



GUIDELINES FOR One & Two Family Units

FUNDAMENTALS

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

- Building permits
- Raze permits
- Trade permits: Electrical, gas, mechanical, plumbing, elevators and conveying systems, and boilers
- Foundation and earthwork permits

REQUIREMENTS

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

Building Permit

- Prepare a [New Building Permit Application](#) available online
- Building Plan (see Page 2)
- Site-Related Plans (see Page 4)



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



www.dkra.dc.gov

Find DCRA: 1100 4th Street SW, Washington DC 20024

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

Hours of Operation

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

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

ONE & TWO FAMILY DWELLINGS BUILDING PLANS CHECKLIST

When applying for a permit, unless submitted electronically, you must submit 4 copies of your building plans. The plans must meet the following requirements as per section 106 of 2013 12 DCMR A.

GENERAL

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

FIRE PROTECTION

- Fire sprinkler information

SHOP DRAWINGS

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

ARCHITECTURAL

- Complete Building Data Information
- List of materials used, including wood species and grade, and concrete and steel strength
- List of design criteria, i.e., live load, dead load, snow load (25 psf), wind speed (90 mph), soil bearing capacity
- Manufacturer's design specifications for pre-fabricated fireplaces must be attached to the plans
- Architectural plans(s) showing the dimensions and use of all rooms, including design occupant loads
- Building height, number of stories and floor areas
- Building elevations (all sides)
- Details of approved tested assemblies for fire resistance rating
- Crawl space ventilation and

access, vapor retarder

- R-values of building insulation components
- U-factor of fenestration
- Partition schedule
- Floor to ceiling height and height from floor to underside of lowest structural member
- Any additional details or sections necessary to accurately depict intended construction
- Stair raiser and tread dimension.
- Guardrail and handrail details
- Site plan showing setbacks, property lines and building restriction lines

STRUCTURAL

- Foundation plan & details; sill; anchor bolt type, size, & spacing
- Footing schedule
- Framing plan, cross sections and details showing all wall stud sizing & spacing & floor joist sizes & spans for each level and roof
- Connection details

- Roof live load
- Engineered Framing Specs
- Underpinning details
- Geotechnical reports where applicable

ELECTRICAL

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

- ✓ Size of feeder conductors and insulation types, conduits and overcurrent protection
- ✓ Connections and sizes of emergency/stand-by generator
- ✓ Size of motors.
- ✓ Main grounding at the service

MECHANICAL

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

PLUMBING

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

APPLICABLE CONSTRUCTION CODES

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

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

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

SITE-RELATED PLANS

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

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

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

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

Problem Soils

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



PERMIT PROCESS

When applying for a building permit, bring the required documentation (listed on Page 1) to the Permit Operations Center. DCRA staff will direct you through the multiple-agency review process. Any projects involving additions or changes to the interior work, more than 1,000 square feet, shall be filed for review.

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

HOMEOWNER'S CENTER

Single Family Dwelling permits shall be processed in the Homeowners Center located on the 2nd floor of the Permit Center for projects with owner representation (owner may bring help, but must be present) including:

- Accessory structure (garage/shed) no more than 1000 sq ft. 15 ft high; alteration & repair of existing; no change in use.
- Addition to single-family dwelling up to 1000 sq. ft; no more than 1 story high at ground level; no party walls.
- Deck up to 1000 sq. ft; no more than 10 ft. above grade.
- Fence entirely on owner's private property.
- Interior renovation no more than 1,000 sq. ft. with no removal or erection of interior load-bearing walls or impact to party wall(s).
- Window/door replacement/repair (if your property is in a Historic or CFA jurisdiction, you must get approval before you apply for a permit).

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

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Pursuant to Section 105.2.5, of the 2013 12 DCMR A, permit exemptions are not applicable in historic districts or to historically designated structures when the proposed scope of work would qualify to be exempted from permit pursuant to Section 105.2 of this chapter. As well, the work is to occur on the land of or the exterior of *buildings*, other *structures* located in historic districts, historically designated *buildings*, or other *structures*. An application for a building permit pursuant to Section 105.1 shall be required for the following work described in Section 105.2 Building:

1. Brick pointing
4. Repair or replacement of fences, except as deemed an ordinary repair
5. Painting of unpainted exterior masonry at a landmark property
7. Replacement in kind, except of interior ceiling tile and gypsum board
8. Garden storage shed
9. Prefabricated pools
10. Retaining walls

TRADE PERMITS

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

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

If yes, your new addition may overload your existing equipment.
Ask your HVAC contractor to perform a load calculation to verify its capacity.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

ADJOINING PROPERTY NOTIFICATION

If construction involves adjoining property (e.g. party walls, underpinning, etc.) notification to each adjacent property owner affected by the work shall be provided pursuant to section 3307 of 2013 DCMR 12.

RESIDENTIAL ENERGY REQUIREMENTS

The provision of energy conservation code shall apply to residential buildings in accordance with section 101.4.7.6 and 101.4.7.6.1 of the 2013 DCMR 12.

CONSTRUCTION BEYOND BUILDING RESTRICTION & PROPERTY LINES

Any construction between the building restriction line (shown on surveyor's plat) and property lines or beyond the property lines is considered a "projection." All projections shall comply with section 3202 of 2013 DCMR 12A.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Is a ductless dryer permitted in DC?

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

2. Where can the condensate from appliances be disposed?

Answer: Please refer to section 307 of the 2012 International Mechanical Code. You may also call (202) 442-8959 for more details.

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

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

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

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

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

Answer: You can obtain a copy of 2013 DC Construction Codes Supplement from the Office of Documents located at 441 4th Street NW Washington, DC 20001, by phone at (202) 727-5090, or from the DCRA website: www.dkra.dc.gov.

6. Can a fireplace be installed in a bedroom?

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

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

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

8. What are the requirements for obtaining a building permit?

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

9. What work is exempt from obtaining a permit?

Answer: With the new 2013 DC Construction Code, essentially a permit is required unless explicitly exempted by the code. The following is a list of items that are exempted from a building permit but for a complete list items that are exempted from permits, please refer to section 105.2 of the 2013 DC Construction Code Supplement for details. Visit our website dcra.dc.gov for more details.

Building:

- Installation of window screens and storm windows
- Repair *in kind* of existing fences
- Papering, tiling, carpeting, floor covering, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work
- Replacement *in kind* of one of the items listed hereafter. For the purpose of this section, "replacement in kind", means replacement with a feature of like material that replicates the existing feature in proportion, appearance, texture, design, detail and dimensions
- Roofing and coping
- Siding
- Gutters and downspouts and fascia
- Private sidewalks and driveways
- Patios
- Non-rated suspended ceiling tile
- Not more than 160 square feet (14.9 m²) of gypsum board excluding installation of fire-rated gypsum wall board or shaft liner
- A single garden storage shed that does not exceed 50 square feet (4.65 m²) in area, is less than ten feet (3048 mm) in overall height, is an accessory *structure* to a *building* of Use Group R-3 or to a *building* under the jurisdiction of the *Residential Code*, and is erected on a lot with no other exempted storage shed
- Prefabricated pools, accessory to a Use Group R-3 occupancy, or accessory to *buildings* under the jurisdiction of the *Residential Code*, which are less than 24 inches (610 mm) deep, do not exceed 1000 gallons (3785.41L), are installed entirely above ground and are not designed or manufactured to be connected to a circulation system

- Retaining walls that are not over four feet (1219 mm) in height, measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, for one and two family dwellings only where the area of land disturbance is less than 50 square feet (4.65 m²)
- Swings and other playground equipment accessory to one- and two-family dwellings

Electrical:

- Repair portable electrical equipment
- Repair lighting fixtures
- Repair or replace ballasts, sockets, receptacles, or snap switches
- Listed cord-and-plug connected temporary decorative lighting
- Replacement of branch circuit overcurrent devices of the required capacity in the same location

Gas:

- Portable heating, cooking or clothes drying appliances
- Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe
- Portable-fuel-cell appliances that are not connected to a fixed piping system and are not interconnected to a power grid

Mechanical:

- Portable heating appliances
- Portable ventilation appliances
- Portable cooling units
- Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment or appliances regulated by the *Construction Codes*
- Portable evaporative coolers
- Self-contained refrigerating systems containing 10 pounds (5 kg) or less of refrigerant or that are actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less

Plumbing:

- The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe, provided that if any concealed trap, drainage, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a permit shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in the *Construction Codes*.
- 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.

10. What is the permissible hours allowed for construction?

Answer: In accordance with section 105.1.2 of 2013 DCMR 12A Construction Hours are from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays, excluding legal holidays.

11. What is the review time on a file job?

Answer: All required DCRA reviews will be completed in 14 to 30 business days from the date of filing, depending on the complexity of the job.

12. What work can be done with a postcard online permit?

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

13. How long is a building permit valid?

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

14. What if I have an existing two family dwelling with NO Certificate of Occupancy.

Answer: Since there is no existing C of O, you must obtain one, which includes obtaining a building permit first.

- You may apply for a [Basic Business License \(BBL\)](#) for a two family flat.
- Self-certify that the building is compliant with the current construction codes.
- Once the necessary inspections have taken place and have been approved, the C of O will be issued.

15. When is a plat required?

Answer: Check the 2013 DCMR 12A, §106.1.13 for plat requirements or online. A surveyor's plat can be ordered from the DC Surveyor's Office located at 1100 4th Street, SW, Third Floor, Washington, DC 20024. They can be reached at (202) 442-4699.

16. Do I need a licensed architect or engineer to do a small addition to a single family dwelling?

Answer: It would depend solely on the extent of construction. You may not require one if the drawings submitted are drawn to scale with full details.

17. What is the minimum ceiling height of a habitable space for a single family dwelling?

Answer: For basements the minimum ceiling height is six feet, 8 inches (6'-8"). For upper floors the minimum ceiling height is seven feet (7'-0"). Refer to "Conversion of a Single Family Dwelling to a two family Dwelling" PDF online at dcra.dc.gov for additional building code requirements.

18. What is a Structural Certification?

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

19. What is the frost depth for DC?

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

20. What is the snow load for DC?

Answer: The basic snow load for the District of Columbia, shall be a minimum of 25 psf (1.20 kN/m²) plus drifting or 30 psf (1.44 kN/m²) equivalent uniform load, whichever is greater per section 1608 of the 2013 DCMR 12A.

21. Can I have a window opening on a 1 and 2 family dwelling, 3 feet from property line?

Answer: Window openings located within 3 ft. of the property line are NOT permitted per table R302.1(1) of the 2012 International Residential Code (IRC).

22. Does DC require sprinklers for a 1 and 2 family dwelling?

Answer: Yes. A sprinkler system is required for all new single family dwellings per Appendix P of the 2013 DCMR 12A and the Appendix P of the 2012 IRC.

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

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

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