



**CALIFORNIA**  
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**An Applicant's Guide to  
Residential Building Permits.**

**City of Rancho Cordova  
Building & Safety Department  
2729 Prospect Park Dr.  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670**

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## An Applicant's Guide

This pamphlet was prepared to answer general questions in the following areas.

1. Requirements for permits and the benefits derived from building according to the code.
2. Procedures to be followed in obtaining a permit.
3. What your plans should include.
4. Procedures for calling for an inspection.
5. Zoning information.
6. Choosing a contractor.
7. Various departments and phone numbers.

This pamphlet does not attempt to answer technical questions which may arise during the construction of a building; however, it does answer many of the general questions asked each day at the Building & Safety Department.

Finally, we wish to emphasize that the building inspectors are knowledgeable in the construction field and are willing to answer your questions whenever possible. For additional information regarding your proposed home improvement, contact a residential building inspector by phone at the Building & Safety Department, (916) 851-8760.



## **Q: Why do I need a building permit?**

The purpose of the permit is to control the quality of construction and the use of property to ensure that the City of Rancho Cordova continues to be a safe, beautiful area in which we can live, rear our children, work, and play. The building permit is based on the 2001 California Building, Plumbing, and Mechanical Codes, the 2004 California Electrical Code and the City of Rancho Cordova Administrative and Adoptive Technical codes. The codes have been carefully enacted by your City Council to protect health, general welfare, and your property investment. Also, the evidence of a building permit is often necessary to obtain financing from lending agencies. Fire and liability insurance damages may not be paid in some cases where improvements do not meet regulations. Therefore, by acquiring permits when needed and complying with Building & Safety Department Requirements, you and your family will be better protected.

## **Q: Who applies for the permit?**

If you are undertaking a do-it-yourself project, then you apply for a building permit or the necessary mechanical, electrical, or plumbing permits. Rancho Cordova has a single permit system, so separate permits are not required. However, when completing an application for a building permit, you must indicate if the permit also covers associated plumbing, mechanical, or electrical work. If the work will be performed by a licensed contractor, you should protect yourself from possible liability by having the contractor apply for the permit in his or her name. If you employ someone who is not a licensed contractor or subcontractor to help with your project, you must obtain Worker's Compensation Insurance. In addition, you must show proof of the insurance at the time the permit is issued.

## **Q: When do I need a building permit?**

- To build a house or other buildings.
- To make improvements, alterations, or additions.
- To make electrical, mechanical or plumbing installations or alterations.
- For swimming pools, sheds over 120 square feet in projected floor area or 9 feet in height, water heaters, signs, fences over 6 feet high, patio covers, and screen rooms.
- For solar heating systems, spas, and reroofs.

In brief, you need a permit for any work that alters existing structures or adds new structures to your property. When in doubt, call the Building & Safety Department, 851-8760.

**Remember:** A building permit is required **before** any construction or work begins.

## **Q: Where do I go to apply for a permit?**

Our office is located at 2729 Prospect Park Drive, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. The public counters are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

## **Q: Can I mail or fax the application?**

You may call the Building & Safety Department to request a fax permit application at (916) 851-8760 or come to our permit office. Also, most of our forms are available on our web site at [www.cityofranhocordova.org](http://www.cityofranhocordova.org). You may mail or fax the application to the permit offices, without plans, for the installation of, relocation of, for the repair of, alteration of, or addition to the following:

*Plumbing:*

- a. Water heating units and pressure relief valves.
- b. Anti-siphon valves (sprinkling systems).
- c. Shower pans.
- d. Gas line tests.
- e. Existing sewer lines.
- f. Water piping services
- g. Plumbing fixtures.
- h. Swamp coolers.
- i. Water softeners.

Similar *Mechanical* work can be handled on a mail-in or fax basis without plans for the following items:

- a. Each forced-air or gravity-type furnace or burner, including ducts and vents to such appliance.
- b. Floor furnace, including vent.
- c. Recessed wall heater.
- d. Floor mounted unit heater.
- e. Heating appliance; refrigeration unit; cooling unit; absorption unit; or each heating, cooling, absorption, or evaporative cooling system.
- f. Wood stove units, fireplace inserts, or prefab fireplace units.
- g. Chimney flues.
- h. Each hood served by a mechanical exhaust, including the ducts for such hood.

Fax the completed application to the Building Department at (916) 851-8762. If the extent of your work is other than specific above, then your permit application and plans will have to be submitted in person at the permit office. If there is a question as to the suitability of handling your project via mail or fax, call our office at 851-8760.

**Q: How long is my building permit valid?**

Your permit will be valid provided you begin construction within 180 days, do not suspend work for more than 180 days, and have required inspections at least every 180 days until the project is completed. If it appears that 180 days will pass without a required inspection, call our inspection office at (916) 851-8766 and request an in-progress inspection or an extension.

**Q: How much does the permit cost?**

Permit fees vary depending on the type of construction, square footage, and / or valuation of your project. Fee estimates may be provided over the phone or you may request a fee schedule booklet for reference. The building permit fee may be only one of many other required fees. Additional fees may be associated with: sewer connection, school impact, minimum floor elevation, use permit, highways and transportation, water utility connection, zoning plan review, etc.

**Q: I have changed my mind and do not want a building permit. Can I get a refund?**

Partial refunds are possible. For fees paid as part of a building permit application, a refund must be requested within 180 days after paying the fee. If the refund is requested before any necessary plan review has started, 80 percent of the plan review fee may be refunded. If the permit has been issued but no inspections have been performed, 40 percent of the total fees paid

may be refunded. For refunds of fees paid to school districts, for sewer connections, etc., you should contact the agency for whom the fee was collected.

### **Q: How soon can I get a building permit?**

Miscellaneous electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits can possibly be issued the same day of the application submittal. The time required to obtain permits other than miscellaneous types varies with the plan review's workload. You can call the permit offices and ask for the current plan review timetable for your type of permit.

### **Q: What do I do with my permit?**

File your copy of the permit with other important papers you may possess. You will be issued a job folder, which must be displayed at the job site where it will be signed by the inspector to indicate his approval of the various stages of construction. The approved plans must also be on the job site and available to the inspector at the time of the various inspections.

### **Q: What steps should I follow for a permit for a new house or addition?**

1. Determine the exact size and design of the house or addition you expect to build.
2. Prepare three sets of plans for submittal. Provide three copies of the plot plans drawn to scale. Show the location of proposed construction with dimensions to the front, rear, and side street and property lines. Show distance to street centerline, lot size, drainage flow arrows, and distance to other existing structures on the lot. Provide the parcel number and/or address, north arrow, and easements. Indicate the location of heating and air conditioning equipment. Superimpose the roof outline on the plan.

Also, provide three copies of building plans and specifications drawn to scale with sufficient detail to indicate conformance to applicable construction standards, codes, and ordinances. Minimum plan size is 11" x 17" paper; and, at a minimum, the plans shall consist of floor, foundation, roof, electrical, elevation, and framing details. Provide second floor framing and cross sections for clarification. If floor or roof trusses are used, include a truss layout plan and truss calculations. Make separate copies of the floor plan and exterior elevations (i.e. views), to scale, on 11" x 17" paper. These are needed by the Assessor's office. Full size copies will be accepted if it is not practical to use the 11" x 17" format. Now you must determine whether you should hire a professional person to accomplish these requirements or perform them yourself.

See page 6 for more information on plan requirements.

3. Come to our permit office, where you will receive directions for processing your plans. A plan review fee will be collected when your set of plans is submitted for plan check. The amount of time required for plan review will be determined by the number of plans ahead of yours that are waiting to be reviewed.
4. After your plans have been reviewed, all applicable codes are met, and any "clouds" are removed from the parcel, you can obtain your permit. Pay the remainder of the building permit fee at the cashier's station. A validated permit will then be handed to you.

### **Q: When are the inspections required?**

A general rule to remember is that before any phase of construction is concealed by a second phase, an inspection is required.

## **Q: What does the building inspector do?**

The inspection folder lists the inspections that must be made on your job. If the inspector approved the work at each inspection, he will initial the job folder and date it. If the work is not complete or does not meet the applicable code requirements, he will leave a correction that will identify required corrections. Every phase of the job is inspected and must be approved before the next part of the job is started. On new construction, for example, the inspections might follow the following pattern:

1. Yard setbacks and foundation inspection when forms and reinforcing bars are in place. Sometimes, a gravel inspection will be necessary for slab construction.
2. Ground plumbing inspections with water lines under pressure and all sewer/vent lines filled with 10 feet of water head and before lines are covered.
3. Floor joist inspection before the subfloor is installed. This may include heat ducts and dryer vents.
4. Electrical, heating, and plumbing work after the exterior is enclosed and before applying the insulation or interior finish. All the framing, including the roof. Exterior lathing inspection before the stucco is applied.
5. Gas and electrical appliance inspection after the installation. Gas line testing after sheetrock installation.
6. Final inspection is to ensure that the structure is ready to occupy. Construction is checked for all minimum code regulations that make it habitable.

## **Q: What should my plans include?**

The three sets of plans should be drawn ¼” – 1’ scale and should be of sufficient clarity to indicate the nature and extent of the proposed work. The plans should include the following:

1. Plot plan
2. Foundation plan and details.
3. Floor plan indicating the use of each room, room dimensions, and the location and size of all windows and doors.
4. Framing plan showing size and spacing of all beams, floor joists, rafters, headers, bracing, floor and roof sheathing, and roof covering.
5. Electrical receptacles, light fixtures, smoke detectors, switches, and size and location of main service panel.
6. Plumbing fixtures and their locations.
7. Furnace or heating appliances and their location.
8. Exterior elevations.
9. Energy data showing compliance with the current Energy Code.
10. Engineering calculations and data for other than conventional wood frame construction or over two stories high.

## **Q: How do I call for an inspection?**

The Building & Safety Department has an automated inspection request system that allows callers to use a touch tone phone to schedule an inspection for the next work day or up to 6:00 AM for the same work day. The inspection request system is available to callers seven days a week. The phone number for the automated system is (916) 851-8766.

Recognized City holidays are New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

If you have an emergency, please call the “emergency” inspection request telephone number listed in the rear of this booklet.

**Q: Can I get electrical power to the job site?**

You may obtain a permit for a temporary power pole.

**Q: When are permanent utility connections provided?**

The gas system must pass the pressure test before a release will be given to PG&E. A final electrical inspection must be performed before a release will be given to SMUD.

**Q: Can I have utility service to my house while completing construction?**

A new custom home may have utility service prior to final inspection. A deposit is required. This is normally 1 percent of the permit valuation with a minimum of \$750 and a maximum of \$3,000. When final inspection is approved, the deposit is returned. If the project is occupied prior to final inspection, the deposit is forfeited. Inquire of our staff if you desire more details.

**Q: Are there zoning regulations?**

Yes! The Zoning Code regulates the use of land; off-street parking; and the location, height, dimensions, and use of buildings. The Planning Department can provide you with zoning information. It is advisable to draw a fully dimensioned or a to-scale sketch of your property, giving the location of all existing structures. This information will enable the Planning Department to give you specific information regarding street setbacks, side yard and rear yard requirements, etc. Because the setbacks may vary according to your district, information concerning setbacks can only be given for specifically identified locations. The Planning Department can be reached at (916) 851-8750.

**Q: Are there requirements for public improvements and engineering?**

Yes. The Land Development and Site Improvement Review Section (LD&SIR) is available to inform you of the requirements within the public right-of-way for walls, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and street improvements. They can be reached at (916) 851-8710.

**Q: When are grading permits required?**

If extensive grading of your lot is proposed, you may need a grading permit from LD&SIR.

**Q: How do I select a contractor?**

This information can be best obtained from the booklet, “What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor”, prepared by the State Contractors License Board. Copies are available through the Contractor’s State License Board ([www.CSLB.ca.gov](http://www.CSLB.ca.gov)).

**Q: Can I act as my own contractor?**

“Owner-builder” is basically a situation in which the homeowner becomes the general contractor. As an “owner-builder”, you, not the person you hire, assume the responsibility for the overall job, which may include such things as State and Federal taxes, workers compensation, and other legal liabilities. Unless you are very experienced in construction, it is best to leave these matters to a contractor.

**Q: I am considering the purchase of a building site for a home to be constructed at a later date. What might influence my building plans?**

If your lot is:

- On a private road,
- Requires a long driveway, or
- Is not on a public water system,

Additional regulations for dwelling construction apply. These regulations concern fire vehicle access, residential fire sprinklers, and road signs/house numbers. Request a copy of the booklet, “Fire District Dwelling Construction Requirements”, RCBID #0066, for more information.

Every attempt has been made to avoid differences between information contained in this pamphlet and zoning and building code requirements. However, ordinances must sometimes be changed or revised in order to maintain the most current and up-to-date building standards. In cases where a conflict occurs between an adopted building code requirement and the information contained in the pamphlet, the adopted code requirements must be observed.

**Telephone Numbers**

Permitting & Development Services 851-8760

This includes: Building & Safety, Planning, and the City Public Works Department.

Assessor’s Office – Parcel Information	874-5231
Environmental Health (Septic/Wells)	874-6010
Inspection Requests	851-8766
Emergency (after hours)	875-5000
Water Resources	874-6851

**Other Publications**

24-Hour Inspection Request System	Form # RCB0601
New Dwelling Construction Requirements	Form # RCB0806