

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
BUILDING & SAFETY
DEPARTMENT**



**A Homeowner's Guide
to
Submitting Building Plans
Understanding Building Plans
And
Building Inspections**

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Dear Homeowner:

The Department of Building and Safety is a member of the Transportation and Land Management Agency (TLMA), which also includes the Departments of Transportation, Planning, Code Enforcement and Environmental Programs.

Building and Safety's primary area of responsibility is the enforcement of County regulations concerning construction activities on private property in the unincorporated areas of Riverside County.

It is the Building and Safety's overall goal to provide safe, pleasant living and working environments for all of our citizens. If you have any questions about any development projects, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

*Mike Lara
Director of Building and Safety*

INTRODUCTION

This brochure is intended to provide basic information for homeowners wishing to design and/or build a home or add an addition to an existing one. It is not a complete list of County codes and regulations but is intended to try and answer the questions most frequently asked of the Building and Safety Department by interested citizens.

Residential buildings are typically constructed using what is called “conventional construction” by the California Building Code. This method utilizes materials and techniques that have been proven through long periods of usage to be adequate for residential buildings. Information provided in this brochure is based upon the “conventional construction” parameters of the most current edition of the California Building Code (which is based on the most current edition of the International Building Code). Specialized engineered structural systems or techniques that were used in your existing home or unusual features of your proposed home may require design by a State of California licensed Professional Engineer or Architect.

Frequently used telephone numbers

Palm Desert

Building & Safety	760-863-8271
Planning	760-863-8277
Transportation	760-863-8267
Fire Department	760-863-3886
CVWD	760-398-2651
Environmental Health	760-393-3390
Flood Control	951-955-1210

Riverside

Building & Safety	951-955-1800
Planning	951-955-3200
Transportation	951-955-6790
Fire Department	951-955-2823
EMWD	951-928-3777
Environmental Health	951-955-8980
Flood Control	951-955-2987

IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?



Most construction work requires a permit and additional inspections to help assure that unsafe conditions are not created.

There are certain exceptions to this rule. These include:

1. One-story, detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses, and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
2. Wood, chain link and wrought iron fences not over 6 feet high.
3. Retaining walls without a surcharge that are not over 4 feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding Class one, two or 3A liquids.
4. Water tanks supported directly on grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2:1.
5. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches above adjacent grade, and not over any basement or story below and are not part of an accessible route.
6. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.
7. Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.

8. Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3 occupancy that are less than 24 inches deep, do not exceed 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above the ground.
9. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes, not including service systems.
10. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one-, and two-family dwellings.
11. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support of Group R-3 and U occupancies.
12. Nonfixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches in height.
13. Minor electrical repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
14. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures and the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures.
15. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil waster or vent pipe.
16. Portable heating appliances; portable ventitation equipment; portable cooling units; and portable evaporative coolers and replacement of any parts of mechanical systems that doe not alter its approval or make it unsafe.

Although a permit may not be required, there may be other County regulations that apply. For instance, the Planning Department may regulate fence heights and locations. If you are uncertain about your project, a telephone call or visit to the Planning Department before commencing work may save some time and headaches.

PLAN PREPARATION

The key to obtaining a permit with the shortest delays and the least amount of frustration lies in the proper preparation of plans. Plan preparation should show specifically what is to be done, where on your property it is to be done, and how the project will be constructed. An accurate drawing is the only practical way of creating mutual understanding and expectations between you, the Building and Safety office staff and the field inspector.

If you have doubts that your project/plan may not be approved, preliminary information can be obtained at any County Building and Safety Department office counter during plan preparation. Quite often a few minutes of conversation and a sketch can save redrawing of plans by resolving concerns before final working drawings are completed.

Another consideration in preparation of plans is the adequacy of the public improvements within the street right-of-way adjoining your property. If your street right-of-way width is substandard, dedication of property to provide additional width may be required. On extensive additions or new dwelling construction, any lacking street paving, curbs and gutters, streetlights, and/or sidewalks may also be required, depending on what currently exist. If improvements are required, plans must be prepared by a California Registered Civil Engineer and submitted to the Transportation Department for their approval before a permit may be issued.

Preliminary conferences with members of the Transportation Department staff in the early planning stages will help you to arrive at cost estimates before proceeding with working drawings. Any time a building permit is required, a site plan of your property showing the location of the work must accompany the building permit application. Simple re-roof permits are an exception and therefore, do not require a site plan. (A site or plot plan is a view of your entire property looking down from above. It must include all property lines, all structures located on the property, the street, the driveway and the location of any proposed work to be done.) A sample site plan is shown attached to this booklet (and one may also be obtained at any of our front counters).

In addition to the required site plan, the size and complexity of your project will determine how extensive your plans must be. Changing out windows or adding electrical outlets may only require existing room uses, dimensions and window sizes. A patio or similar structure will require a drawing or sketch showing how the structure will be built, including the size

and spacing of structural members and the methods intended to be used in making the connections of the structure and attachments to the existing building. To assist you; the Building and Safety Department has standard drawings available on the department's website at www.rctlma.org/building/default.aspx or at our public counter for patios, balconies and block walls.

If you are planning to construct a new home, or just a room addition, more complete plans are needed. General residential plan submittal requirements and room addition requirements are available on our website (Form No. 284-179) and (Form No. 284-180).

For the design of a complete home, it is advisable to arrange with a professional Architect or building designer for preparation of the plans. Certain State of California requirements are extremely complex, and typically beyond the capabilities of the average homeowner. These State requirements alone make obtaining professional help advisable.

SUBMITTAL FOR PLAN REVIEW

Three complete sets of plans must be submitted for plan check to the Building & Safety Department. One set of plans will be returned to you at the time of permit issuance as your approved copy.

Additional information:

- A. You will need the legal description of your property (lot and tract number). This can be obtained from your property tax bill or deed.
- B. You will be asked to fill out an application to construct for your building permit. You will need to specify the type of work proposed. The square footage and use of new buildings or additions is required. The property owner, architect, engineer, applicant or licensed contractor information including address and telephone number is required on this form. See the application to construct form No. 284-199 on our website.
- C. When plans are required (including site plans) a permit fee must be paid at the time of permit application.
- D. Review time for plan check is ten working days for all projects. Plans submitted for review expire by limitation 180 days after application. Extensions can requested on form No. 284-193. Extensions for 180

days are normally granted once. When applying for plan check, you should allow ample time for processing, but should not be so premature that the plan check expires.

PERMIT ISSUANCE

After all required departments have approved the plans, a permit to construct may be issued. At the time of permit issuance certain fees may be required that are specific to your project. A preliminary estimate of fees is advisable before the expense and effort of final plan preparation is undertaken. We urge you to contact the Building and Safety Department in your area for more information.

Building permit fees can be found on the Building and Safety Department's website at www.rctlma.org/building/default.aspx. It is also be advisable to contact the Transportation Department, Health Department, Planning Department/Land Use, and Fire Department for other associated fees.

Building and Safety fees are set forth in Ordinance 457. All residential projects, which include grading plan check, grading inspection, structural plan check and field inspection are deposit-based fees. This will enable fees to be charged for the actual cost of providing the specific services or inspections. This cost shall include supervision, overhead, equipment, hourly wages and fringe benefits of the employees involved.

If you intend to hire workers on an hourly basis, you are required by law to provide workers compensation insurance. The carrier name and policy number will be required to be included in the permit application. When your building permit is issued, a copy of the approved plans will be returned to you and an inspection record card. The plans and card are to be kept at the job location and must be available for the inspector's use whenever they visit your property for inspections. With your permit in hand you are now ready to proceed with construction.

REQUESTING INSPECTIONS

Inspections may be scheduled in person at the Building and Safety counter, or by telephoning the office in your area. The inspection request phone number appears on the back of your inspection card. Inspections received before 3:00 p.m. will be inspected the next available inspection day. If it is necessary that you make a specific appointment with the field inspector, they can be reached between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. by calling the nearest office. The field inspectors arrange their own schedules to make best use of their time; unless for some specific reason a meeting is required. We ask that requests for specific appointments be avoided. Make sure that when you request an inspection you include your name and phone number where you can be reached along with the permit number, the job address, and the type of inspection that you are requesting.

THE INSPECTION PROCESS

When the building inspector visits your project, the approved plans must be available for comparison with the work, and the inspection card must be available for the inspector's signature if the work passes the inspection. If there are corrections to be made before approval, the inspector will leave a "correction notice" briefly outlining the things required to be completed prior to approval of that portion of the project. Time delays and reinspections can be avoided if you make sure that work is complete before the inspector arrives. Any necessary tests should have been done ahead of time to assure acceptance and compliance.

Your inspector can provide you with a lot of useful information about the codes and inspections but cannot act as a construction supervisor. If you are not reasonably familiar with construction procedures it may be to your advantage to hire a licensed contractor or tradesperson to do the work or assist you.

PLAN CHANGES

If you decide during the construction process that a change is desirable, it is necessary that a plan change be cleared through the Building and Safety Department office staff. This can sometimes be done over the counter, but if building area or structural features are to be modified it may be necessary to perform additional plan checking and/or that an additional permit fees may be required.

If you have questions regarding a need for plan change approval, call and ask.

INSPECTIONS

During construction of your project the majority of contacts with the Building and Safety Department will be through the field inspection staff when they visit your property.

County building regulations require that certain inspections be made prior to covering that portion of construction, for example, a framing inspection before drywall is applied. On typical residential construction this means that you must request inspections at certain stages of the project before proceeding. These inspection stages typically are as follows:

- Foundation inspection: To be made when trenches have been excavated, forms are set, and all steel reinforcing, hold down hardware and/or anchor bolts are in place.
- Concrete slab or underfloor inspection: To be made after all in-slab or under-floor equipment, piping, conduit, etc. are in place, but before the concrete is placed or floor sheathing installed.
- Roof sheathing and shear panel-nailing inspection: To be made when the roof sheathing and shear panels are installed and entirely nailed off.
- Framing inspection: To be made after all framing, fire blocking, and bracing are in place; all pipes, chimneys and vents are complete, roof covering is in place, rough electrical wiring, plumbing piping, and heating ducts are installed.

- Insulation inspection: To be made when all insulation is installed, and all openings and gaps in the shell of the building have been caulked or sealed.
- Lath and/or gypsum board inspection: To be made after all lathing and gypsum board, interior and exterior, is in place and nailed but before plaster has been applied or before gypsum board joints and fasteners have been taped and finished.
- Final inspection: To be made after finish grading, building is complete and ready for occupancy, and all plumbing and electrical fixtures and appliances are installed.

Other inspections may be required as well as those outlined above. For instance, pressure tests are necessary for water and gas piping, and water tests of drainage and sewer piping are likewise required. The inspectors may also advise you of the need for additional inspections if they believe special attention is required for some areas of your project.

AVOIDING PERMIT EXPIRATION

Every permit issued by the building official under the provisions of the California Building Code, shall expire by limitation and become null and void if the building or work authorized by such permit is not commenced within 180 days from the date of such permit, or if the work authorized by such permit is suspended or abandoned at any time after the work is commenced for a period of 180 days. Before such work can be continued, a new permit shall be obtained first and the fee shall be based on the minimum permit fee or an estimate based on the number of remaining inspections, provided no changes have been made or will be made in the original plans and specifications for such work. If new building codes become effective during expiration, the new permit and building plans may be subject to the new requirements.

FINAL APPROVAL

If your project has conditions of approval from other departments that are not yet met, clearances (approvals) will be required prior to requesting final inspection from Building and Safety. To obtain approvals for your project,

call the office closest to you and request information regarding these conditions.

After the building inspector makes his inspection, and all requirements have been satisfied, your project will be approved. If a new electric or gas service has been installed as a part of your project and approved by the inspector, they will see that the utility company is notified. Note: you must also call and arrange for installation of the electrical meters from the utility company.

SUMMARY

We have attempted in this pamphlet to provide useful, but very general information. To ensure that your project proceeds without delays, consider the following:

- Ask for a preliminary review of what you propose before you develop working drawings.
- Plan carefully. Make sure plans are complete and clearly indicate what you are going to do, where you are going to do it and how you propose to do it.
- If you do not have basic design or construction skills, consider getting help from professionals.
- Call for inspections ahead of time and recheck your work before the inspector arrives, thereby avoiding callbacks, or additional cost based on the deposit based fee method.
- Coordinate final inspection with Planning, Transportation or Fire Departments and with the serving utilities.

We want to be helpful to you during your construction project. We urge you to utilize the services of the Building and Safety Department, when you need guidance or have questions as you proceed through the building experience.

Together we can make your efforts more productive and less frustrating.

Remember, when in doubt, give us a call and ask for help. It is easier and more satisfying when we can prevent a problem before it develops.