take it to the Zoning Unit of L&I. This “Notice” is necessary in order to process the zoning/use permit. A Notice of Decision by the ZBA expires one (1) year from issuance. In other words, you must obtain your Zoning/Use Permit within one (1) year of the ZBA’s Notice of Decision or start all over again.

**Appealing a Zoning Board of Adjustment Decision:** You may appeal a decision of the ZBA to the Court of Common Pleas within thirty (30) days of the date of the Notice of Decision. The legal standard is whether the ZBA abused its discretion or acted in contradiction of the law. The City of Philadelphia will represent the ZBA in court. **Community organizations or individuals living in the city may seek to appeal L&I’s granting of a permit;** may appeal to ZBA; and to Court of Common Pleas. Appeal periods extend thirty (30) days from the ZBA hearing if there was one, and if not, thirty (30) days from the time the plaintiff knew or the court determines that the plaintiff should have known of the decision. The developer or community organization may appeal the decision of the Court of Common Pleas to the Commonwealth Court.

**FEES**

**Fees** for zoning appeals are due upon application. As of June, 2006, the following schedule of fees is applicable:

- Administrative Review.....\$ 50.00
- First appeal of refusal/referral  
(for properties containing one- or two-family dwellings).....\$ 100.00
- First appeal of refusal/referral  
(for any property besides one- or two-family dwellings).....\$ 200.00
- Each additional appeal of a refusal/referral.....\$ 90.00
- Accelerated ZBA hearing.....\$ 500.00

**Note:** Maximum accelerated hearing fee for simultaneous hearings resulting from multiple permit applications shall not exceed \$3,500.00.



## TO OBTAIN A FOUNDATION PERMIT

To begin laying the foundation prior to all approvals necessary for building permit issuance.

Administrative Code Section A-302.6 permits you to construct the foundation of a building only with this permit. It is useful for situations where construction must commence, but building plans for the structure have not been completed. Licenses and Inspections will issue a foundation permit once the Water Department approves access to water and sewer and a search of the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) results in no potential impacts with rare endangered or threatened species. The fee is \$100 for this permit and an approved zoning permit is required. In addition, the building owner must sign and submit a letter stating that the owner assumes full responsibility for removing or altering the foundations should this be necessary after the full set of plans are reviewed.

*Note: Where the foundations are for City- owned buildings, the Art Commission must be involved at this stage. Where health care facilities, the Pennsylvania Health Department must be consulted.*

## TO OBTAIN A BUILDING PERMIT

Building permits are required for new construction, repairs, alterations, demolitions, additions to a structure, installation of foundations for tanks and equipment, construction or demolition of ducts, sprinkler systems, or standpipe system. Work covered by the building permit must begin within six (6) months of the issued date, and the permit will remain in force until completion of the work, provided there is no stoppage of work for a period exceeding six (6) months.

**All tax abatements must be applied for within sixty (60) days of building permit approval.**

***For additional information concerning the building permit process in the City of Philadelphia contact the Department of Licenses and Inspections at 215-686-2467 or email: [Permit Services@phila.gov](mailto:PermitServices@phila.gov).***

**The Permit Services Division of L&I is open for building permit applications and review Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM except on the last Wednesday of the month when it closes at noon.**

**Submit Building Permit Application. Applications must be prepared in ink or typewritten and submitted to L&I.**

The following information must be shown on the application:

- Location of Property: Provide the BRT assigned address for the original parcel. Descriptive locations such as “Northeast Corner or Southwest Corner of...” will not be accepted. This must be an exact address.
- Description of the proposed alteration or construction.
- The names, addresses and phone numbers of the owner, architect, engineer and contractor (if any), the name of the person filing the application, and the Business Privilege License Number for each (except owner).
- The signature of the applicant
- Philadelphia Business Privilege License. (Information concerning where to purchase the licenses can be obtained by contacting 215-686-2490)
- Alterations where the cost of the work exceeds \$50,000 must submit an Asbestos Inspection Report
- The International Energy Conservation Code requires a certificate of compliance and documentation showing compliance with this code for all building permits for new construction, additions, and alterations.
- For new construction of residential dwelling units, submission of plans approved by the Fairmount Park Commission indicating Required Street Tree
- For certain projects, Special Inspections of building elements are required. These elements include sprayed-on fireproofing, compacted fill, piles; EIFS, concrete and pre-cast concrete products, welding, and steel framing. See Philadelphia Building Code Chapter 17 for additional details. When Special Inspections are required, the registered design professional shall provide a Special Inspections Statement that includes a list of inspections to be made and the names of the individuals, firms and approved agencies intended to be retained for conducting such inspections.

**Three Sets of architectural plans, structural plans and mechanical plans must be submitted for new construction, additions or where there is:**

- Construction of partitions
- An increase in the number of occupants as calculated by the Building Code
- A change in the means or size of egress
- Any work involving structural members
- Any new wall openings
- New construction of, or alterations to, ductwork; and/or
- New construction of, or alterations to, sprinkler systems and standpipe systems

## **Plans must include the following information:**

- o Location of property: BRT assigned address
- o Name, address and telephone number of person who prepared plans
- o Name and address of the owner of the property
- o Scale used (except for extreme cases this should be either 1/4" = 1' or 1/8" = 1')
- o Legend distinguishing existing and new construction and materials
- o Seal of an architect or engineer registered in Pennsylvania for all new construction and additions (except ground floor additions less than 120 square feet. to one or two family dwellings), structural alterations, and for all non-structural alterations where the cost of construction exceeds \$15,000
- o Building Code data (i.e. Type of Construction, Use Group, Fire Suppression information, floor areas, etc.) shown on the cover sheet

## **Architectural Plans must also include:**

- Plan of each floor indicating the location, size and usage of each room, closets, shafts, windows, doors, exits, thickness and material of partitions and firewalls, location of emergency lighting, dimensions and any other necessary information.
- Descriptions or sections of new and existing floor, roof, ceiling framing, and supports
- Location of fire fighting systems such as sprinklers and standpipes
- Outside grade details for all new construction and additions
- Fire alarm systems: type and location of equipment
- Exit signs

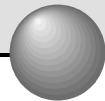
## **Mechanical Plans must also include:**

- Ductwork size and locations (not required for C.O., only reviews)
- Amount of ventilation air supplied in each room
- Location of all fire dampers
- Material of ducts and linings (not required for C.O., only reviews)
- Location and type of air conditioning and heating units and associated equipment

***L&I offers "Fast Track" Program to quasi-governmental agencies such as PHDC, PHA, and Community Development Corporations. The advantage of using this program is that plans and prerequisite approvals are not required to rebuild a single family dwelling in its existing footprint. The only submission requirement is a datasheet sealed by a design professional.***

## **SPECIAL CONDITION PREREQUISITE APPROVALS REQUIRED**

1. Zoning Permit and Use Registration Permit Needed: Whenever a business use is started on or in any property.
2. Street Department – Traffic Division Approval Needed: If work involves driveways, depressed curbs and parking lots. (Other areas of coordination will include approval for curb cuts that are more than 30 feet wide and approval from the Lighting Division for lighting on new streets.)
3. Water Department Approval Needed:
  - \* For new construction, fire suppression system installation, construction adjacent to or over a Water Department easement or drainage right-of-way,
  - \* Where extension of Public Water and Sewer is required because either water and sewer are not available in the area, or you need to extend a connection further down a street or abandon an existing water and sewer site. (Note: must submit a bond along with approved drawings to the Water Department. Other areas of coordination will include Act 537 approval, Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index (PNDI) search, DEP - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) approval, and Water Dept. Erosion and Sediment Control Approval.)
4. Art Commission Approval Needed: For construction involving city funds.
5. Fairmount Park Commission Approval Needed: For new residential construction.
6. Historical Commission Approval Needed: If property or building is historic. See below for more details.
7. Health Department Approval Needed: If well or septic systems is installed.
8. Fire Department Approval Needed: If new construction or changes in occupancy of high rise building, approval is required regarding hydrant location, fire department vehicle access, fire command center approval, fire department connection location and required signage, evacuation procedures, stairwell signage, pull station signage, signage at elevator lobbies, voice alarm messages, and fire alarm sequencing. It is also advisable to contact the Fire Code Unit's High Rise Officer, Lt. Michael S. Keen and river plans prior to submission to L&I. This is NOT required but recommended.



**Submit Plan to the City of Philadelphia Historical Commission if property is on the Register of Historic Places or construction is within Historic District:**

Any work that requires a building permit or that changes the appearance of a property on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places must have approval from the Historical Commission before the Department of Licenses and Inspections will issue a building permit. The Historical Commission reviews all work that requires a permit or that may change the exterior appearance of a property. The permit application is submitted to Historical Commission staff. If within staff’s jurisdiction, approval received within a few days of submission. When the scope of work exceeds the staff’s jurisdiction, the Architectural Committee and the Historical Commission review it. The Commission also reviews plans for construction of new buildings within a historic district. Average review time varies depending on hearing schedule but can be up to three (3) months.

*The permit must be displayed on the construction site and the set of approved plans returned to you must be available at the construction site. As stated on the building permit, you must notify the appropriate District office 24 hours prior to beginning work and must schedule all required inspections.*

“Fast Form” online trade permits are available from L&I for roof coverings, window replacement, interior demolition, relocation of sprinkler heads, relocation of HVAC diffusers, siding and stucco, warm air installations, and porch floor replacement.

Go to <http://www.phila.gov/li/construction/index.html> Trade permits from the Water Department obtained by plumbers and engineers include the Ferrule Connection Permit, Valve Connection approval, Sewer connection approval, Highway opening and occupancy approval and Hydrant Flow Test. Where groundwater must be pumped to build, you must obtain a groundwater discharge permit from the Water Department, Industrial Waste Unit.

<b>FEES to obtain a building permit as of June 2006 are:</b>	
New Construction and Additions	
Area	Permit Fee
500 square feet or less	\$100
Over 500 square feet	\$100 plus an additional \$50 per each 100 sq. ft or fraction thereof
Alterations and Repairs	
Area	Permit Fee
500 square feet or less	\$100
Over 500 square feet	\$100 plus an additional \$38 per each 100 sq. ft or fraction thereof



## TO OBTAIN A CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

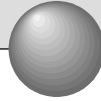
1. **A Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.) is issued by Licenses and Inspections prior to residents occupying the property.** The certificate of occupancy must include a statement that the structure has been inspected for compliance with the applicable code requirements for the occupancy and division of occupancy and the use for which the proposed occupancy is classified and shall specify the following:
  - o The address of the building and census tract.
  - o The location within the building if for part of a building.
  - o The edition of the code under which the permit was issued.
  - o The use(s) and Occupancy Group(s) in accordance with the Building Code.
  - o The type of construction as defined by the Building Code.
  - o If and where an automatic sprinkler system is provided and whether it is required.
  - o If a standpipe system is provided and whether it is required.
  - o Any variances or special conditions.
  - o The application, permit and plan numbers.
  - o The date of the final inspection.
  - o The name and address of the owner.
  - o The printed name and signature of the code official.
  
2. **When a Certificate of Occupancy is required, the Certificate is held in the District office** pending compliance to applicable codes verified by the responsible inspectors. Inspections are performed out of the L & I District field office. The District office must be notified upon completion of work so that a final inspection can be made and the Certificate of Occupancy issued. This final inspection will result in approval by the building inspector and the District supervisor if all work is in compliance with the applicable codes.

## **TO OBTAIN A STREET OPENING/STREET CLOSURE PERMIT/AMEND CITY PLAN**

Although the Contractor/Developer is responsible for building the street, the City is responsible for maintaining it in perpetuity where it is a public street.

This permit provides for the repair and maintenance of a new street.

**You must have the support of the District Councilperson in which the property is located to obtain a street opening permit. If any change in the street must occur, the District Councilperson can stop the project. Obtain support early in the process.**



1. File Letter of Request to the Streets Commissioner.
2. The Streets Department will prepare a study plan showing existing street lines with the changes requested. This plan is distributed to the Planning Commission, District Regulator, BRT, Policy, Fire Department and utility companies.
3. The developer will be informed of any changes requested by the various City agencies.
4. The draft ordinance is prepared and sent to Law Department, along with the revised study plan for approval as to form.
5. After the Law Department signs off, the ordinance is sent to the Mayor's Office. From the Mayor's Office, it goes to the District Councilman and is introduced into City Council. (It formally was sent to the party-in-interest to have their District Councilperson introduce the ordinance.)

6. If you require a new street to be placed, at this time initiate the paving plan review with the Streets Department Transportation Engineering and Planning Section (TEPS), however the plan will not be approved until both ordinances are passed.
  - a. To initiate paving plan review, the Developer must send 12 copies of the paving plan to the Streets Department Transportation Engineering & Planning Section. The paving plan must include the following information and be sealed by a licensed engineer:
    - Roadway geometry.
    - Elevations and grades.
    - Existing and proposed drainage facilities.
    - All required traffic signage and linestriping.
    - Traffic signal plan, if applicable.
    - Street lighting.
    - Landscaping.
    - Cartway and footway widths.
    - Driveway locations.
    - Accessible curb cut ramps.
    - Paving sections detailing character of paving.
    - Listing of Streets Department approved construction items. Specifications for those items which are not included in the Streets Department Standard Construction Items Catalog must be submitted for review.
    - The Streets Department Surveys Division must provide curb layout at a pre-determined cost to be included in the contract.
    - The Streets Department Highway Division must inspect all roadway construction and related work. The contract must include an item to cover inspection costs.
  - b. After all comments to the paving plan have been addressed, resubmit two (2) copies of the plan for a further review.
  - c. The Developer must submit seven (7) copies of the final plan and five (5) copies of the specifications. The Streets Department Transportation Engineering & Planning Section will issue a letter of approval of the plan.

d. As Per Section 11-504 of the Philadelphia Code, the Contractor must contact the Streets Department Contract Unit to initiate a private paving contract. The Contractor will be required to complete an application with related documents and acquire appropriate bonds. If the Paving Contractor is not on the Streets Department list of approved paving contractors, the Streets Department must receive references. The Streets Department reserves the right to reject any Contractor which has not been pre-approved. The Contractor must prepare a work proposal listing all items and quantities with associated costs to obtain a bond. This work proposal must be approved by the Streets Department Contract Unit.

e. Upon receipt of the private paving application and related documents, the Streets Department Contracts Unit will initiate the private paving contract. Allow two (2) weeks for contract development.

f. After the contract has been executed, the Contractor may begin street related work. The Contractor must contact the Streets Department Highways Construction Unit to arrange for inspection at least two (2) weeks prior to the start of work.

g. The Streets Department Highways Division will accept the streets upon completion provided construction complies with approved plans, specifications, and procedures.

7. The bill is referred to the Committee on Streets and Services where a public hearing is scheduled. The Survey Bureau Manager testifies at this hearing stating the reasons for the ordinance and to any questions of Council or the public.
8. The bill is reintroduced in Council with a favorable recommendation and with full City Council approval, it is sent to the Mayor for approval.
9. After the Mayor signs the bill, developer must pay \$200 within 120 days for the cost of the ordinance or it is null and void.
10. Once it is paid, a public hearing is scheduled before the Board of Surveyors.
11. The developer must post the notice in the neighborhood and daily newspaper.
12. The Board of Surveyors then holds a public hearing of the proposed City Plan change.
13. The plan is sent to the Planning Commission for their approval, and the revision is made.

# Thank you



for investing in Philadelphia!