

Demolition Permits

WHEN TO GET A DEMOLITION PERMIT

A permit is required to demolish any building within the City of Tacoma, except for residential sheds that are 200 square feet or less and located at least 6 feet from other structures. Demolition permits can be applied for online at: <https://www.tacomapermits.org/>.

SITE PLAN

In order to get a permit, you must submit a site plan with the application. The site plan must show each building on the property, each building to be demolished, and each building to remain. For assistance with preparing a simple site plan, please see [Drawings tip sheet](#).

SEPA

Demolition of a building greater than 12,000 square feet requires an environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Re-contouring a site, work within a critical area, and removal of underground tanks are also common SEPA triggers. For a comprehensive list, refer to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11-800. [SEPA tip sheet](#) outlines the SEPA process.

TREES

Private Property – Removal of a tree from a Critical Area, as defined by Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.11, may require a permit. For multiple trees, a clearing and grading permit may be needed. Removal of just one or a couple of trees from private property that is not classified as a Critical Area, may not require a permit. If trees are to be retained on site the Stormwater Management Manual (SWMM) tree protection requirements must be followed during the demolition.

Right-of-way – A permit is required to remove trees that are located in the City right-of-way and, in most situations, **removal of a street tree will require replacement of the street tree**. Applying for a tree removal permit can be done online through the Tacoma Permits (ACA) portal: <https://aca.accela.com/tacoma/>. There is no fee associated with a tree permit for removal of trees within the right-of-way unless the permit is requested for the purpose of view enhancement which requires a separate application form. Please note that a [Right-of-Way Bond](#) is required to do work in the city right-of-way. This requirement can be waived if the work abuts a Single-Family Dwelling and the property owner provides a copy of the home owner's insurance with the application.



A permit is required to demolish any building, except for residential sheds smaller than 200 square feet



A permit is required for removal of trees within the right-of-way

SURFACE WATER

All demolition projects of any size must practice temporary erosion and sedimentation controls. Information on temporary erosion and sediment control can be found in Volume 2 of the [City of Tacoma Stormwater Management Manual \(SWMM\)](#). If a project disturbs an area of 7,000 square feet or more, a Construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is required to be reviewed and approved by Environmental Services. Site disturbance includes all areas to be demolished (including buildings, pavement removal, removal of other constructed features), areas of clearing, areas of grading and excavation, and any other alteration of the site features. A SWPPP short form may be used for projects disturbing less than one acre.

Sites where demolition occurs must be stabilized after disturbance. The method of stabilization shall be indicated on the submitted site plan.



Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | www.tacomapermits.org (253) 591-5030

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

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All site utilities are required to be properly abandoned. All site utilities should be shown on the site plan submitted at the time of application for a demolition permit.

Based on the specific project scope, additional information may be required for approval of demolition.

For questions regarding temporary erosion and sedimentation control for demolition activities, contact Environmental Services at (253) 591-5218 or stormandsewer@cityoftacoma.org.



Any proposed demolition of structures that appear to be located within 300 feet of a critical area will be looked at by an Environmental Specialist.

CRITICAL AREAS

Any proposed demolition of structures that appear to be located within 300 feet of a critical area (wetlands, streams, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, including marine waters) will be looked at by an Environmental Specialist to determine if further review or permitting is needed. All critical areas and buffers should be identified on the site plan for review and potential permitting. If the Environmental Specialist can determine that the proposed demolition is not located within a critical area or associated buffer, no further action is needed. The demolition of structures within a critical area or associated buffer requires a letter of exemption from the City, pursuant to TMC 13.11.140.B.12. The letter exemption process generally takes 30-45 days for approval and can be conditioned. Re-contouring a site, planting, removing vegetation, placing stabilizing structures or similar actions may require additional review and/or permitting.

ASBESTOS

In the past, asbestos was used in many building materials because of its unique qualities. It is heat resistant, corrosion resistant, fire resistant, strong, flexible, and doesn't conduct electricity. Asbestos has since been found to cause serious health problems if handled improperly.

All applicants for demolition permits are required by state law to have an AHERA-certified building inspector survey the structure for asbestos prior to the start of work, and submit a Notice of Intent to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency. All asbestos must be removed by a certified asbestos worker prior to start of demolition. This applies to all structures, including mobile homes, with greater than 120 square feet of roof area. Asbestos notifications can only be submitted or amended online, through the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency website <https://secure.pscleanair.org/asbestos/>. For additional information: www.pscleanair.org.



Asbestos pipe fittings

STRUCTURAL HAZARDS

Any proposed demolition must be approved before issuance of the demolition permit and inspected after the demolition takes place. Review and inspection will need to ensure that there are no remaining hazards caused by a demolition. For instance, when demolishing a building with a basement the basement should be filled afterwards, and in partial demolitions the structural integrity of the building will need to be preserved.

UTILITIES

Contact appropriate agencies to disconnect utilities prior to demolition. Any abandoned sewer lines must be capped and inspected.

RESOURCES

- WAC Chapter: [197-11 SEPA Rules](#)
- Tacoma Municipal Code [2.02 - Building Code](#), [13.12 - Environmental Code](#) and [13.11 Critical Areas](#), [9.18](#), [9.19](#), and [9.20 – Trees and Shrubs](#)
- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency www.pscleanair.org
- Puget Sound Energy www.pse.com
- Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) www.mytpu.org
- [Stormwater Management Manual](#)



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HISTORIC REVIEW

In 2019, the Tacoma City Council enacted a new ordinance that provides for review of certain demolition permits that may affect historically significant buildings that are not within local historic districts or individually designated City Landmarks.

These include demolition permits that affect buildings over 50 years of age and:

- Demolition of any building located within a designated Mixed Use Center or National Register Historic District, or
- Any demolition permit citywide involving 4,000 square feet or greater of demolition on a single parcel (single-family structures exempted)

About City Landmarks

For buildings that are already designated City Landmarks or within a locally designated historic district, the demolition review process is reviewed per TMC 13.05.048.

How it Works

Summary Demolition Report

Demolition permit applications required to have this review, shall include a summary checklist report that includes the following information:

- Identification of any affected structures that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a district. To find properties on the National Register of Historic Places, please visit the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation at <https://wisaard.dahp.wa.gov/>.
- Current photographs of all elevations of affected structures, as well as historic photographs if available
- Historical narrative summary of affected buildings, including (if known) build date, architect, builder, occupants, and any associated events.

The Historic Preservation Office will review the submittal (for up to 30 days) to determine if the demolition warrants further review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for historical significance.

Historic Property Assessment

If any affected structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a part of a district, or any of the affected structures appear to meet the criteria for the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, a Historic Property Assessment report will be required to be submitted for review by the LPC.

The Historic Property Assessment must be prepared by a qualified cultural resources consultant, and must contain:

- A narrative statement which assesses the historical or cultural significance of the property, in terms of the Designation Criteria listed in TMC 13.07.050; and
- A narrative statement which assesses the physical condition of the property and includes an architectural description; and
- Specific language indicating which improvements on the site are eligible for historic designation according to the Designation Criteria, including any significant interior features within publicly owned buildings; and
- A complete legal description; and
- A description of the character-defining features and architectural elements that contribute to the historic character of the property.

Following its review of the Historic Property Assessment Report, the Landmarks Preservation Commission may recommend that a building proposed for demolition be formally reviewed for consideration as a City Landmark. This recommendation may be reviewed for up to 60 days by City Council Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee.

If the Committee concurs, the LPC shall conduct a public hearing and make a formal recommendation to City Council. If no concurrence is received within 60 days, the historic review is concluded.

Inadvertent (IDP) Discovery Plans

All permit applications for projects that disturb the ground shall prepare a plan for the possible unanticipated discovery of historic, cultural or archaeological resources, including a point of contact, procedure for stop-work notification, and for notification of appropriate agencies. The City can provide examples of IDPs.



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