

Frequently Asked Questions

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Answers

1. How do I get a building permit?

Answer: Complete an Application

When you arrive in our offices, you will be asked what type of project you are doing. With that information, our staff will provide you with one or more applications to complete while you are waiting for service. Although we have tried to make the forms as easy to complete as possible, if you have a question about a term you see or are unsure about an answer, feel free to ask any of our staff for help completing the form.

Items needed to submit with the application(click to read description):

- One (1) Building Permit Application
- One (1) Site Plan Drawing
- Two (2) sets of Construction Drawing
- Two (2) sets of Windload Calculations
- Two (2) Sets of Energy Sheets
- Florida Product Approval Numbers
- Two (2) Sets of Engineered Truss Layouts
- Santa Rosa Island Authority Approval(if applicable)

Receive a Land Use Certificate

Before you are seated with one of our staff, the first thing that you will do is confirm that your project conforms with County codes. With your property reference number in hand (if you don't have it available, we have easy access to the information), one of the representatives from Planning and Zoning here at our offices will first review the zoning maps to determine whether the project is allowed in your zoning district. After this review, their representative will identify the future land use category for the parcel, establish required construction setbacks for your parcel, identify the drainage basin it is located in, identify its flood zone, and if it is not in a subdivision, whether the parcel has been appropriately subdivided. If your parcel is not in a subdivision, you will also look at the soil map to determine whether there may be wetlands that require an additional survey.

Data Entry

With this review complete, one of our Permitting Clerks will then go about the task of entering all of this information into our computer system. All of the information you have provided on the proposed construction, as well as the information obtained during the land use review, is entered into the system. In that way we build a profile of your project that allows us to establish the types of inspections required as well as the permit fees that must be charged.

During this process, we will also review all of the plans and applications you are submitting to ensure they are complete. * Please review Additional Items Needed (see below). Note: If you will be installing, modifying, or repairing a septic system, you will also need to submit an application with Health Department personnel, whose offices are located at 1300 W. Gregory Street.

Fee Collection/Permit Issuance

You will next be asked to go to our cashier to pay your permitting fees. These fees are based on the information provided during the application process and are established by County ordinance. Once your plans have been approved and you have paid all fees, the cashier will also print your permit, ask you to sign it, and provide instruction for its display on the job site.

Construction and Inspection

As you proceed with construction, our inspectors will need to review your progress several times for code compliance. When you are ready for these inspections, please call our offices to schedule the inspection. (Before you request a rough framing inspection, you must have passed your electrical, plumbing, gas, and mechanical inspections.) When the inspector visits the construction site, he/she will either pass or reject the work that has been done. In either case, he/she will place a sticker on the inspected system. If the work was rejected, the inspector will also leave a list of violations at the site. If you have additional questions after reviewing the inspector's comments, feel free to phone them at our offices for clarification of the discrepancies.

Project Completion

After appropriate inspections have been completed, our staff will automatically notify Gulf Power and Energy Services of Pensacola when your project is ready for power and natural gas, respectively. When the entire project is complete, we will review the inspections completed, assess any additional fees, and print a Certificate of Occupancy.

Description of Additional Items Needed

There are also other items that must be provided when applying for a building permit, based on the details of your project. Below is a description of the items listed above.

Prepare a Site Plan - The site plan should show an outline of the property; the location of the proposed construction; all existing structures on the property; any driveways, sidewalks, and walkways; the names of any adjacent roadways; the type of drainage (curb and gutter, ditch, etc.) and the direction stormwater flows off the property. Be sure to include the external dimensions of each structure, the distance measured between structures, and to the property line, and the dimensions of the property. This drawing should be to scale if at all possible. If you are installing a septic system, an additional copy (total of 3) must be submitted, and it must be drawn to scale. If sanitary sewer is accessible from your construction site, you will need to make arrangements with Escambia County Utilities Authority to connect it. You will be required to provide evidence of these arrangements before a permit will be issued.

Submit 2 sets of Construction Drawings - You will need to submit 2 sets of construction drawings for your project. These drawings will be reviewed by our plan reviewers and chief inspectors for compliance with applicable building codes. When complete, one set of these drawings will be maintained on file, and the other set will be returned to you. Your set must be maintained on the job site for review and comparison by our inspectors.

Submit 2 sets of Windload Calculations - Florida Statutes require structures built within the State to be capable of withstanding hurricane-force winds. This wind speed requirement varies from 140 - 120 miles per hour depending on the location.. The requirement to submit these calculations applies only to those structures with an area of 400 square feet or more. Your home designer or architect should prepare these calculations as part of the building design.

Submit 2 Sets of Energy Sheets - These sheets are prepared by Gulf Power as a free service for residential structures. Through an energy audit process, they provide an evaluation of the energy efficiency of the proposed construction. These sheets can be obtained at several Gulf Power offices throughout the County.

Include Florida Product Approval Numbers - Structural components such as windows, exterior doors, garage doors, roofing shingles, etc. are required to have a Florida Product Approval Code. This information is available from the manufacturer or from the Product Approval page at www.FloridaBuilding.org.

Submit 2 Sets of Engineered Truss Layouts - These can be obtained from a truss manufacturing company upon request.

Santa Rosa Island Authority Approval(if applicable) - If your project is on Santa Rosa Island , the Island Authority must review and approve the plans before submission to the County. Your permit will not be issued without this approval.

2. How do I get an electrical permit?

Answer: Obtaining an electrical permit to perform work on your own home is a pretty easy process, but there are a few basics that must be covered before a permit is issued:

- First, do you own the property? If you don't own the property, we can't issue you a permit.
- Second, is this your primary residence? Florida Statutes only allow us to issue a property owner a permit if they reside in the dwelling. Because a landlord doesn't live in rental property, he or she may not pull a permit to perform their own work on that property.
- Third, will you be doing the work yourself? In order to get a permit, you have to actually perform the work yourself. If you have to hire someone to do the work, why would you hire someone who isn't licensed to do it?
- Fourth, do you have the knowledge to do this electrical work safely and effectively? To ensure your safety and that the quality of your work will meet the electrical code, we'll ask you to fill out a form listing the electrical work to be performed and materials to be used. If you don't know the difference between an internal feeder and a service drop, or what color a ground wire is, you may not want to be doing the work anyway.

You'll need to meet with an inspector between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning to go over these questions. When the inspector is satisfied that you know what you're doing, he/she will sign off on your application and you will be allowed to obtain a permit.

The Electrical Permit Process

First, meet with an engineer from your power company to determine available amperage and voltage, and where your power will be connected.

After you obtain the necessary permit, post your permit card on the site and perform the "rough" work associated with the electrical installation. This means that all wire should be pulled, stapled, secured and strapped, and that the boxes should be set, joints made and metal boxes grounded.

The day before you are ready for it, call for your "rough" inspection. The inspector must be able to see the entire installation, so make sure that you haven't installed insulation or sheetrock, and if there is any slab or ditch work, that it remains uncovered.*

When the inspector completes the "rough" inspection, he/she will either sign the posted permit card or leave a "rough" sticker in the electrical panel or other location on the job site. If he finds a discrepancy, he/she will leave a note telling you what was found.

Complete the installation including wall finishes, receptacles, switches, and panel breakers. When this is complete, call for your "final" inspection.

If your electrical installation complies with code, the inspector will pass the inspection and a green sticker will be placed on the meter socket.

NOTE: Connection to electrical power will be delayed until the electrical, plumbing, gas, mechanical, and building inspections have all been passed and the inspection paperwork is assembled in our office. As soon as possible, we will forward the permit number, as approved, to the power company. Normally, new services are connected in 2-3 days if no line work is required. It is your responsibility to open an account with your water company, and provide them with a deposit (if required), billing information, and your permit number.

Also, before you request a "rough" framing inspection, you must have passed your electrical, plumbing, gas, and mechanical inspections.

* If the inspector is unable to examine the entire installation, he/she will have to return at a later date. You will then be charged a reinspection fee as well as having to remove any materials that obscure the site. You're also responsible for ensuring the inspector has access to the premises. Again, if the inspector can't get to the installation, you will be charged a reinspection fee.

3. How do I get a plumbing permit?

Answer: Obtaining a plumbing permit to perform work on your own home is a pretty easy process, but there are a few basics that must be covered before a permit is issued:

- First, do you own the property? If you don't own the property, we can't issue you a permit.
- Second, is this your primary residence? Florida Statutes only allow us to issue a property owner a permit if they reside in the dwelling. Because a landlord doesn't live in rental property, he or she may not pull a permit to perform their own work on that property.
- Third, will you be doing the work yourself? In order to get a permit, you have to actually perform the work yourself. If you have to hire someone to do the work, why would you hire someone who isn't licensed to do it?
- Fourth, do you have the knowledge to do this plumbing work safely and effectively? To ensure your safety and that the quality of your work will meet the plumbing code, we'll give you a short verbal test. We will also ask you to draw a diagram showing your project and ask you to explain it to us.

You'll need to meet with an inspector between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning to go over these questions. When the inspector is satisfied that you know what you're doing, he/she will sign off on your application and you will be allowed to obtain a permit.

The Plumbing Permit Process

First, post your permit card on the site and perform the "rough" work associated with the plumbing installation. This means that all piping should be installed, secured and strapped, and that there are no leaks.

The day before you are ready for it, call for your "rough" inspection. The inspector must be able to see the entire installation, so make sure that you haven't installed insulation or sheetrock, and if there is any slab or ditch work, that it remains uncovered.*

When the inspector completes the "rough" inspection, he/she will either sign the posted permit card or leave a "rough" sticker in the washing machine hookup box or other location on the job site. If he/she finds a discrepancy, he/she will call you to tell you what was found.

Complete the installation including wall finishes and plumbing fixtures. When this is complete, call for your "final" inspection.

If your plumbing installation complies with code, the inspector will pass the inspection and a green sticker will be placed on the water heater.

4. How do I get a mechanical permit?

Answer: Obtaining a mechanical permit to perform work on your own home is a pretty easy process, but there are a few basics that must be covered before a permit is issued:

- First, do you own the property? If you don't own the property, we can't issue you a permit.
- Second, is this your primary residence? Florida Statutes only allow us to issue a property owner a permit if they reside in the dwelling. Because a landlord doesn't live in rental property, he or she may not pull a permit to perform their own work on that property.
- Third, will you be doing the work yourself? In order to get a permit, you have to actually perform the work yourself. If you have to hire someone to do the work, why would you hire someone who isn't licensed to do it?
- Fourth, do you have the knowledge to do this plumbing work safely and effectively? To ensure your safety and that the quality of your work will meet the plumbing code, we'll give you a short verbal test. We will also ask you to draw a diagram showing your project and ask you to explain it to us.

You'll need to meet with an inspector between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning to go over these questions. When the inspector is satisfied that you know what you're doing, he/she will sign off on your application and you will be allowed to obtain a permit.

The Mechanical Permit Process

First, post your permit card on the site and perform the "rough" work associated with the plumbing installation. This means that all piping should be installed, secured and strapped, and that there are no leaks.

The day before you are ready for it, call for your "rough" inspection. The inspector must be able to see the entire installation, so make sure that you haven't installed insulation or sheetrock, and if there is any slab or ditch work, that it remains uncovered.*

When the inspector completes the "rough" inspection, he/she will either sign the posted permit card or leave a "rough" sticker in the washing machine hookup box or other location on the job site. If he/she finds a discrepancy, he/she will call you to tell you what was found.

Complete the installation including wall finishes and plumbing fixtures. When this is complete, call for your "final" inspection.

If your plumbing installation complies with code, the inspector will pass the inspection and a green sticker will be placed on the water heater.

5. How do I get a gas permit?

Answer: Obtaining a gas permit to perform work on your own home is a pretty easy process, but there are a few basics that must be covered before a permit is issued:

- First, do you own the property? If you don't own the property, we can't issue you a permit.
- Second, is this your primary residence? Florida Statutes only allow us to issue a property owner a permit if they reside in the dwelling. Because a landlord doesn't live in rental property, he or she may not pull a permit to perform their own work on that property.
- Third, will you be doing the work yourself? In order to get a permit, you have to actually perform the work yourself. If you have to hire someone to do the work, why would you hire someone who isn't licensed to do it?
- Fourth, do you have the knowledge to do this plumbing work safely and effectively? To ensure your safety and that the quality of your work will meet the plumbing code, we'll give you a short verbal test. We will also ask you to draw a diagram showing your project and ask you to explain it to us.

You'll need to meet with an inspector between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning to go over these questions. When the inspector is satisfied that you know what you're doing, he/she will sign off on your application and you will be allowed to obtain a permit.

The Gas Permit Process

First, post your permit card on the site and perform the "rough" work associated with the plumbing installation. This means that all piping should be installed, secured and strapped, and that there are no leaks.

The day before you are ready for it, call for your "rough" inspection. The inspector must be able to see the entire installation, so make sure that you haven't installed insulation or sheetrock, and if there is any slab or ditch work, that it remains uncovered.*

When the inspector completes the "rough" inspection, he/she will either sign the posted permit card or leave a "rough" sticker in the washing machine hookup box or other location on the job site. If he/she finds a discrepancy, he/she will call you to tell you what was found.

Complete the installation including wall finishes and plumbing fixtures. When this is complete, call for your "final" inspection.

If your plumbing installation complies with code, the inspector will pass the inspection and a green sticker will be placed on the water heater.

6. Why can't I build on my property?

Answer: Several times each week, people come into our office and are told that they can't build on their property. This naturally comes as a surprise to most and, more often than not, leaves them upset and unable to understand where the problem lies.

On this page you will find a few of the common pitfalls in the process, what we look for, some ideas of what you can do if this happens to you, and what you can do to prevent it.

After you read these tips, please feel free to visit our offices to review the requirements for development. In that way, when you come in to get your building permit, all you will hear is...
"YES!"

Why there may be problems.

In order to promote orderly growth within the County, the Board of County Commissioners created the County's Land Development Code (LDC). A number of articles within the LDC establish criteria that may prevent development of a specific parcel of land if they can't be met. Some examples of these criteria include setbacks, lot size, road frontage, and illegal subdivision of a parcel.

What we look for.

One of the first things we look at when you submit a permit application is the zoning of the parcel. Because the LDC limits the types of buildings or businesses that may be put in a particular zone, this may present you with your first problem. For example, in order to place a mobile home on a parcel it must be Zoned R-5 or greater. If your parcel is zoned R-2, a mobile home would be a non-conforming use and is

not allowed. Likewise, a single-family home is not allowed in an industrial zone. The idea behind this is to create a pattern of similar uses in different areas of the county and prevent inappropriate development from creating hardships on our citizens.

Next, if your property is not in an approved subdivision, we will review the history of your parcel to determine whether it has been subdivided correctly. The LDC states that any lot existing prior to 1990 is a "lot of record" and can be developed. After 1990, a "lot of record" may only be divided once without undergoing a subdivision review. This means that if the original parcel of land has been subdivided more than one time, only the first applicant for a permit on any of the new parcels will be able to obtain a building permit. If someone else on another parcel has already applied for a permit or built a home, you will not be able to get a permit until the property is properly subdivided.

There are a few exceptions to these restrictions in the case of property deeded at no cost between family members, but other restrictions may still apply. Before you deed your property to a family member, be sure to check to ensure you are creating a lot that will allow them to obtain a permit.

Assuming you are the first applicant, there may still be some roadblocks to a permit. Each zoning district has certain minimum lot size requirements, building setbacks, and road frontage standards that must be met in order to qualify for development. For instance, in the Villages Residential districts, the minimum lot width at the front building line is 100 feet and 80 feet at the street right-of-way. In the R-2 district, on the other hand, the minimum lot width at the front building line is 70 feet and 50 feet at the street. In VR-1, the minimum lot size is 4 acres, VR-2 requires only 3/4 acre, and the minimum in VR-3 is 2 acres. In order for us to issue a permit, you must be able to meet each of these criterion for your zoning district.

What you can do to prevent this from happening to you.

Perhaps the easiest way to prevent these problems from occurring is to make an informed decision when you purchase property. Before you go to the trouble of subdividing your land, or spend the time and money to purchase a piece of property or building, spend some time in our office. Bring your proposal to us so that we may review it with you and determine what you can and cannot do. The small amount of time you spend may save you hours of aggravation and a tremendous sum of money.

What you can do if it happens to you.

First, don't panic! There are several possibilities that our staff will explain to you and help you as you make an informed decision. You may be asked to do something as simple as move the site of your house or building a few feet to meet a setback requirement. It could also involve simply reorienting the structure to face a different street or corner. Our job is to help you do what you want, as long as the LDC allows it. If this happens, be open to our suggestions on how you might accomplish what you want.

If the LDC simply doesn't allow us to issue a permit for your desired use, you may still have some options. Among these are for you to apply to the Board of Adjustments for a variance to the LDC to permit what you want, or to apply for a rezoning of your parcel to one that will allow your desired use. If you are the "victim" of an illegal subdivision, you may need to contact the person who sold you the

property to ask them to go through the subdivision process, or you may need to accomplish this yourself. Each of these will cost you time and money, and there is no guarantee that your request will be granted; however, they may be your only alternative. If you decide that you want to pursue these options, our staff members will guide you through the process.