



UNDERSTANDING THE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Houston BuildExpo

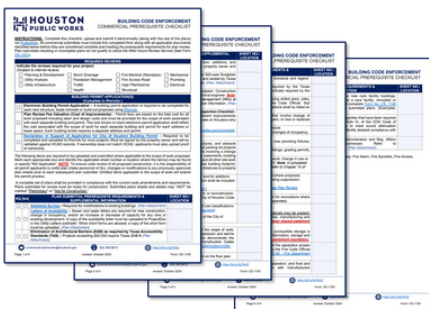
2025

PREREQUISITE CHECKLIST

Learn about the Commercial Prerequisite Checklist

Requirements:

- Asbestos Survey
- Letters of Availability
- Elimination of Architectural Barriers
- Site Plan
- Landscaping
- Sidewalks
- Parking
- Code Analysis Sheet
- Use of Occupancy
- Schedules and Legends
- Seals and Signatures
- Soil Report
- Mechanical Plans
- Electrical Plans
- Plumbing Plans
- Storm Drainage / Civil Plans
- Traffic / Civil Plans
- Fire Suppression and Standpipe System Plans
- Fire Alarm
- Owner Statement of Intended Use
- HazMat Details
- High Piled Storage Details
- Fire Access Roads and Control Gates
- Health Plans
- Care Facility Worksheet
- Airport Sound Attenuation
- Administration Regulatory Affair (ARA) Permit or Time Stamped Application



To access the form scan the QR code or go to:
bit.ly/4bebY0E



PLANNING & RESEARCH

Before you buy, consider the following...

- Whether you can financially and legally build your proposed project
- Deed restrictions and property liens
- Survey and property lines (Ensure that your structure can be built in the proposed location)
- Utility availability (Assess if water and sanitary capacity and utilities are available and/or if additional fees may be required)
- Platting (May be required if there is a change of use or occupancy for the property)
- Parking (Determine requirements for the type of occupancy proposed)
- Setback (May be required where the proposed business abuts a major thoroughfare)
- Floodplain (Refer to Chapter 19 of the Code of Ordinances)
- Existing Certificates of Occupancy
- Check open records for any previous uses, certificates of occupancy, and any conditions that will require plans and construction permits
- Check if the property is in the Houston Airport System (HAS) Tier 1 or Tier 2 since certain occupancy types are not allowed



DESIGN PREPARATION

What codes are currently in effect?

- 2021 International Building Code
- 2021 Uniform Mechanical Code
- 2023 National Electrical Code
- 2021 Uniform Plumbing Code
- 2021 International Fire Code
- 2021 International Energy Conservation Code, or ASHRAE Standard 90.1-2019
- 2021 Swimming Pool and Spa Code (with Houston Amendments)
- 2021 International Existing Building Code (with Houston Amendments)
- City of Houston Design Manual
- City of Houston Code of Ordinances

To access the complete design criteria, scan the QR code or go to: bit.ly/3W0g3RN

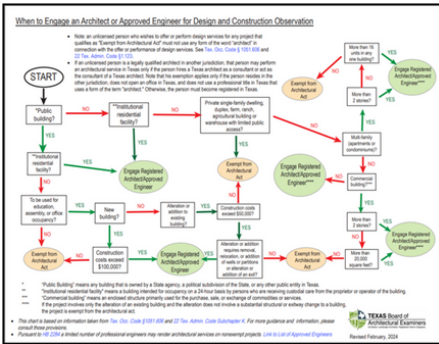


Does your project require an architect or engineer?

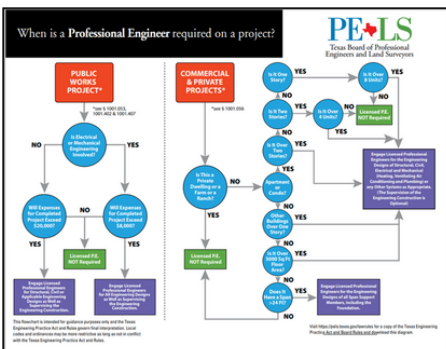
- Refer to the Texas Boards of Architectural Examiners & Professional Engineers
- Based on project type and scope:
 - New Construction (ground up)
 - Build out (first time or first generation tenant improvement)
 - Remodel (extensive and minor)
 - Repair (replacing like for like materials)
 - Expansion/addition (new square footage)
 - Change of Use (e.g., change storage warehouse to auto repair shop, change retail to restaurant)

WHEN TO ENGAGE WITH AN ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER?

- When to Engage an Architect or Approved Engineer for Design and Construction Observation



To access the chart, scan the QR code or go to: bit.ly/3VUKQIG



To access the chart, scan the QR code or go to: bit.ly/45DUPfu



- Licensed Professional Engineers Approved to Engage in the Practice of Architecture

PE ID License #	Name
48190	James R. Womack, P.E.
52246	Dennis Dyke, P.E.
46141	J.L. "Hubb" Cross, P.E.
37838	David Ingle, P.E.
26839	Bud R. Richardson, P.E.
37744	Franklin Johnson, P.E.
75677	Sean Nease, P.E.
64716	Richard Roberts, P.E.
77549	John Richard Rogers, P.E.
41004	James Dixon, P.E.
43677	Johnny Tabor, P.E.
40914	Donald Stahl, P.E.
45447	Justin Davis, P.E.
42324	Royce Krueger, P.E.
38918	Ronald Nelson, P.E.
41050	Jose Gil, P.E.
83956	Kamdan L. P.E.
27521	Harrison Carlick, P.E.
45147	Doris Gibbs, P.E.
62637	Raymond Stone, P.E.
82754	John A. Scobee, P.E.

Professional engineers who have been administratively determined to qualify to engage in the practice of architecture are not licensed or registered by the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners and are subject to the exclusive regulation of the Texas Board of Professional Engineers. <https://www.engineers.texas.gov>

List revised Mar 01, 2022

To access the full list, scan the QR code or go to: bit.ly/3VliMxE



RESOURCES & OTHER INFORMATION

Access Online Resources and Other Information

Web Links:

- Building Code Enforcement Permit Fees: bit.ly/45jhWxU
- Water & Sewer Rates: bit.ly/3ZsreE1
- City Fee Schedule: bit.ly/3xRPxw3
- Open Records: bit.ly/3YDvsHT

Other Information:

- **Tax Increment Redevelopment Zone (TIRZ):** Special districts created by City Council to attract new investment. Property tax increases (increments) fund public improvements in the zone.
- **Reporting Unpermitted Work:**
Call: 311 or 713-837-0311
Visit: www.houstontx.gov/311/
Email: 311@houstontx.gov
- **Historic Designation:** Historic properties may be exempt from certain Energy Code requirements and may qualify for a 50% permit fee discount with an approved Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Houston Archeological and Historical Commission (HAHC).



DESIGN PREPARATION

Does the project require a specialized consultant or an additional step?

- Historical Review
- Sprinklers
- Fire Alarm
- Asbestos Survey
- Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) Accessibility Review
- Elevation Certificates
- Electronic Locks

Does the project include work to be performed in the City right-of-way and/or easement?

- Plan & Profile drawings must be submitted and approved by the Office of the City Engineer prior to construction.

Architectural Barriers

- Projects over \$50,000 require a TDLR number for the architectural barriers act. For more information visit <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/ab/ab.htm>

APPLICATION & PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Plans must include:

- **Architectural / Structural:** Plans by an Architect, Designer, Draftsman, Engineer. Plans include Site Plan, Code analysis, Building Plans, Elevations, Building Sections, Existing/New Floor Plan, Foundation Plan, Wall Sections, Roof Plans, Framing, Finishes, Energy Code Certificates, Stairways, Door Hardware Schedule, Glazing Schedules
- **Electrical:** Plans by Master Electrician or Texas Licensed Engineer. Plans include One-line diagram, load analysis and panel schedule. Plans should include a power plan, a reflective ceiling plan, lighting plan, exit signs, floor plugs, exterior light pole, etc.
- **Plumbing:** Plans by Master Plumber or Designer. Plans include plumbing layout, riser diagram, fixture details, piping and penetration. Plans fixtures, leave-out locations/fill-in, floor drains, internal roof drainage, Letters of availability, etc.
- **Heating, Ventilation and Cooling (HVAC):** Plans by A/C Contractor or Texas Licensed Engineer. Plans include HVAC layout, RTU, AHU, duct plan, calculations.

Note: Addresses are critical and must be verified for new construction.

DEPARTMENTS/GROUPS



The **Infrastructure & Development Service (IDS)** group is responsible for managing wastewater flows through wastewater capacity reservations (WCR), managing water demands through water/storm drainage commitment letters, review process which provides information on water, wastewater and storm drainage requirements for new development or for existing development that will require additional water and/or wastewater capacity.



- Impact fee receipt (or exemption form)
- Wastewater Capacity Reservation Letter (WCR)¹
- Point of connection
- For Impact Fee / WCR Credit
 - Demolition project number
 - Previous water account
 - HCAD tax statement

**1 Applicable for: a.) New development or for existing development that will require additional water and/or wastewater capacity, b.) If the main water line is < 6" or > 20" and c.) If the sewer line is < 8".*



The **Planning & Development Department** reviews development site plans, (new construction and additions) for compliance with the City Code of Ordinances (Chapter 42), parking regulations (Chapter 26), tree and shrub regulations (Chapter 33); determine property use and setbacks (Chapter 42).

DEPARTMENTS/GROUPS



The **Floodplain Management Office** oversees floodplain development by reviewing plans, monitoring, and inspecting construction per the Code of Ordinances. It also maintains an archive of outdated Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panels previously issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



The **Traffic section** reviews plans for driveways, sidewalks, culverts, parking lots, as well as conversions. It issues permits for private street paving work and addresses right-of-way issues.

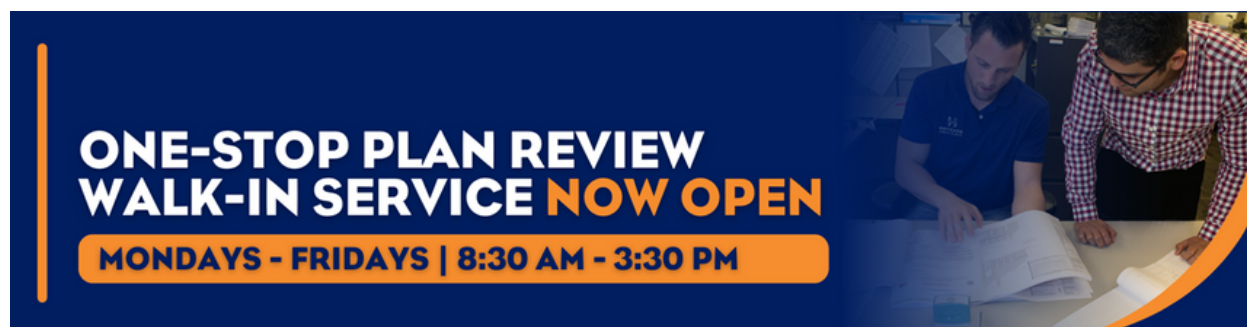


The **Stormwater section** ensures site drainage complies with all regulations, directing runoff to the city right-of-way and preventing overflow onto adjacent properties.

PLAN REVIEW SERVICES AND OPTIONS

Learn about phased permits

- **Expedited Review Service (ERS):** Expedited option available for projects that have been through one complete review. Other qualifications and criteria applies. Refer to Form CE-1251 (bit.ly/4kApD7D) for more information. There is a fee for this service.
- **Quick Start Program:** For projects exceeding \$1 million valuation with a limited number of reviews remaining, a 24-hour turnaround is available. Refer to Form CE-1071 (bit.ly/3ZVR2bO) for more information.
- **One-Stop Plan Review Walk-In Service:** This review process is designed for minor commercial and minor residential projects. For a full list of eligible project types, visit bit.ly/3RBGIXw.



DEFERRED SUBMITTALS

Learn about phased permits

Deferred submittals are allowed for elements of a building that are not typically designed by the time the general design plans are submitted for code review. However, they will need to be submitted for review prior to installation.

Examples of Deferred Items:

- Truss details
- Curtain walls
- Pre-cast concrete (non-rated)
- Metal buildings (non-rated)
- Pre-fab storage racks (non-high pile)



Note: Sprinkler plans, fire alarm and electronic lock plans are required to be submitted separately, not deferred.

To access the deferred submittal form, scan the QR code or go to: bit.ly/4kVa3Dc



DEPARTMENTS/GROUPS

Learn about phased permits

The City of Houston offers phased permitting to allow construction to begin before final designs are complete, ideal for fast-track projects.



Examples:

- Site Grading
- Site Paving and Underground Utilities
- Site and Foundation (requires recorded plat)
- Superstructure (concrete buildings, or non-rated steel)
- Shell only
- Shell and core
- Buildouts by floor (noncombustible only)

NOTE: Phased permits must be obtained in order of construction. For more detailed information, refer to the Form CE-1198 Phased Construction Permitting Options



Frequently Missed Plan Review Prerequisites

- Water and Wastewater Availability Letters
- Engineered structural plans (sealed and signed)
- Hazmat/High-Piled Form or Exemption Form
- Code Analysis
- Access Management Form (Traffic)
- Submitting final design plans and not preliminary plans

Wastewater Capacity Reservation (WCR) Letter

- Prior to submitting plans, complete the WCR application online via iPermits. For instructions refer to bit.ly/3HlvQpd
- Response will be sent to you (WCR letter)
- Pay impact fees
- Submit impact fee receipt and WCR letter with plans

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