



STEPS for Obtaining City Approval for Residential Construction in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes

If you are considering renovations or additions to your home, please be aware that most home improvement projects require the preparation of plans and a 2-step City approval of those plans before any actual construction can occur.

STEP 1 – Planning Approval

The Planning Division's review focuses on whether your proposed project is consistent with the City's Development (Zoning) code regulations. Once an application and accompanying plans are submitted, a planner will ensure that the project meets height, open space, setback requirements and if applicable, whether it creates any view impacts and is compatible with the immediate neighborhood. Everything from new fences, BBQs, skylights, garden windows, spas, swimming pools, flag poles, roof modifications and storage sheds to grading, retaining walls, balconies, decks, 1st or 2nd story additions and new homes require planning approval. Applications for minor projects can be approved over-the-counter while applications for major additions and remodels must be approved by either the Planning Director or Planning Commission. Due to the processing requirements of the City, it typically takes 4.5 months (from submittal to a decision) to obtain approval of Staff level applications and about 10 months to obtain approval Planning Commission level applications.

Always talk to a Planner **first** before preparing plans and submitting an application for a proposed project. You may also consult the City's website (www.palosverdes.com/rpv) to download Planning Applications and access other helpful documents such as the Neighborhood Compatibility Handbook, the Residential Development Standards Table and the Height Variation Guidelines.

STEP 2 - Building & Safety Plan Check

After receiving Planning approval, your project plans will need to go through a plan check review by the Building and Safety Division to ensure your project is designed and built in accordance with the State Building Code adopted by the City. Only after Planning approval has been obtained, can your plans be submitted to Building & Safety for review. To help you understand what items need to be shown on the plans you submit to Building and Safety please see the attached [Plan Check Submittal Requirements](#). The attached [Residential Plan Check List](#) will be used by Building and Safety Staff to review your plans. Also attached are the [Drainage Plan Guidelines](#).

Geology/Soils Report Requirements

Given the unique geologic and soil conditions of the City, many construction projects require that you hire a geologist to prepare a soils report and/or a geology report to ensure that your project is feasible and designed in a manner that takes into account any unique geologic and/or soil conditions on your property. The report will need to be reviewed and approved by the City's geotechnical consultant either as part of the Building and Safety plan check process and sometimes as part of the Planning review process. Attached is a handout titled "[When will a soils report be required?](#)" that identifies projects that typically require the preparation of geology and/or soils report. In addition, the [Geologic Review Fee Schedule](#) is attached.

If you are unsure whether you need to prepare a geology report for your project, you may arrange for a City Geologist visit to your property to see if a geology report will be needed for a particular project. To arrange for a visit, a fee and site plan of the property, showing what currently is on site and where the proposed project is occurring, will need to be submitted to the Building and Safety Division.