



BEFORE YOU BUILD GUIDE

A Guide for Homebuilders

Permit Process Steps

The following show the steps in the permit process:

1. Gather information
2. Assemble application package
3. Apply for permit/pay review fee
4. Review completed application
5. Request more information or revisions to applications
6. Issue conditional approval letter
7. Prepare your property
8. Purchase approved permits and begin construction
9. Inspect construction
10. Issue final approval

1. Gather Information

The first step in any project is to gather as much information as possible about your site and building plans.

Questions for property seller

If you are purchasing land, ask the seller if the County has already done any review work on the property. Prior approvals for sewage disposal, drinking water supply, site access, etc. may still be valid and can save you considerable time and effort in getting the final approval for your project. If you have the tax parcel number for the property, a permit center employee can check the status of prior approvals for you. (If you do not know the tax parcel number, call Thurston County Assessor's Office at (360)786-5410.)

Check address

If your building site does not have an address, contact Thurston County Development Services, Addressing Section at (360)754-3355 ext. 7590 with your tax parcel number. Development Services will assign an address based on the parcel.

Talk to local experts

Ask local builders and realtors about any problems that they may have had getting permits for projects similar to yours. Write down any solutions that might help you get approval for your project.

Get building and sewage system plans

Find a set of building plans for your home or begin working with a design professional. The name of the contractor who will build your home and their state contractor's license number must be included on your application form. If your site will require on-site sewage disposal, you will need to contact a certified on-site sewage (septic) system designer. Thurston County Environmental Health keeps a list of certified designers in the area. Copies of this list are available at the Permit Assistance Center, or by calling (360)786-5490. State-licensed engineers with expertise in civil or sanitary engineering and state-registered sanitarians also are qualified to design on-site sewage (septic) systems.

2. Assemble Application Package

A complete and accurate application package will help Thurston County Development Services rapidly and accurately review your project. Below are the application requirements for:

- a) Conditional Site Approval
- b) Building Permit only

Required for Conditional Site Approval:

(For on-site sewage (septic) system design approval and conditions for further development)

- Master Application (*form MA001*) and Residential Supplemental Application (*form SA001*)
- Site Plan

Thurston County Permit Assistance Center

2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Bldg 1, Second Floor; Olympia, WA 98502
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- On-site sewage(septic) system design (three copies) (*form SA016*)

Required for Building Permit only:

(*For building site that already has on-site sewage (septic) system approval or is served by a sewer system*)

- Master Application (*form MA001*) and Residential Supplemental Application (*form SA001*)
- Site Plan
- On-site Sewage (Septic) Installation Permit
- Review of Water Availability (*as explained in step 4 below*)
- Building construction drawings (two sets)
- Washington State Energy Code Residential Checklist

If you have any questions about the application requirements for your project please contact the Permit Assistance Center at the contact information below.

3. Apply for Permit / Pay Review Fee

When your application package is complete, bring it to the Permit Assistance Center at the location listed below. You must include a check payable to Thurston County to cover the non-refundable review fee for your application.

When you enter the Permit Assistance Center, sign in at the service counter. A permit case manager will be assigned to take in your application. Your case manager will review your application package with you to ensure that all required information has been included. (*Note: only complete application packages will be accepted. If any items are missing from your application, you will be required to gather that information and provide it before your application will be processed.*) When the application is determined to be complete, your case manager will enter your application into our permit tracking system, assign a project number, and collect the review fee. You will receive a packet of property flagging materials. **You**

should immediately install the flags as directed in the packet to mark your property corners and driveway access point for County site reviews.

4. Review of Completed Applications

Zoning Review

Your site plan will be reviewed to make sure that it meets all zoning requirements. Your building site must be in a zone that allows the proposed residential structure. The site plan also must meet building set-back requirements that specify the distance of the proposed home from the property lines. An information sheet with details about these requirements is included in the back of this guide. A County reviewer also will check to see if the building site is within 300 feet of any lands designated for long-term agriculture, long-term forestry or mining. You will be notified if your property is near any of the resource lands. Before receiving a Building Permit, applicants must sign a Resource Notification form. This form states that you are aware of possible negative impacts to your property resulting from commercial Activities allowed on these resource lands.

Critical Area Review

Critical areas include shorelines, flood plains, streams, wetlands, important wildlife habitat areas and landslide hazard areas (such as steep slopes and marine bluffs). If the initial review of your application shows a critical area on your property, an environmental planner will review your site plan and application. The planner may need to visit your site (please have all flags in place) to decide whether a buffer zone is required between the critical area and any proposed structures. You will be notified if your property includes a critical area and if a buffer is required.

Site Visit and Soils Evaluation

A County Environmental Health Specialist will visit your building site to do a soils evaluation.

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Typically, your sewage system designer will need to dig two test holes in the proposed primary drainfield area and one hole in the proposed reserve drainfield area before the inspection. The holes should be at least 6 feet deep (unless the water table or a restrictive layer is shallower than 6 feet), at least 2 feet wide, and sloped to allow access into the hole. The designer should clearly flag each hole.

Other County reviewers may verify other information that you or your agent submitted as part of your site plan. They may check major topographic features, vegetation coverage, location of critical areas (shorelines, flood plains, wetlands, steep slopes, etc.), and proposed access to the site. To help the reviews find your lot and compare your site plan with the actual site, please make sure that you clearly flag the property corners and the location of proposed access point(s) to the project site.

On-Site Sewage (Septic) System Design Review

Washington State and Thurston County codes require each residence to have a functioning approved on-site sewage (septic) system for treating and disposing of human waste and wastewater. A poorly designed or failing system may allow sewage to leak into your water supply or contaminate nearby wells, streams, lakes or underlying ground water. Most Thurston County single-residence sewage systems include a septic tank and drainfield, professionally designed to meet minimum state and local regulations for preventing pollution.

Your sewage system designer usually will submit detailed information about the soils, topography, critical setbacks and elevations at your site. The design will include calculations to find the appropriate size for your system based on the number of bedrooms in the proposed home. Environmental Health will check this design information for compliance with state and local regulations and technical requirements.

The Environmental Health Specialist will tell you and your designer if any changes to the initial sewage system design are necessary. Your designer is responsible for submitting revised design information to Thurston County Environmental Health.

When your on-site sewage (septic) system design has been approved, the reviewer will notify your case manager in the Permit Assistance Center. The case manager will add this approval to your project file. You will receive a Conditional Site Approval letter approving an on-site sewage (septic) system design for your property and establishing written conditions for further site development.

After meeting any requirements explained in the Conditional Site Approval Letter and paying the permit fee, you will receive an On-Site Sewage (Septic) Installation Permit to construct your system. When the system is installed, the sewage system designer must call Thurston County Environmental Health for a final inspection and submit “as-built” drawings (drawings that show how your system is actually constructed).

After Environmental Health accepts the as-built drawings, you will receive an Operational Certificate with conditions for ongoing operation and maintenance of your system. You may now begin using the system. You must follow the conditions listed in your certificate to stay in compliance. Most Operational Certificates must be renewed every four years or before the expiration date.

If Your Building Site is Served by a Public Sewer System

To meet sewage disposal requirements, obtain the signature of the sewer provider confirming the availability of sanitary sewer prior to applying for your Building Permit. The project application for your Building Permit has a space provided for this signature.

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Drinking Water Review

Washington State law requires the assurance of an adequate supply of drinking water prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

If you are proposing a single-family or two-party water source for your new home, complete a single-family Certificate of Water Availability form. If you are proposing connection to a water source serving more than two homes (public water system), obtain the signature from the water provider confirming assignment of a service connection prior to applying for your Building Permit. The project application for your Building Permit has a space provided for this signature. Requirements for approval of each type are as follows:

Connection to Single-Family or Two-Party Source:

(Additional standards apply to springs and surface-water sources).

- Completed Certificate of Water Availability.
- Well site approval – drawings of your well site must be included on your site plan and are approved during the site-plan review process.
- Well driller’s report – this report, also commonly called a “well log, provides details about how your well is constructed.
- Water right permit (if required) – this permit is required if you will be drawing from a surface-water source. It also may be required if you will use the water for irrigation purposes.
- Access easement (if required) – an easement is required if you must cross public right of way or another person’s property to access your well, or if you well is on another person’s property.
- Isolation covenant (two-party well only) – this form gives property owners the legal ability to control activities within 100 feet

of their well that could affect their water quality.

- Quantity test (pump test, air test, bailer test) – your quantity test must demonstrate a minimum 400-gallon-per-day flow for single-family wells and a minimum 800 gallon-per-day flow for two-party wells.
- Satisfactory bacteria and nitrate tests – these water quality tests ensure that your water meets drinking-water standards. If your building site is in a known or suspected contamination area, additional water quality tests may be required.
- No contamination source within 100 feet of the well.

Connection to Public Water System

- Signature of the water provider on the project application for Building Permit confirming assignment of a service connection. Local and state health officials will review your application to make sure that the proposed water system complies with all applicable laws and standards.

Public Right-of-Way Access Review

Thurston County Roads and Transportation Services will review all proposals for new driveway access to County roads and unopened County right-of-way, and issues Encroachment Permits. A County engineering technical will review your access proposal based on the following safety requirements:

- Sight distance – drivers and pedestrians entering and exiting your property must be able to see oncoming bicycles from a safe distance. This distance increases proportionately to traffic speeds.
- Intersections – access must be constructed a t a minimum distance from any intersection. Again the safe distance is determined based on traffic volumes and speed.

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- Drainage – frequently the proposed access route will cross a roadside drainage ditch. A County engineering technician will decide if a culvert is needed to maintain proper drainage and will notify you of any installation requirements.

When your access proposal has been approved, the reviewer will prepare an Encroachment Permit and notify your case manager in the Permit Assistance Center. The case manager will add this approval to your project file. You must purchase the Encroachment Permit before constructing the driveway.

Stormwater Treatment and Erosion Control Review

Thurston County Roads and Transportation Services also reviews all site plans to make sure that they meet storm-water treatment and erosion control requirements. It is against the law to direct storm-water from your site onto a neighboring property or County right-of-way. During construction, the County also requires measures to prevent soil erosion caused by rainfall on the exposed building site.

Thurston County allows several methods for handling residential storm-water. Your project site plan must include your proposal for storm-water treatment and erosion control.

Building Plan Review

A certified Plans Examiner in Thurston County Development Services will review your site plan, construction drawings, specifications and other information related to your project for compliance with the state Building Code and other construction and operation regulations. The Examiner will point out any changes required to comply with state and local code. When these changes are made, the Plans Examiner will approve your drawings. Additional code-related information may be attached to your approved plans for easy reference during construction.

If you have any questions about specific code requirements for residential construction, please contact the Permit Assistance center at the phone number listed below and ask for Plan Review technical assistance.

5. Request More Information or Revisions to Application

Sometimes information in your application may be incorrect or missing. The reviewer will contact you or your designated agent with a list of information to be added or revised. If you have questions about the reviewer's request, please contact the reviewer directly. He or she will include a contact telephone number, email address and mailing address in any correspondence.

6. Issue Conditional Approval Letter

When all departments have reviewed and approved your proposal, they will forward comments to your Case Manager. Your Case Manager will send you a conditional approval letter with a list of remaining requirements and an invoice for all remaining review and permit fees.

7. Prepare your Property

The following is allowed without further review or permit from the County*:

Clearing/Grubbing/Grading:

You are allowed to remove shrubs and small trees (less than 6 inches in diameter at 4 ½ ft.). You may excavate down to 24 inches (grubbing), you can cover up to 1 foot with up to 50 yards of fill. You may also excavate below finished grade for basements and footings of a building, retaining wall or other structure authorized by a valid Building Permit. All other filling or grading requires a Grading Permit.

Cutting:

Property located in the Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater Urban Growth Areas: A Forest Lands Conversion permit is

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need if – you are clearing more than 5,000 square feet of land or cutting more than 5,000 board feet and if those trees are more than a tree length from existing structures.

Property in the Rural Areas: A Forest Lands Conversion permit is needed if - you are cutting trees located further than a tree length from existing structures, or own two acres or more and are cutting more than 5,000 board feet of timber.

*Remember waterfront, wetlands, streams, steep slopes, Oregon white oak trees, and high ground water hazard areas have additional regulations. Do not clear, grub or cut trees in these areas until you check with Development Services.

8. Purchase Approved Permits and Begin Construction

After meeting all the approval conditions and paying the remaining fees at the Permit Assistance Center, the County will issue you an On-Site Sewage (Septic) Installation Permit and Building Permit, or a Building Permit only (if your building site already has on-site sewage (septic) system approval or is served by a sewer). You may now begin construction.

9. Inspect Construction

Thurston County Development Services is required to make on-site inspections at specific points during the construction of your home. **To request an inspection, please call our Building Inspection Request Line at (360)786-5489. Before requesting an inspection, all property corners must be clearly marked.** To speak directly with a Building Inspector, please call between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, or between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. on Thursday's.

The following information explains the required construction inspections and when to request them:

Footing and Setback Inspections:

Excavation for footings should be complete, and all required reinforcing steel should be in place. Any required forms and all bedding materials for an all-weather wood foundation system should be in place.

Foundation Wall Inspection:

Request this inspection after all forms and required reinforcement, foundation vents and access openings are properly installed, but before concrete placement.

Concrete Slab Inspection:

Request this inspection after all in-slab building service equipment, conduit, piping accessories and other ancillary equipment are in place, but before concrete placement. Please note: this inspection is required only if any of the above in- or under- slab items were installed.

Shear Wall Nailing Inspection

Request this inspection after all framing members have been installed in the area where shear wall panels or lateral restraint panels have been specified by a private engineer or by Thurston County. Required hold-downs and strapping must be in place and all nailing completed. No covering (installing siding, insulation, wallboard, etc.) may begin until this inspection is done.

Electrical Inspection

All electrical wiring and hardware must be approved for cover and service by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries Electrical Inspection Division. You should request this inspection by calling (360)902-5242. Your Electrical Inspection must be approved before requesting a Framing Inspection.

Plumbing Rough-In Inspection

Request this inspection after all drain, waste, vent and water supply piping is installed and during water or air pressure testing. This

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inspection may be approved before or at the same time as the Framing Inspection.

Mechanical Rough-In Inspection

Request this inspection after all mechanical equipment and ducting (including bath fans, range hood – if ducted, gas piping and wood stove chimney(s) are installed and during air pressure testing of the gas pipes. This inspection may be approved before or at the same time as the Framing Inspection.

Propane Tank Inspection

Request this inspection if you have installed a propane tank. This inspection may be approved during the Mechanical Rough-In Inspection.

Framing Inspection

Request this inspection after the roof, all framing, fire blocking, windows, chimneys, exterior siding and bracing are in place; all plumbing, mechanical and electrical are approved for cover; and energy code caulking and sealing are done.

Insulation Inspection

Request this inspection after all concealed areas (walls, cathedral ceilings, etc.) are insulated, but before covering. Accessible attics and under-floor areas will be inspected during the Final Inspection.

Gypsum Board Inspection

Request this inspection after all interior and exterior gypsum board is in place, but before plastering is done or gypsum board joints and fasteners are taped and finished.

Final Electrical Inspection

After all electrical trim and appliances are installed, call the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries at (360)902-5242 for a Final Electrical.

Final Access Inspection

When your driveway is installed, call Thurston County Development Review at (360)357-2493 for a final inspection.

Final Inspection

Request this inspection after the grading is done, the septic as-built drawing is approved, and the home is ready for occupancy. The address that is clearly legible from the road should be posted.

10. Issue Final Approval

When all required inspections have been completed and approved, you will receive a Certificate of Final Inspection. Your new home is now ready for occupancy. Ask the building inspector approving the final inspection of your home to give you the County copy of your approved Building Plans. Please keep these plans, your Certificate of Final Inspection, your permit card and other permit and construction documents in a safe place for future reference. If you decide to remodel or build an addition onto your home, these documents will serve as a record of what was constructed on your site and as a useful reference for your designer or builder.

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Information and Inspection Numbers:

Thurston County

- Tax parcel number information:
Assessor's Office (360) 786-5410
- On-site sewage (septic) system design and drinking water information:
Environmental Health (360) 786-5490
- Noxious weed information:
Noxious Weed Control (360) 786-5576
- Property and permit application information:
Permit Assistance Center (360) 786-5490
- Site access, storm-water treatment and erosion control information:
Roads and Transportation Services, Development Review (360) 357-2493
- County water and sewer utility information:
Water and Waste Management, Utilities (360) 357-2491
- Building Inspections: (360) 786-5489
- Final On-site Sewage (Septic) System Inspections: (360) 786-5400
- TDD Line for hearing impaired callers:
(360) 754-2933

Washington State

- Department of Labor and Industries Contractor Registration Verification: (360) 902-5226
- Electrical Inspections: (360) 902-5242
- Factory Assembled Housing Structures Inspections (360) 956-5206
- Residential Energy Code Assistance: (800) 235-TA4U
Provides technical assistance for builders on the Washington State Energy Code and the Ventilation and Indoor Air Quality Code.

Other

- Olympia Master Builders Referral Service (360) 754-0912
Free service that puts you in touch with licensed, bonded contractors to discuss new home construction and remodeling.
- Utilities Underground Location Center (800) 424-5555
Free service sponsored by utility companies to find out if there are any underground utility lines where you are planning to dig.

Thurston County Mapping web site: www.geodata.org