

# Planning Your Project

## Overview

Now that you have decided on a construction project, what's next? A successful project is one that has been thoroughly researched and planned before any significant investment of time and money has been made. To get started it is important to understand what reviews and approvals will be required, what fees are applicable, and if other jurisdictions or outside agencies get involved.

The Permit Center can provide you with information about the rules, regulations, or physical constraints that your property may be subject to. The information is typically from the perspective of Zoning, Civil Engineering, Fire Prevention, Water Resources, and the Building Codes. Permit Center staff can also provide you with fee information, as well as, identify other jurisdictions or outside agencies you may need to contact; all in a single visit.

## Permit Center Review Criteria

**Zoning** information comes from the Livermore Planning and Zoning Code (LPZC) which is part of the Livermore Municipal Code (LMC). This information can be found online at <http://www.ci.livermore.ca.us/>, the reference sections in each branch of the Livermore Library, or at the Permit Center. Every area of town has been assigned a specific zone and each zone has regulations that help shape the overall look and feel of the neighborhood and community. These rules contain information about allowable heights, setbacks, maximum lot coverage, and land use. While many projects are allowed by the zoning code, others are required to be reviewed by special committees and/or gain Conditional Use by staff review, the Planning Commission, or City Council. Permit Center staff can identify the process or processes your project will require.

**Civil Engineering** information typically comes from city maps and records that show the location of underground utilities, sanitary sewer mains, storm sewer lines, water mains, and recorded easements. In addition, information can be obtained about grading, street trees, driveways, curb/gutter/sidewalks, water service, and encroachments. Permit Center staff will help determine the location of easements, utilities, or other infrastructure improvements on and around your property.

**Fire Prevention** information is a key element to the overall safety of any project. The City has a fire sprinkler ordinance (*Please see appendix A*) that outlines the requirements for fire sprinklered buildings. Not all residential buildings or projects are required to be sprinklered. Permit Center staff can determine if your project is subject to being fire sprinklered or required to have other preventive systems.

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**Building Codes** information is vital to the development of any project and is contained in the California Building Code, California Mechanical Code, California Plumbing Code, California Electrical Code, California Fire Code, and California Building Energy Efficiency Standards (TITLE-24). The Codes are designed to ensure the minimum fire-life safety and livability of occupants throughout the life of a building. Permit Center staff can help you obtain specific code information for your project.

**Inspections** are required at specified intervals during the course of construction. Upon your request, the inspector will visit the job site and perform the scheduled inspection and record the results on your permit envelope. It is the function of the inspector to ensure that all zoning, civil engineering, fire prevention, building codes, and other regulations are being met and that your project is being constructed in conformance to the approved plans. Permit Center staff can outline the specified inspections necessary for your project.

*(Please see Step 8: Inspections).*

## Outside Agencies

Depending on the location and type of project you are planning, it is possible that other agencies may need to be informed. In the case of a demolition project, for example, a permit from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) must be obtained. Other outside agencies that could get involved are: State of California Fish and Game, Army Corp of Engineers, Zone 7 Water District, CalTrans, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and utility companies to name a few. While it is not likely that a project on an established lot will need to interface with these jurisdictions, there is always the chance that one or more may have an obligation to review a project. Permit Center staff can identify any Outside Agency that may have easement rights or review obligations on your property.

## Gas, Electric, Water and Sewer Services

In the case of a new construction project or upgrade of existing utility services, your project will need to be coordinated with the utility companies serving your area. Livermore is served by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), Zone 7 Water District, the California Water Service Company, City of Livermore Water, and in the case of sanitary and storm sewer, the City of Livermore.

**Gas and Electric Services** are delivered by PG&E and they are the only utility that can set main gas and electric meters. PG&E has approval authority over the design, engineering, and installation of infrastructure improvements up to and including the service meters. The property owner is then responsible for the gas pipes, electrical conduit and electrical wire on the “house” side of the meters. When planning a new project where no PG&E service exists or working on an existing structure where gas and electrical service upgrades are required, always

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contact the new business department of PG&E for guidance. (*Please see appendix D*)

**Water Services** are provided by the Zone 7 Water District (also known as county water), the City of Livermore, and the California Water Service Company. Zone 7 is the larger overlaying jurisdiction and works with the City of Livermore and the California Water Service Company to provide water delivery. When a project is in a Zone 7 and City of Livermore area, meter fees are divided amongst the two jurisdictions. In this case, your usage bill comes from the City of Livermore and you are known to have “City” water. Where a project is in the Zone 7 and California Water Service Company area the meter fee is for Zone 7 only. In this case, there is no City of Livermore meter fee. Your usage bill will be through the California Water Service Company and you are known to have “California” or “Cal” water. Permit Center staff is available to identify the water service area for your project.

**Storm Sewer Services** are provided by Zone 7 and the City of Livermore. Each project is required to control the flow of storm water into the storm water inlets, conveyance pipes, and culverts maintained by Zone 7 and the City of Livermore. Each construction project is evaluated for the amount of impervious surface being created and an appropriate storm water fee is divided amongst the two jurisdictions.

**Sanitary Sewer Services** are provided by the City of Livermore and each new home in City of Livermore jurisdiction is required to connect to the city sewer system. This is accomplished through the installation of a lateral line (sewer lateral) that completes the connection of the home to the sewer main. The main sewer system is maintained in good working order by the city to ensure sanitary conditions are met.

## Fees

Nobody likes to pay fees but the reality is that it takes time and materials to adequately apply the proper review criteria to a project. In addition, there are infrastructure improvements and city programs that some projects are required to participate in where a fee is necessary. Typically, there are four types of fees a project is subject to. These are: Time and Material fees (typically you permit and inspection fees), Development fees, mitigation fees, and Taxes. Time and material fees cover staff wages and overhead such as, utilities, and equipment. Development fees cover the costs of existing and future infrastructure and programs. Additionally, there are School Mitigation fees and city and state taxes that could be applicable.

Regardless of the category they fall in, all fees are implemented to cover direct fees for services, fund public improvements related to the project, or fund public programs as approved by City Council. The basis for each fee can be found in

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the Livermore Municipal Code (LMC), while the actual fees are published in the City of Livermore Master Fee Schedule. A copy of the Master Fee Schedule can be obtained from the Permit Center or the City Clerks Office. Permit Center staff can identify and further explain each fee your project is subject to.

## **Design with Green Building in Mind**

As energy costs rise and resources become increasingly scarce, good design, improved construction methods, and specifying eco-friendly materials can lead to a more efficient project. During the planning stage, for example, consider the orientation with respect to the sun when deciding where to place windows, doors, and skylights since these openings will greatly effect the inside temperature and the need to heat and cool your new space, as well as, provide lighting. This is equally important if you have chosen to install a solar electric system.

The use of alternate framing methods and composite lumber products are becoming a popular way to make more efficient use of forested resources. Many builders, for example, are evaluating their framing methods and using less lumber when possible. The use of “right-sized” headers, composite beams, truss joists, and finger jointed moldings are just a few ways lumber is being used today.

All the materials and building products you use to construct your project contribute to the overall air quality of your new space. There are many products on the market today that are low or have no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) or formaldehyde resulting in cleaner air to breath. The use of more eco-friendly paints, solvents, adhesives, and stains can greatly increase the quality of the air you breath.

If you are interested in designing with green in mind, the City of Livermore has several Green Building tools to aid you. If you are building a new single family home, for example, you can use the Single Family Green Point Checklist as a guide to help you decide which green building features make sense for your project. Additionally, the Permit Center has construction debris recycling guides and bay friendly landscape booklets. For more information on green building, please visit the Green Resource Center located at the Permit Center and take some time to browse through the handouts, conduct your own research on products and vendors, handle recycled material samples, and enjoy the displays.

To assist you further, Permit Center staff is extensively trained in green building practices and are available to assist you.