

# CITY OF PORTLAND PUBLIC WORKS PERMITTING



1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Room 5000, Portland, Oregon 97201

Phone: 503-823-1987

[www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### What is a public works permit?

A permit to construct property or developer initiated improvements in the public right-of-way (including public facilities in public easements) located within the City of Portland.

### Why do I need a permit?

When properties develop, public services (sanitary sewer, water, street improvements and stormwater management) are needed to serve these developments. Because these improvements are intended for public use and will be maintained by the City, the City must review and approve plans prior to construction.

### When is a public works permit required?

Typically, it is required for curb and street pavement construction, sidewalk reconstruction, street lighting, stormwater facilities for street drainage, sewer mainline extensions, and water main extensions for subdivisions in proposed (new) public rights-of-way. (The Water Bureau plans review process for subdivisions is concurrent with the Public Works process and follows the same timelines. See the [The Portland Water Bureau's Developer's Manual \(and Addendum\)](#) for permitting requirements for Water Bureau facilities)

### How are public works improvement requirements identified?

Requirements are identified as part of an early assistance/inquiry review, building permit review or a land use review, such as a subdivision. During these reviews, staff will inform an applicant of the requirements. The applicant may also research requirements in advance by visiting the Development Services Center (DSC) or proceeding with the Public Works early assistance/inquiry process.

### Can I skip the early assistance/inquiry meeting if I have called or met individually previously with each bureau?

The inquiry meeting can be skipped only if you have already obtained written responses from a bureau identifying the requirement for a public works permit through a Pre-application conference, Land Use Review, or building permit review.

### Would the City consider designing and constructing the improvements for me?

Yes, under some circumstances:

- Water main extensions within existing public rights-of-way must be constructed by the Water Bureau at the expense of the developer.
- Property owners may form a Local Improvement District (LID) for larger public improvement projects. An LID is a means for a group of property owners to share in the cost of infrastructure improvements. For questions, contact the LID Administrator at 503-823-5648.
- In certain cases the City will install street lights at the expense of the developer.

### Who should I contact regarding a public works permit?

Public Works Permitting staff are available to answer your questions and provide information about the permitting process and the status of your permit. Call 503-823-1987 or email [PublicWorksPermitting@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:PublicWorksPermitting@portlandoregon.gov).

### Where do I apply for a public works permit?

Application paperwork and plans should be submitted **electronically** under "Step 2 - Concept Submittal" on the Public Works website [www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks). Contact Public Works if you want to submit plans in person at 1900 SW 4th Ave, Suite 5000, Portland Oregon 97201, between the hours of **8:00 AM and 4:30 PM**.



*The City of Portland complies with all non discrimination, Civil Rights laws including Civil Rights Title VI and ADA Title II. To help ensure equal access to City programs, services and activities, the City of Portland will reasonably modify policies/procedures and provide auxiliary aids/services to persons with disabilities. Call 503-823-5185, TTY 503-823-6868 or Oregon Relay Service: 711 with such requests, or visit <http://bit.ly/13EWaCg>*

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**What information and drawings are required?**

For each permit plan review step, there are different submittal requirements. See the "**Step-by-Step Permit Process**" at [www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks) for more information.

**How long does it take to get a Public Works Permit?**

City review time is approximately 4-5 months at the minim, and longer for more complicated projects. At different steps in the review process your engineer will submit corrected and more detailed plans for review. There are typically 4 steps for plan submittal by your engineer – at Concept Review (30%), Design Review (60%), Final Plan Review (90%), and Vellums. A flow chart of the process can be found here: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/61827>

**Can I skip a step, if I think that my plans are ready?**

No. Each step is important to keep a project moving forward.

**What happens if I need to change the scope after the Concept review (30%) phase?**

You will need to repeat the Concept review phase again to review the new scope.

**What if I am ready to proceed on one bureau's plans but not on the plans of another bureau? Can I have a two track process? Will that cost me more?**

Some bureaus require plans to be at a certain plan review level before issuance. This is to ensure that changes to one set of plans will not impact work under the issued permit.

A two-track process for permit review and issuance is possible, however, it is generally not recommended. A two-track process will cost more because for each permit you would have separate review meetings at each stage. Instead, it is recommended that the plans are reviewed and approved in unison. Then when the permit is ready to be issued, bureau plans can be issued separately based on what the applicant wants to start constructing first. Typically, having permits for a project ready to be issued and then issuing only certain permits will not cost more.

**Who reviews my public works permit?**

The Bureaus of Environmental Services, Parks, Transportation, Water, and Parks-Urban Forestry review public works permits.

**What are the review fees? How much will I need to bond for?**

Upon Concept Plan approval you are provided with a Public Works Permit Fee Letter, that details estimated permit review fees, construction inspection fees, and the amount for financial guarantees for your project. If you are extending a water main for a new subdivision through proposed public rights-of-way, the Water Bureau requirements are provided at the 30% concept development review meeting.

**When do I have to provide a bond?**

A bond will be required by Environmental Services and Transportation prior to public works permit issuance, building permit issuance, or Final Plat approval, whichever comes first. For subdivision water system projects, the Water Bureau requires a bond at completion of the water facility installation.

**Are adjustments to Water Bureau facilities covered under my permit?**

No. Any adjustments to Water Bureau facilities must be performed by Portland Water Bureau crews with separate fees paid to Portland Water Bureau. For additional information contact the Water Bureau at (503) 823-7368.

**Is there any reimbursement for extending a sewer main?**

When properties that will be served by the sewer extension do not meet the cost share criteria of the programs listed in Title 17.32.095.A, and do not contribute toward the cost of the sewer, the property owner or developer paying for the sewer extension may be reimbursed by the City for part of the cost of such extension. Reimbursement is determined on a case by case situation. For additional information contact Public Works or your BES plan reviewer.

## **I am looking for permit options...**

### **Can the street be gravel? Can't the street remain paved without sidewalks?**

City code requires streets to be brought up to City standards with development. In certain circumstances exceptions may be granted to those standards. Developers should work with City staff to explore options.

### **Why does the sidewalk need to be widened?**

Sidewalks may need to be widened to meet federal accessibility requirements or local pedestrian design standards that take into account street classification and zoning.

### **Can the improvements be deferred until a later time?**

In limited situations the City may allow an interim standard and defer complete standard improvements until a later date. Developers should work with City staff to explore this option.

### **Is there another option? What else would the City consider?**

**You may discuss alternative options through a Public Works Alternative Review application, or Public Works Inquiry meeting with bureau staff.**

To begin the process through a Public Works Inquiry, visit <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/article/309700>. For Public Works Alternative Review information, visit <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/article/481371>.

### **How do I appeal a bureau decision requiring public works improvements?**

The City has a Public Works Appeals process. In order to have an appeal granted you must be able to demonstrate that the City's decision requiring public works improvements was inconsistent with, contrary to, or a misapplication of City Code, rules, standards, or policy.

### **What is the difference between a Public Works Appeal and a Design Exception?**

An Appeal is for when you think that the City's decision requiring public works improvements was inconsistent with, contrary to, or a misapplication of City Code, rules, standards, or policy. A Design Exception is a request to use a different standard than the standards specified by the bureau.

### **What authority does the city have for requiring the frontage to be rebuilt?**

City Code [Title 17 Public Improvements](#) describes the City's authority to require street improvements.

### **Why do I have to dedicate a portion of my property to the public?**

Dedications are required if your property has frontage along a street that is not improved to current standards and the right-of-way width is not sufficient to accommodate those improvements.

## **How do I get more information?**

- Visit [www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/publicworks)
- Visit the Bureau of Development Services Center (1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, 5<sup>th</sup> floor) between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, and ask to speak with a Public Works Permitting team member.
- Call the Public Works Permitting hotline at 503-823-1987
- Email Public Works Permitting at [PublicWorksPermitting@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:PublicWorksPermitting@portlandoregon.gov)