

Questions from Permit 101 Workshop

- 1) Since ground rods are not allowed in Foster City, how is temporary power grounded?

Temporary power by definition is temporary and ground rods will be sufficient for limited term use.

- 2) How much do permits cost?

The cost of a building permit varies based on the scope and type of construction project. To get an accurate estimate of a building permit, please refer to [Master Fees and Service Charges Schedule | Foster City California](#) and click on the fees for current fiscal year.

- 3) If I have a legally unpermitted shed that is under 120 square feet, do I need a permit to add electricity?

Yes.

- 4) Does adding electricity make the shed require a permit?

It depends on the use of the electricity:

- a. If the electricity is for lighting and outlets for gardening or yardwork (charging power tool batteries, and temporary extension cord use for yardwork or maintenance) does not trigger a change of use for the shed.
- b. If electricity is for creating a home office, recreation room; installing heat or air conditioning, or similar then the shed becomes habitable space and would need a permit for the proposed use.

- 5) Do I need a permit before I start work?

Yes, you need a permit before starting most types of construction projects, including, renovations, electrical work, plumbing work, modifications etc., There are a few exceptions including, fences under 7 feet height, sheds under 120 square feet, painting, flooring, changing an interior door without framing, finish floor replacement, above ground pools less than 24 inches high and less than 5000 gallons.

Starting work without a permit can result in penalties and possible having to undo completed work to pass inspections.

- 6) If the owner gets the permit instead of the contractor, does the owner have more responsibility?

When applying for a permit as an Owner-Builder, the owner will be required to fill out and submit an Owner-Builder's Acknowledgement Form. This form requires acknowledgement of certain responsibilities that a contractor would have such as insurance coverage for potential injuries to workers on the property, subjectivity to "Employer" tax responsibilities

and responsibility for the work performed. There are also limitations on selling the property shortly after an owner-builder project is complete. For more information review the Owner-Builder Acknowledgement form [here](#).

7) Is there a way for owners to obtain plans from past work performed on their homes?

To obtain plans, you can do the following:

Plans may be viewed at the Community Development Department at City Hall, 610 Foster City Blvd, during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 am- 12 pm and 1pm -5 pm). As required by Health and Safety Code §19851 (d), in order for copies of floor plans for a property to be released, approval must be requested from the owner and architects/engineers. To request approval:

1. Submit a Public Records Act Request at: <https://cityoffostercityca.nextrequest.com/>
2. Complete and Submit Permission Affidavit:
https://www.fostercity.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/14500/affidavit_-_request_for_plan_copies_by_requestor_and_send_to_prop._owner_and_arch._enr._fillable.pdf

If you are the owner of the property, please complete the owner's section of the affidavit. Please respond directly to this message with the completed affidavit.

Once we receive your completed affidavit, our office will send out a letter to the architects/engineers. As soon as we have responses from them, which can take up to 30 days from receipt, we will advise if/when copies of the plans can be made.

Please feel free to call 650 286-3250 or respond directly to this message if you have any questions.

8) How is soil adequacy verified during the permit process?

If a permit application involves construction that relies on soil bearing strength for its intended use, Foster City allows 1200 PSF maximum without obtaining a soils/geology report. Please see [design criteria](#)

9) How soon does the work need to be done upon issuance of a permit?

Once a building permit is issued, construction work must commence within 180 days, which means at minimum you have one inspection conducted by our building inspector. If the work does not start within this period, the permit may expire. Additionally, progress must be demonstrated to keep the permit active. If for some reason, the work cannot commence within 180 days, please contact the Building Division to apply for an extension.