



## **FAQ #1: When Do I Need a Building Permit?**

Any owner, authorized agent, or contractor who desires to construct, enlarge, alter, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure must first make application to the Town and obtain a Building Permit. Furthermore, any owner, authorized agent, or contractor who desires to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert, or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical, or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by the applicable international building codes, must first apply to the Town and obtain a Building Permit.

A Building Permit **IS** required for (but not limited to):

- Any new structure on a vacant lot or parcel of land
- Any addition to an existing dwelling or building which alters the size, use or occupancy of a building
- Construction, alteration, or replacement of any exterior walls or adding windows or doors
- Replacement/alteration of interior walls, floors, including load bearing or non-load bearing
- Replacement of columns, beams, joists, rafters, roofs, or any other load bearing component
- Enclosing existing structures, carports, porches, and screened rooms for any purpose
- Construction of any raised deck, attached, or detached, with or without a roof
- Repair and replacement of interior or exterior stairs, handrails and/or guardrails
- Adding, altering, or removing any electrical, plumbing, heating or air-conditioning systems
- Fire or storm damage repairs of any type or scope
- Roof replacement involving structural elements or pilewood
- Installation of storage or utility sheds of all types, materials, and sizes

A Building Permit **IS NOT** required for (but not limited to):

- Exterior painting (except in CB, CBT or CH Zones, where Design Review Board approval is needed)
- Wallpaper and other wall coverings (except Assembly, Day Care, and Institutional Occupancies)
- Floor or wall tiling, rugs, carpeting
- Replacing kitchen cabinets (provided there is no wall, electrical, or plumbing changes/work)
- Replacing fascia or soffit (1 & 2 Family Dwellings only)
- Non-structural siding placed over existing siding/sheathing (1 & 2 Family Dwellings only)
- Patios or decks directly on grade without footing, or repair/replacement of existing decking boards
- Roof shingle replacement that does not require new structural elements



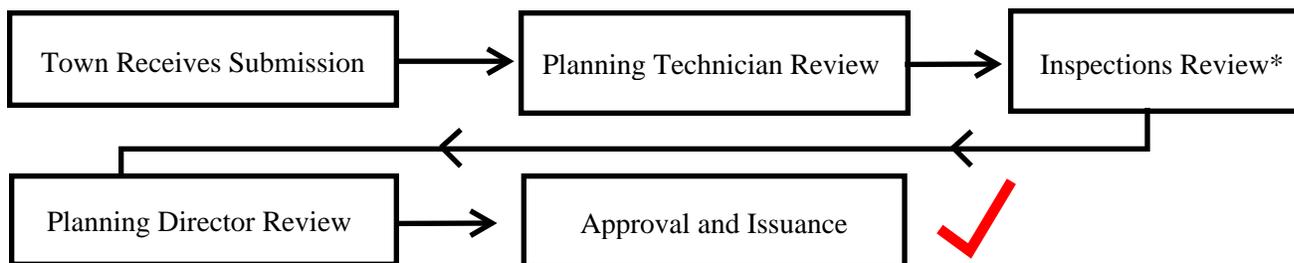
## FAQ #2: How Long is the Processing Time?

Most Building Permit applications have a processing time of **two (2) to four (4) weeks**. Commercial Building Permits in particular tend to have a minimum processing time of four (4) weeks.

Please note that this window is highly variable, and depends on a number of external factors, including, but not limited to:

- Application completeness upon submission;
- Quality and legibility of requested drawings and documents upon submission;
- Availability of third-party plans reviewer (Plancheck, Inc.);
- Town Hall hours of operation;

A typical submission follows the process outlined below:



Once the process is completed, the applicant will be contacted that their permit is ready for pickup. If the permit has not already been paid for, the applicant must pay for the permit at the time of pickup. Please note that the Town only accepts cash or check for permit fee payments, and cannot mail approved permits to applicants at this time. Fees shall be made payable to Town of La Plata.

Staff will review the application and required materials and will notify the applicant of any deficiencies or revisions that need to be made.

**\*For Commercial projects only:** The inspections review phase will also have an additional review by the Office of the State Fire Marshall.



## FAQ #3: What Are the Guidelines For Sheds?

Sheds are classified as an "Accessory Structure", as defined by the Town's code. As such, they are to be in compliance with the Town's Zoning Ordinance when a project proposal is submitted.

The construction and placement of a shed on one's property within the Town **requires a building permit**.

The Zoning Ordinance states that **all detached accessory structures shall only be placed in the rear yard**.

- Section 191-5.B.261 of the Code defines the rear yard as *"open space extending across the full width of the lot between the rear lot line and the nearest projection of the principal structure thereof"*

When submitting a Building Permit for the construction of a shed, be sure to include:

- A site plan of where the shed will be placed on the property (drawn to engineer or architect's scale);
- Cut sheet/technical manual of the shed (if using a pre-constructed shed from a third-party seller);
- Shed setbacks from the property boundary lines



## FAQ #4: Are Fences Regulated by the Town?

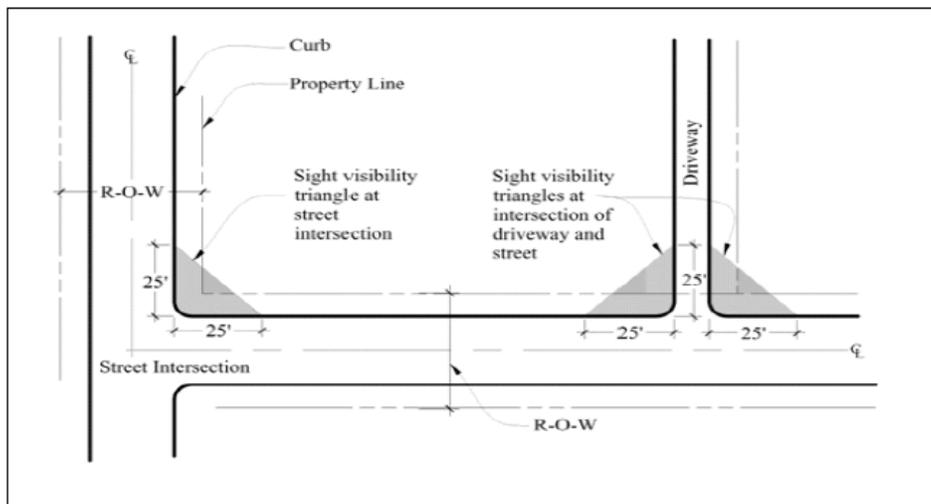
The Town does not require a permit for erecting a fence around one's residential property. However, there are a few guidelines to follow:

Fences in the Town may not:

- Be larger than seven (7) feet tall in the **rear yard**
- Be larger than four (4) feet tall in the **front or side yards**
- Be within the property's Sight Visibility Triangle\*

All properties in the Central Business (CB), Central Business Transition (CBT), and Commercial Highway (CH) zones are required to obtain approval of all required fences, enclosures and screenings from the Design Review Board (DRB) in accordance with Chapter 16, Design Review, of the Town Code.

\*The Sight Visibility Triangle (SVT) (depicted below) is the triangular space provided across all lot corners created by either intersection of two (2) streets or the intersection of a driveway and a street. The SVT is determined by drawing diagonal line across the corner of the lot measure from two (2) points drawn twenty-five (25) feet back from the street or driveway intersection, entrance, or driveway





## FAQ #5: What Are the Fees for Building Permits?

Please note that the following fees are subject to change at any time.

### **NON-RESIDENTIAL - ICC USE GROUPS A, B, F, H, I, M, S**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GROUP A (ASSEMBLY)</li> <li>● GROUP B (BUSINESS)</li> <li>● GROUP F (FACTORY &amp; INDUSTRY)</li> <li>● GROUP H (HAZARD)</li> <li>● GROUP I (MERCANTILE)</li> <li>● GROUP S (STORAGE)</li> </ul> | } | <p>\$0.55 per sq. ft<br/>         Minimum fee of<br/>         \$235.00</p> |
|---|---|--|

### **RESIDENTIAL - ICC USE GROUPS R, T**

- NEW CONSTRUCTION - \$0.55 per sq. ft., minimum fee of \$715.00
- ADDITIONS - \$0.55 per sq. ft., minimum fee of \$410.00
- ALTERATIONS - \$0.55 per sq. ft., minimum fee of \$340.00
- TEMPORARY & MISCELLANEOUS\* - \$0.10 per sq. ft. with a minimum fee of \$115.00
- MOVING OF BUILDINGS - \$0.45 per sq. ft., minimum fee of \$83.00
- DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS - \$83.00

\*Projects that fall under "Miscellaneous" include (but are not limited to):

- Pools
- Roofs
- Solar Panels
- Decks
- Sheds
- Pellet Stoves

If you are unsure what your project's use group might be, feel free to contact the Planning Department at (301) 934-8811.

The full Fee Schedule for permits and other planning and development projects can be found on the Town's website ([www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org))



## **FAQ #6: What Do I Need to Submit with a Building Permit Application?**

In addition to the standard Building Permit application, the following items are typically required upon submission:

- Construction plan;
- Site plan (Drawn to engineer or architect scale);
- Technical manual / Cut sheet (if project includes the installation of a pre-fabricated structure or appliance obtained from a third party);

**Two physical copies of the items, and one electronic copy are required upon submission. An incomplete application may be rejected.**

One approved set will be returned to the applicant once the permit has been issued.

Please note that construction plans for a commercial project must be drawn and sealed by a licensed Maryland design professional (engineer, architect).

LAST REVISED: 01/28/2019



## **FAQ # 7: What is the Design Review Board?**

Adopted on May 14, 2002, under Town Ordinance O2-13, The Design Review Board (DRB) is a panel of citizens that ensures that new development (including alterations to existing buildings) maintains and enhances the integrity and quality of the Town's commercial areas. Design review considers the wide variety parameters of any given proposal, including (but not limited to):

- Site Layout
- Building size and scale
- Architectural features
- Parking circulation
- Landscaping
- Signage

The design review process encourages flexibility, while striving to ensure the aesthetic and functional compatibility of new development with the desired character and economic and social vitality that is articulated in the Town's Vision Plan. During the design review process, a proposal is evaluated against the Town's design guidelines, in consideration of other development regulations that may influence the proposed project. An example of this would be compliance with the International Building Code and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Meetings are typically held on the second Wednesday of each month. The DRB's meeting calendar, submission deadlines, and community design guidelines can be found on the Town's website at [www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org)

LAST REVISED: 01/24/2019



## **FAQ # 8: What Do I Need to Submit with a Design Review Board Application?**

In addition to the standard DRB application form, the following items are typically\* required upon submission:

### **A. New Construction, Addition, Exterior Renovation, Accessory Structure Projects**

- Site plan showing building location, service areas, dumpster location, parking, and circulaion, lighting, fencing, screening and adjacent structures and roadways (24" x 36" or larger);
- Building elevations, in color, that are drawn to scale and clearly show all sides, proposed dimensions, materials, and colors (11" x 17" or larger);
- Sign design, in color, showing site location, dimensions, square footage calculations, materials, lighting, and master sin plan if required. For detached signs, please provide an elevation showing the relationship of the sign to the building or provide a photograph if an existing sign is being used (8.5" x 11" or larger);
- Landscape plan with a plant list including identification of species for trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and perennials (24" x 36" or larger);
- Written responses to all *applicable* sections of the Community Design Guidelines for the CH, CB, or CBT zones that explain how the proposed project meets the guidelines;

Please provide ten (10) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of the above for large-format submissions (24" x 36" or larger), or one (1) hard copy and one (1) electronic copy for small-format submissions (8.5"x11").

### **B. Sign & Common Sign Plan Projects**

- Site plan showing sign and building location;
- Sign design, in color, showing site location, dimensions, square footage calculations, materials, lighting, and master sin plan if required. For detached signs, please provide an elevation; showing the relationship of the sign to the building or provide a photograph if an existing sign is being used (8.5" x 11" or larger);
- Written responses to all *applicable* sections of the Community Design Guidelines for the CH, CB, or CBT zones that explains how the proposed project meets the guidelines;

Please provide ten (10) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of the above for large-format submissions (24" x 36" or larger), or one (1) hard copy and one (1) electronic copy for small-format submissions (8.5"x11").

\*Please note that some projects may not require every item listed above. Clarification of what is required for a project is available from Planning Department staff (301) 934-8811.

LAST REVISED: 01/24/2019

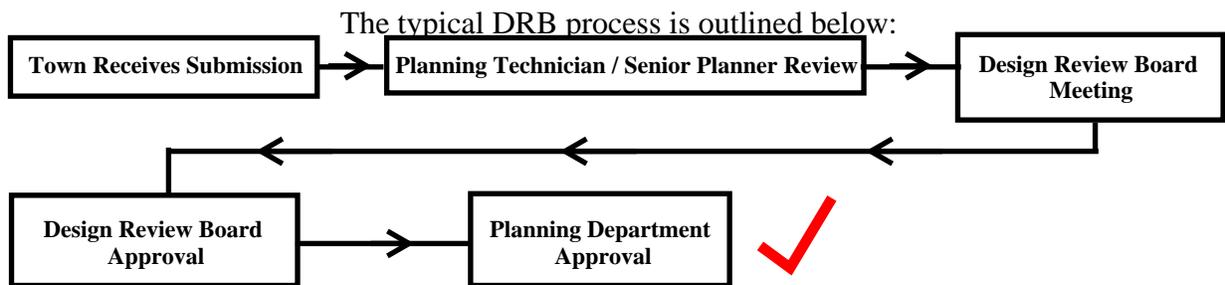


## FAQ # 9: How Long is the DRB Process?

Applicant submissions are to be submitted to the Town four (4) weeks prior to the desired meeting date. Planning Department staff will review the application and required required material and will notify the applicant of any deficiencies or revisions that need to be made.

An incomplete application package may result in a longer process. Furthermore, the following external factors can cause the process time to vary:

- Quality/legibility of requested drawings, plans and documents
- Application completeness upon submission
- Town Hall hours of operations



Once the project is approved by the Design Review Board, staff will provide the applicant with a copy of the approved plan sets/drawings.

LAST REVISED: 01/24/2019



## **FAQ #10: What Are the Types of Sign Permits?**

The Town issues three (3) types of Sign Permits:

1. Permanent
2. Temporary
3. Sign(s) of Limited Duration (S.O.L.D.)

Permanent and Temporary sign permits must be applied for using a Sign Permit application, available at La Plata Town Hall or on the Town's website ([www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org)) under the "Forms & Applications" section.

Permanent and Temporary Sign Permits for signs up to 32 square feet in size have a fee of \$30.00. Signs bigger 32 square feet will have an additional charge of \$1.25 per square foot.

Sign(s) of Limited Duration are identified using color-coded stickers that are given by the Town. There is no formal application process for SOLD stickers, and they can be obtained from La Plata Town Hall provided that the signs follow the sticker issuance policies:

- Signs must a maximum of four (4) square fee (example: 2" X 2");
- Only one (1) sign per lot (please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to obtain property ownership for each lot);
- Maximum of fifteen (15) SOLD stickers per applicant

SOLD stickers are only valid for seven (7) days, after which they must be taken down (the expiration date will be written on the stickers by Planning Department staff)

There are no fees for obtaining SOLD stickers.

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## **FAQ #11: How Do I Obtain a Permanent Sign Permit?**

To be issued a Sign Permit for a Permanent sign, you must apply using a Sign Permit application. On the application, you must check off "Permanent" under the "Sign Type" field. Please note that this is an important distinction to indicate, as the process for Permanent and Temporary signs are different.

**IMPORTANT:** If the sign(s) location is in the Commercial Highway, Central Business, or Central Business Transition zones, the sign must also be approved by the Design Review Board before the Sign Permit can be approved by the Planning Department. Please refer to the Design Review Board FAQs or contact the Planning Department staff for further information about the Design Review Board process.

Planning Department staff will be able to determine whether or not the proposed sign's location is within the aforementioned zones.

### **Required Material Upon Submission of Permanent Sign Permit Application**

- Two (2) pictures or renderings of the proposed sign (in color)
- A site map of the sign's location on the property

Please note that the proposed sign must not be placed within the property's Sight Visibility Triangle (refer to **FAQ #4**).

Staff will review the application and required materials and will notify the applicant that of any deficiencies or revisions that need to be made. An application that has to be approved by the Design Review Board will need the board's approval before the Planning Department can approve it.

Once approved, staff will inform the applicant that their Permanent Sign Permit is ready for pickup.



## **FAQ #12: How Do I Obtain a Temporary Sign Permit?**

To be issued a Sign Permit for a Temporary sign, you must apply using a Sign Permit application. On the application, you must check off "Temporary" under the "Sign Type" field. Please note that this is an important distinction to indicate, as the process for Permanent and Temporary signs are different.

A Temporary sign permit allows a sign to be placed for a fifteen (15) day period. The fifteen (15) days begin on the day that the permit is issued. Once the period has expired, the sign must be taken down.

This period can be extended by applying for another Temporary sign permit. There is a limit of seven (7) extensions for a Temporary sign permit allowed in a single calendar year.

If your proposed temporary sign will be located within the Commercial Highway, Central Business, or Central Business Transition zones, you DO NOT have to seek approval from the Design Review Board beforehand.

### **Required Material Upon Submission of Temporary Sign Permit Application**

- Two (2) pictures or renderings of the proposed sign (in color)
- A site map of the sign's location on the property

Staff will review the application and required materials and will notify the applicant of any deficiencies or revisions that need to be made.

Once approved, staff will notify the applicant that their Temporary Sign Permit is ready for pickup.



## FAQ #13: What is a Plumbing Permit?

A plumbing permit is required for the replacement, repair, or alteration of plumbing fixtures beyond a simple one-to-one replacement of an existing fixture.

Water heaters, sinks, baths, water closets, and gas fireplaces are just some of the examples of fixtures that are covered under a plumbing permit.

An example of a one-to-one replacement would be replacing an existing water heater with a new water heater in the same location.

**Please note: Any plumbing work that involve structural alteration of a building also requires a Building Permit.**

In order to be issued a permit, you must complete a **Plumbing Permit Application** (available from La Plata Town Hall or on the Town's website under the "Forms & Applications" section) and return it to the Town.

The first five (5) fixtures have a flat fee of \$46.25, and every fixture after the first five (5) with have an additional fee of \$4.90. Fees shall be made payable to the Town of La Plata via cash or check.

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## **FAQ #14: What is a Utility Service Permit?**

A **Utility Service Permit** is required for connecting a building to the Town's water, sewer, and surface water infrastructure. It indicates that the building meets safety standards and helps protect the Town's public infrastructure.

New residential and commercial buildings require Utility Services permit.

In order to be issued a Utility Services permit, you must complete a Utility Services Permit application, which is available at La Plata Town Hall or on the Town's website ([www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org)) under the "Forms & Applications" section.

Once the completed application is received by the Town, it will be reviewed by the Planning Department, and the Department of Public Works. Once both departments have approved the application, the permit will be issued after the required fees are paid.

MAJOR FACILITY FEE\*  
SEWER CONNECTION FEE  
WATER CONNECTION FEE  
WATER METER FEE

\*For new residential or commercial properties, the Major Facility Fee is not due until the applicant receives their Certificate of Use & Occupancy.

LAST REVISED: 01/24/2019



## FAQ # 15: What is a Certificate of Use & Occupancy?

A **Certificate of Use and Occupancy** certifies that the Town's Planning Department has found a building to be in compliance with the Town's applicable building codes and other requirements; indicating that it is in acceptable condition for occupancy.

A Certificate of Use & Occupancy is required for the following (but not limited to):

- New Residential occupancy
- New Commercial occupancy
- Change in Commercial ownership/occupancy

To apply for a Certificate of Use & Occupancy, you must complete a **Certificate of Use & Occupancy Application**, available at La Plata Town Hall or on the Town's website ([www.townoflaplata.org](http://www.townoflaplata.org)) under the "Forms & Applications" section.

After completing the application, you must schedule a Use & Occupancy inspection. For residential occupancies, you must schedule with **Planchek, Inc. (301-870-8710)**. For commercial occupancies and changes in commercial occupancies, you must schedule with both Planchek, Inc. **AND** the **Office of the State Fire Marshall (443-550-6280)**. Please note that there will be an additional inspection fee which will be collected by the Office of the State Fire Marshall.

Once your required inspections are completed, the respective parties will issue you a inspection report. You will need to bring the report(s) indicating a passing inspection to the Town, after which you will be issued a Certificate of Use & Occupancy.

Please note that there is a \$72.50 fee associated with commercial occupancies. There is no fee associated with residential occupancies. Fees are to be made payable to the Town of La Plata via cash or check.