



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Pres 16-419, **Version:** 1

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### Building Permit Process Review

#### **Summary and Background Information:**

In response to Council inquiries, staff is providing the results of an analysis of the building permit process as it relates to:

- What types of residential permits are required
- How is this communicated
- Identified improvements within these aspects of the process partly based on survey of peer cities in the front range area
- Additional future presentation will be provided related to land use cases
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#### **Background of Building Permits**

Building, plumbing, gas, HVAC and electrical permits give you legal permission to start construction of a building project in accordance with approved drawings and specifications. Building permits are required to help protect the public by reducing the potential hazards of unsafe construction and ensuring public health and safety.

In Commerce City, review times vary by permit type:

- 10 days for standard building permit reviews
- 4 days for reviews on home improvement projects.
- Over-the-counter same-day permits, Monday-Friday, that require no plan review.
- Weekend Warrior same-day permits for small home improvement projects

In Commerce City, accessory residential permits usually require building permits, such as fences, sheds, driveways, and decks. A number of other types of residential work do not, however, such as water tanks, fences less than 42 inches, landscaping, painting, papering, tiling, cabinetry, limited interior wall finishes, etc.

These requirements are communicated in three main ways:

1. Forms
  - a. *Builder Guides* - Primarily for residents, aides with simple DIY projects
  - b. *Topical Information Guides* - More complex projects often performed by contractors
  - c. *Facts to Know for LDC processes* - Usually for Land Use Cases, such as Rezoning or Variances
2. City website - Currently, some forms are not available, but some actions are available online, such as requesting inspections and limited online permits.
3. Staff communication to customers
  - a. Staff provides information directly to customers via phone, permit counter, and email
  - b. Provided by Permit Techs, admin staff, Planners, and engineering staff
  - c. Often utilizes handouts as a supplement

### **Analysis and Improvements**

Staff surveyed 13 different front range communities to determine what types of accessory residential permits are required elsewhere. The results will be made available during the presentation. As a result of this survey and analysis, staff will be making certain changes related to when a permit is required :

- No longer require a permit for flatwork on single family or duplex lots
- No longer require a permit for sheds under 200 sq. ft.
- Change to the landscaping triggers - Remove the requirement that landscaping upgrades are required for accessory structures, and only requiring landscaping upgrades for substantial additions to the primary structure

Additionally, this survey and analysis also led to changes for the three ways this information is communicated to customers:

1. Forms
  - Builder Guides and FTK are helpful
  - Topical Information Guides can be improved
  - Begin a process to add Spanish versions
2. Website
  - Work is underway with communications to provide additional information and forms on the website
  - Long term goal is to make more electronic submittals available, both for building permits and Land Use cases
3. How is this communicated - Staff
  - Interviews showed that staff is providing consistent and correct information about when a permit is required for all categories except paving
  - Staff training has already commenced to address the consistency issue on all of these topics, especially given the changes in what requires a permit

In summary, the interviews and analysis showed that building permit information which is communicated is overall strong by staff. However, select items emerged that need training for consistency or improvements to our information, such as permits for flatwork, and updating our Topical Information Guides. Further, a reduction in permits required is possible and recommended in light of increased permit activity and as it relates to what peer cities require. Finally, Community Development will be working to enhance opportunities for customer feedback in the future.

**Staff Responsible (Department Head):** Chris Cramer, Community Development Director

**Staff Member Presenting:** Chris Cramer, Community Development Director

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**Suggested Motion:** Presentation only