



Planning Division
CLIENT ASSISTANCE MEMO

Land Use Permits Nonresidential/ Multiple-Family FAQ

What types of new nonresidential/multiple family or remodeling projects trigger Major Site Plan Review?

Projects that typically involve any of the following trigger Major Site Plan Review and Design Review:

- Construction of a building or installation of impervious surface on a vacant parcel; or
- Establishment of a new use or change of use which is not located in an existing building; or
- Expansion of the existing gross floor area more than 10% or 1,000sf, whichever is less; or
- Modifications to the number of off-street parking stalls, the amount of impervious structure, or the height of structures more than 10% from an approved site plan; or
- Whenever your proposed improvement triggers review under SEPA (the State Environmental Protection Act).

(See GHMC 17.96.030 for a complete list of projects that require major site plan review.)

What is Major Site Plan Review?

The purpose of major site plan review is to determine your project's compliance with all of the applicable codes and standards. Major site plan review is the primary land use permit review process for all nonresidential and multiple-family projects.

The City's Community Development Director approves Major Site Plans via a Type II Administrative decision. No public hearing is required. Administrative decisions are appealable to the City's Hearing Examiner. All other types of land use permits, for example SEPA review, concurrency review, and design review, are considered along with major site plan review as part of one consolidated review process.

If a Director's Interpretation or Type III decision, such as a conditional use permit or variance, is included in your major site plan review package, there will be a public hearing and the decision maker is the City's Hearing Examiner.

During major site plan review, the City will review the project against all land use, civil, emergency access, SEPA and design standards.

An important feature of major site plan review is the preliminary civil review. You will need to provide the items described in the City's **Public Works Land Use Intake Checklist** in the format(s) described in the City's **Preliminary Civil Plan Checklist**. After major site plan approval, you will schedule an intake appointment to submit a civil permit application using the **Private Development Civil Plan Checklist**. The civil permit submittal will need to be consistent with the preliminary civil review.

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Other required documents include:

- an environmental checklist for SEPA review;
- general information about the proposed development including the name and location;
- the names and contact information for the land owners, applicant and the applicant's agents;
- a project description;
- a vicinity map;
- a topographic map;
- the site plan itself (See GHMC 17.96.050.F);
- a circulation plan;
- a landscape plan (See GHMC 17.78.030); and
- a design review application (See GHMC 17.98.040).

What can I do to ensure my Permit Approval Process runs smoothly?

While not all of these are required, they are highly encouraged.

- Schedule a **Pre-Application Conference**. (See Pre-Application Assistance Memo)
- Hire a **Project Lead** that will follow your project from pre-application through construction.
- Provide a complete, written **Scope of Work** that covers all of the elements of the project (i.e. utilities, parking, building and landscape layout, tree retention) and includes all the parcels necessary to accomplish the work. (Required)
- Provide a **Code Analysis** to demonstrate how you intend to meet the code (including the zoning code, development standards and the Design Manual).
- Provide a written response to the **Criteria for Approval** (for variances, conditional uses, design alternatives, alternative landscape plans, etc.). (Required)
- Show the **Areas of Disturbance** around trees identified for retention and show the full area of grading, clearing and construction with the required 10 foot no construction zone around tree retention areas and landscape buffers. (Required)
- Consult with **Outside Agencies** before submitting your application (including Peninsula Light/PSE, Murrays Disposal and Pierce Transit).
- Have the Project Lead **review the submittal for consistency and accuracy** across all the plan sets before submitting the application.
- Schedule an **Intake Appointment** and, if necessary, a **resubmittal appointment**. If resubmitting, provide a written response to each staff comment/correction.

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When can I expect approval of my project?

Determining Completeness of the Application

When an application is submitted, the City has 28 days to determine whether the application is “complete,” or whether all the required submittal information listed on each application has been made available to City staff (RCW 36.70B.070). Applications are submitted at the Intake Appointment. (Please see the Intake Appointment FAQ memo for more information.)

Once the application is “complete,” the City will issue a Notice of Complete Application. At this point, the application becomes active and formal City review begins. The City will also post notice on the site, publish notification of the application in the newspaper and mail notification to surrounding property owners. The City will open a public comment period for two weeks. During the public comment period, the City will receive initial comments from outside agencies (Department of Ecology, local Tribes, etc.).

Review for Compliance

The City is required to make a final decision on an application within 120 calendar days of “active” application processing. Active processing means that review of the application is proceeding normally and has not been put “on-hold” by a request for additional information.

The City will send you a complete review letter with comments from City departments, outside agencies and any issues raised by the public during the comment period. It is the goal of the City to send the comment letter 6-8 weeks after you submit a complete application.

Additional Information/Revisions

Even if your application is complete enough to begin review, the City may still seek additional information or studies. If the City asks you for revisions or additional information or studies, the 120-day review clock stops and does not start up again until you have submitted the required information. You have 90 days to resubmit your application materials based on the initial review. You may apply for an extension if needed.

The City will review resubmittal materials within about four weeks. When staff determines that your response satisfies the City’s information request, the 120-day clock will start running again.

If there are substantial changes in your resubmittal materials from the original proposal, the City may require a resubmittal intake meeting and may require a new Notice of Application and a restart of the 120-day clock.

Critical Area Review

If your site contains critical areas or buffers, the City will send the application out to a third party consultant for review. The consultant will provide an estimated cost for the review and you will need to pay that estimate prior to the review.

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Where Can I find Application Materials for Land Use Permits?

You can find a list of the application materials you need to bring by project type at:

www.gigharborwa.gov/planning-checklists-apps-fees.

This webpage contains general application information (fees, application information, environmental checklists, the general permit application form, etc.), project specific checklists, and information about design review.

The civil plan documents are available on the City's website at:

<http://www.gigharborwa.gov/checklists-forms-fees>.

Client Assistance Memos are not intended to replace the Gig Harbor Municipal Code. Should you have any questions regarding this information please call the Planner of the Day at (253) 851-6170.

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