

Access Requirements for Building Sites

What is the purpose of access requirements?



Safety, primarily. Access requirements enable emergency vehicles to reach sites as needed. They also help to ensure that people who work at, live in, or visit the sites can come and go without endangering themselves.

How much access am I required to provide?



You must provide access from your building site to a publicly maintained or County-maintained road. If your property fronts a publicly maintained or County-maintained road and the site is for a single-family home only, a driveway can satisfy the requirement. If it does not front a publicly maintained or County-maintained road or if the site will provide access to more than one residence, then you must provide a two-way road from the site to the publicly maintained or County road.

What are the physical requirements of the road?

It must be a two-way road at least 16 feet wide with shoulders at least 1 foot wide. It must have a minimum grade of 1% and a maximum grade of 15%, built to geotechnical standards. Drainage and drainage facilities must not erode the roadway or adjacent properties.

What if the topography makes it impossible to satisfy these requirements?

With the written permission of your fire district or the County fire marshal, the maximum grade can be as much as 20%. To exceed a 20% grade, you must apply for a Street Improvement Exception, which must be approved by the Planning Commission.

How can I qualify for an exception?

You must apply for a Street Improvement Exception. To approve your application, the County must find that strict application of the access regulations would result in extraordinary hardship or damage to you.

Who determines whether my request for an exception will be approved?



Requests are normally handled at the staff level, although in some instances the Planning Commission may decide.

How can I tell whether an existing road is a County-maintained road?

The Department of Public Works has maps on file. You can inspect these maps at the DRC (Development Review Center), or you can call Public Works at (650) 363-4161.

A road in front of my building site runs to a County-maintained road. Does this satisfy the requirement?

It may. If you think that it meets all the requirements, you can ask that Public Works perform a field inspection to determine whether it qualifies.

What kinds of permits do I need to build an access road?

The required permits may be the same as an Encroachment Permit. In addition, you may need a grading permit, which you may be able to apply for at the same time as you apply for your building permit. You can apply at the DRC.

Who will approve the permit?



The Public Works Department will approve the permit.

Will there be a public hearing?

Only if your project involves another permit that requires a public hearing, such as a Coastal Development Permit.

How long will it take for the application to be approved?



Most Encroachment applications can be processed in as few as 3 days. Building and grading permits can take as long as 6 months.

What fees must I pay?



You must pay an application fee, an encroachment fee, and, if applicable, a street improvement exception fee. All are flat fees.

What's the next step in this process?



Read the pamphlet *General Procedures When You Apply for a Planning or Building Permit*. This pamphlet explains the general procedures for applying for a permit, paying fees, calling for inspections, and other related matters. Then you should also review the following documents, which contain other information that you may need:

How to Apply for a Grading Permit

How to Apply for an Encroachment Permit

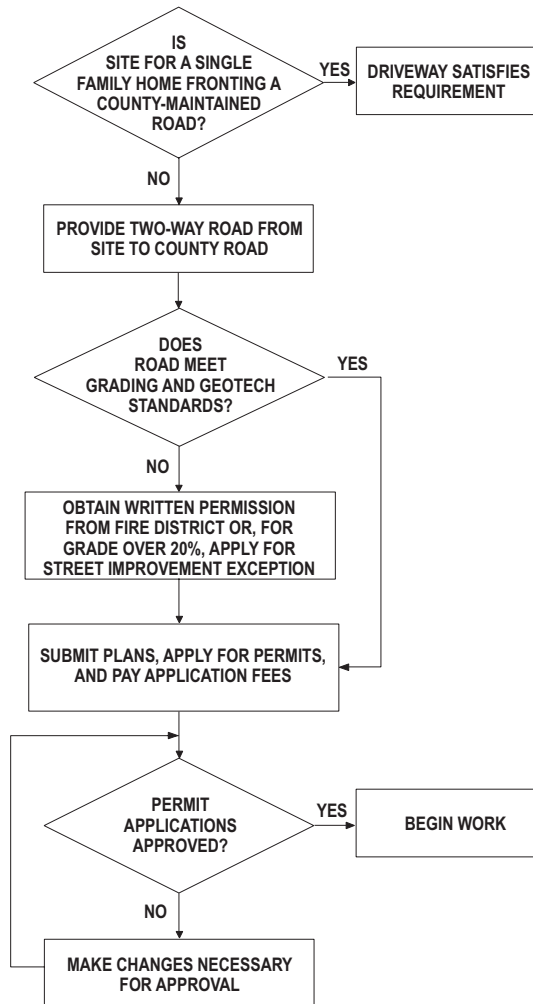
How to Apply for a Street Improvement Exception:

Geotechnical Requirements

Resolution and Policy: Access Standards for Private Roads, Access Easements, Driveways

After you have become familiar with these documents, we recommend that you prepare some very preliminary plans and bring them to the DRC counter so that we can review them. An informal meeting at this stage may save you considerable time and money later on.

Permit Process to Build an Access Road



PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE



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Access Requirements for Building Sites

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