



PUBLIC WORKS

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STREET WORK PERMIT INFORMATION

What's a Street Work Permit, and when is one needed?

Sometimes called a Street Opening Permit, this permit is required whenever work will be done in a City right-of-way which will break the surface of the ground or will impact City improvements (such as sidewalks, pavement or utilities). The permit lets the City know what work is proposed to be done, and provides a way for the City to approve, monitor and inspect the work.

What's a City right-of-way?

The right-of-way is property controlled by the City for the use of the public as a way for traffic to travel. Traffic can mean vehicles, bicycles or pedestrians. The right-of-way is usually associated with a street, avenue, alley, or lane. Note that the right-of-way is not just the paved portion, but the entire width from private property line to private property line. Many residents are surprised to find that in most residential areas the right-of-way starts several feet behind the sidewalk in an area considered by them to be their private yard.

How much does the permit cost?

Fee is based on the current year's Municipal Fee Schedule. For the current Fiscal Year Adopted Municipal Fee Schedule, please see

<https://www.paloalto.gov/Departments/Administrative-Services/City-Budget>

Who applies?

Normally, the contractor performing the work takes out the permit. It is possible for a general contractor to take out a permit for work to be performed by subcontractors which can minimize the number of permits required for larger projects involving many subcontractors. In any case, the Permittee must have a State Contractor's License for the type of work to be performed.

What is required to apply?

An application/permit form and submittal instructions may be obtained by reaching out to Public Works Engineering at pwecips@paloalto.gov

General requirements include the following:

- Signed application form.
<https://www.paloalto.gov/files/assets/public/v/1/public-works/engineering-services/webpages/forms-and-permits/streetwork-permit.pdf>
- A plan sheet(s) showing the location and nature of the work. The plan should be scaled and drawn by an architect or engineer with CAD software. Small jobs such as simple in-kind sidewalk replacements can use images from your camera or Google Streetview with markups.
- A traffic control plan to MUTCD standards if any pedestrian or vehicular traffic is impacted.

- Insurance certificate.

<https://www.paloalto.gov/files/assets/public/v/2/public-works/engineering-services/webpages/forms-and-permits/insurance-certificate-submission-requirements-revised-2021.pdf>

Why is insuring the City necessary? Doesn't it have its own insurance?

Should someone suffer an injury because of the permitted work activities, and a lawsuit is filed, it is likely that the plaintiff will name the City as one of the defendants, because the work is on City-controlled property with City approval. Because the City is named as an additional insured, the applicant's insurance company will be required to defend the City, relieving the City of the burden and cost of defending itself, or of going to the expense of having itself removed from the suit.

How long does it take?

If the work is very simple and doesn't impact any existing trees or utilities, it may be possible to issue the permit the same day. In general, though, it is necessary for other City departments to review for possible impact in their areas of responsibility.

It could take as many as two weeks or more to get all departmental reviews done.

There are two items that cause the greatest delays in permit approval:

- Insurance documents that do not conform to all of the requirements listed above, and
- Failure to provide an adequate traffic control plan when the permitted activity will impact pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Once I have the permit, are there any other requirements?

The City's Public Works Inspectors must be called at (650) 496-6929 a minimum of one work day before beginning any work. An inspector will come out to discuss the project and give tips and advice on how to be sure you meet City requirements. And, of course, you should contact Underground Service Alert (USA), at (800) 227-2600, if you plan to do any excavation work. At the conclusion of work, the Inspectors must again be called for a final inspection, sign-off and permit closure.

This publication is intended to be an informal means of informing the public about a City process. Although it is assumed the information provided is accurate, the sheet is not intended to create any sort of legal obligation on the City's part. The actual process is governed by City ordinances, regulations and procedures, and the reader should make specific inquiry to the City for specific cases.