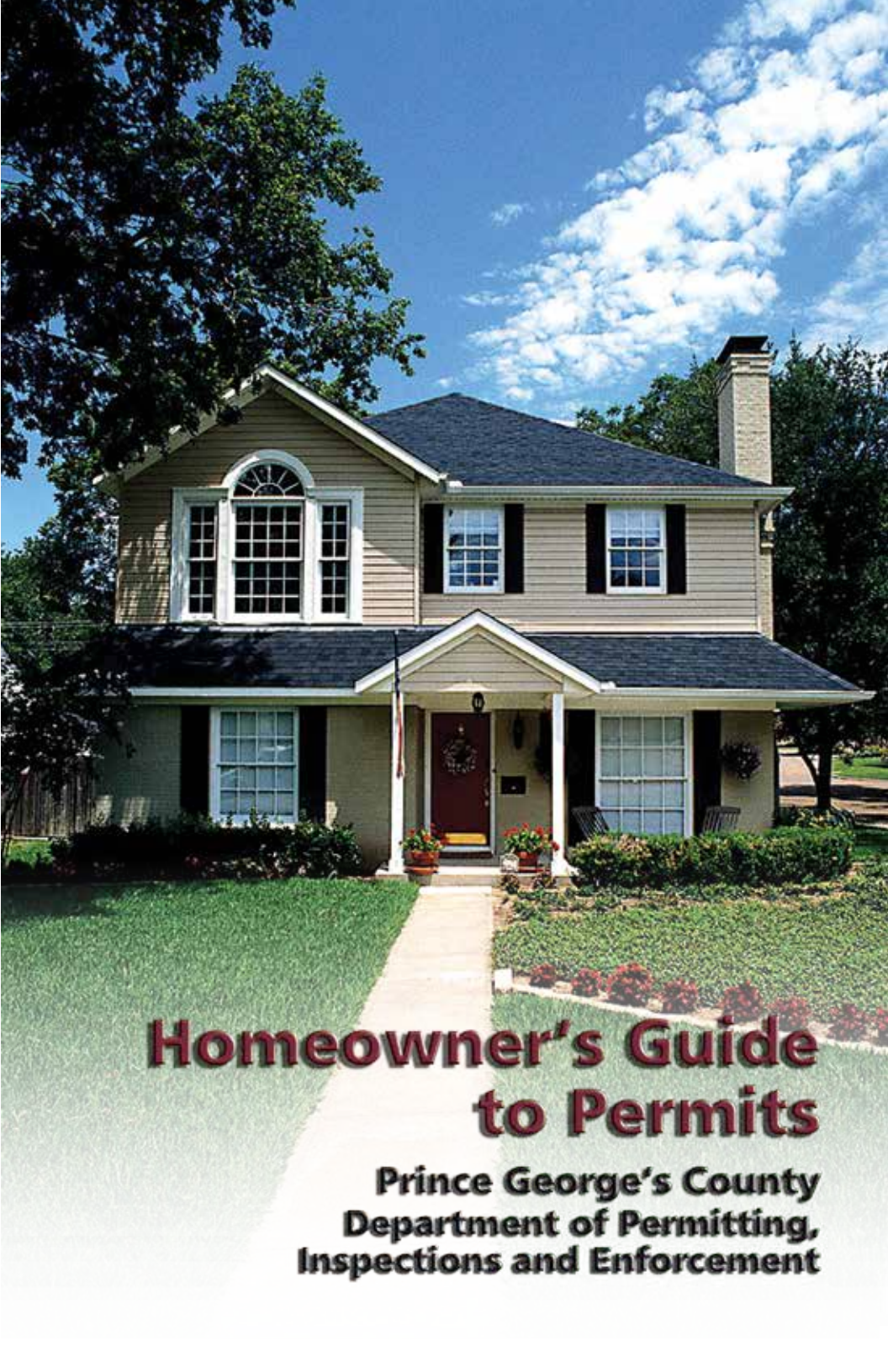

Homeowner's Guide to Permits

Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement

Prince George's County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have any questions regarding ADA or if assistance is needed in obtaining permit processing services, you should contact the Permits Administration Office at (301) 883–5776.

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Introduction

This booklet has been prepared to provide preliminary information and instructions regarding a number of common home improvement projects. The enclosed guidelines will enable homeowners and their contractors to understand the permit process and how it applies to their specific project.

Inside you will find information on requirements that must be fulfilled prior to the issuance of permits. Additional requirements apply to projects located in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and/or for historic structures or properties. Applicable codes and general details are provided in each section. By learning which sections of the Prince George's County Code apply to a proposed project, applicants can prepare their plans accordingly, thereby reducing delays and increasing the cost efficiency of their project.

Any questions pertaining to the professional standing of a specific Home Improvement Contractor should be directed to the Maryland Home Improvement Commission (MHIC) at (410) 230–6309 or their web site at *www.dllr.state.md.us*.

Information about plumbing and gasfitting permit requirements issued by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) may be obtained by calling (301) 206–4003.

If your home is currently served by a well and/or septic system and you wish to construct additional living space or a

detached structure, you will need Health Department approval of your building permit. You will need to know the size and location of your septic system and/or well.

If you have any questions regarding your property or Health Department requirements, contact the Water Quality and Septic Systems Program at (301) 883–7680. Remember, you will need to protect your investment in these systems by providing access for construction equipment that prevents travel over any part of your septic system or near your well.

This guide will assist you in obtaining permits for your home improvements. If you have any questions or comments, please call the Permits and Information Management Section at (301) 883–5776.

When Is a Permit Required?

Project Categories

The projects listed in this booklet are grouped into four general categories:

1. Accessory Buildings (includes sheds);
2. Home Improvement and Repair Projects;
3. Appliance Installations (includes replacements); and
4. Miscellaneous.

Type of Permit and Symbols

The symbols listed below appear in the permit/plans column to indicate the type of permit required. The symbols denote:

B — Building Permit

E — Electrical Permit

M — Mechanical Permit

P — Plumbing and Gasfitting Permit Issued by Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)

G — Grading Permit

N — No Permit or Plans Required

Y — Plans Required

1. Accessory Buildings	Permit	Plans
Build shed that is more than 150 square feet	B	Y
Build storage shed that is 150 square feet or less (only one allowed per lot without permit)	N	N
Any shed that is attached to a building or carport	B	Y
Build farm building (on farm property, agricultural use only)	E*	N

* Electrical and Mechanical Contractors License required to obtain electrical and mechanical trade permits.

2. Home Improvement and Repair Projects	Permit	Plans
Install exterior siding	N	N
Replace roof shingles (no structural repair involved)	N	N
Replace roof sheathing	B	Y
Panel interior walls without partitions	N	N
Put up partitions and finish rec room (electric/plumbing, separate permits required)	B	Y
Exact window and/or door replacement (no structural alteration)	N	N
Install pre-fabricated fireplace	B	Y
Build masonry chimneys for stove	B	Y
Build masonry fireplace	B	Y
Construct entrance way/area way into basement	B	Y
Construct, dig or enlarge a basement under existing dwelling	B	Y
Driveways and paving	B	Y
Foundation waterproofing	B	Y
Build patio less than 500 square feet on grade (no steps; cannot be used to park vehicles)	N	N
Build above-grade patio	B	Y
Build patio covers	B	Y
Replace or install carpeting	N	N
Painting	N	N
Replace or install kitchen counter or bathroom counter	N	N

2. Home Improvement and Repair Projects *(cont'd)*	Permit	Plans
Replace interior or exterior door	N	N
Enclose carport	B	Y
Build or replace porch or deck	B	Y
Repair steps	B	Y
Relocate stairs	B	Y
Pier	B, G	Y
Bulkhead	B, G	Y
Boathouse	B	Y
Mooring pile	B, G	Y
Boat lift	B	Y
Build dormers	B	Y
Install a hardwood or asphalt tile floor on a subfloor	N	N
Install kitchen cabinets	N	N
Replace switch plates	N	N
Replace electrical wiring	E*	N
Relocate switches, outlets, lighting fixtures, and sub panels	E*	N
Relocate service entrance cable or change the size of service	E*	N
Install smoke detectors (if connected to house wiring)	E*	N
Replace circuit breakers	E*	N
Replace kitchen stove exhaust	E*	N

* Electrical and Mechanical Contractors License required to obtain electrical and mechanical trade permits.

3. Appliance Installations	Permit	Plans
Install electric air conditioning**	E, M*	N
Install gas air conditioning	M, P*	N
Install heat pump	E, M*	N
Install well-water pump	E*	N
Install humidifier	E*	N
Install boiler (gas, oil, etc.)	E, M, P*	N
Install portable cooling unit (*i.e.*, window A/C)**	N	N
Install electronic air cleaner	E*	N
Install attic fan	E*	N
Install oil furnace	E, M*	N
Install gas furnace	E, M, P*	N
Install electric furnace	E*	N

* Electrical and Mechanical Contractors License required to obtain electrical and mechanical trade permits.

** Cord and plug connection does not require permit.

4. **Miscellaneous**	**Permit**	**Plans**
Build retaining walls (over 2 feet high)	B	Y
Build brick or block privacy wall (over 4 feet high)	B	Y
Install hot tub/spa/pool	B, E*	Y
Construct fences (over 4 feet high/6 feet limit)	B	Y
Install outdoor gas barbecue (if served by Washington Gas Light Co.)	P	N
Install swimming pool (if connected to WSSC, permit required)	B, E*	Y
Install solar heating system	M, B, E*	N
Erect freestanding radio or TV antenna or satellite dish 18 inches or more in diameter	B, E*	Y
Demolish building (RAZE Permit)	B, P**	N

* Electrical and Mechanical Contractors License required to obtain electrical and mechanical trade permits.

** Requires disconnect letters from all utility companies.

Fences

Fences are constructed for a variety of reasons. They are generally used to restrict the movement of people and animals into or out of a parcel of land. Often they are placed to denote boundaries, delineate specific-use areas, provide privacy or for aesthetic reasons. Common fence types are split rail, picket, board on board or chain link.

Fences may not be placed so as to encroach on easements of any kind or on State or County rights-of-way. If you are on a corner lot, you may not locate a fence within 25 feet of the point of intersection on your property lines that abut the streets.

To place a fence over four feet high on your lot, you must apply for a building permit and submit site plans showing proposed fence location(s) including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans may be required for fence erections.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Privacy Walls

Privacy walls used for fencing are usually constructed of brick, block, stone or concrete.

When planning the construction or installation of a privacy wall, it is very important to consider existing drainage patterns on your lot. You must not alter the drainage patterns. This includes rainfall run-off that originates on your property and flows through your lot from adjacent properties. Grades on either side of the wall must remain as they were prior to construction.

To construct a privacy wall of over four feet high, you must apply for a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s) including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans must also be submitted. Privacy walls have the same set-back requirements as fences according to the zoning and existence of private well and/or septic systems.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Retaining Walls

Retaining walls are usually constructed on sloping parcels of land that are presently eroding or in areas that will be cut (excavated) or filled in order to create more usable space. Retaining walls are customarily built from railroad ties, brick, block, stone or concrete. Railroad tie retaining walls are the most popular due to the lower construction costs.

Existing rainfall drainage patterns are a major concern when planning to construct a retaining wall since those patterns may be permanently altered by the structure(s) and the accompanying earthwork. Run-off that originates on your property or flows through your lot from adjacent properties must be adequately conveyed to a proper outfall to prevent any damage or nuisance to your neighbors. Additionally, groundwater movement must be addressed with the installation of weep holes and/or drain tile behind the wall.

To construct a retaining wall or series of walls that will have a total height of greater than two feet, you must apply for a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed construction location(s), including well and/or septic. Structural plans must also be submitted. Retaining walls have the same set-back requirements as fences according to lot zoning.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

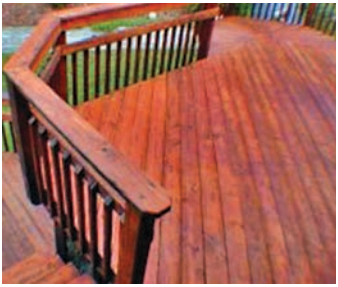
Patios and Decks

Patios and decks are similar in that they are both open-air leisure areas. These structures are generally differentiated from one another based upon construction materials. Those built from brick, block, stone or concrete (masonry) are classified as patios and those built from lumber are designated as decks.

Patios are usually built at grade with a finished height that does not exceed six inches. For construction of patios built at existing grade (and less than 500 square feet), no permits are required for their construction. If your lot is served by a private well and/or septic, an at-grade patio must be reviewed by the Quality and Septic Systems Program to ensure that access for septic tank maintenance is provided.

Decks are generally elevated structures. A building permit is required for construction of decks over eight inches in height. Decks near septic systems should be designed so that footers or other support structures do not damage septic system plumbing or prevent pumping access to septic tank cleanouts.

If you intend to construct a patio or deck, you must apply for a building permit and submit site plans showing the existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans are also required.

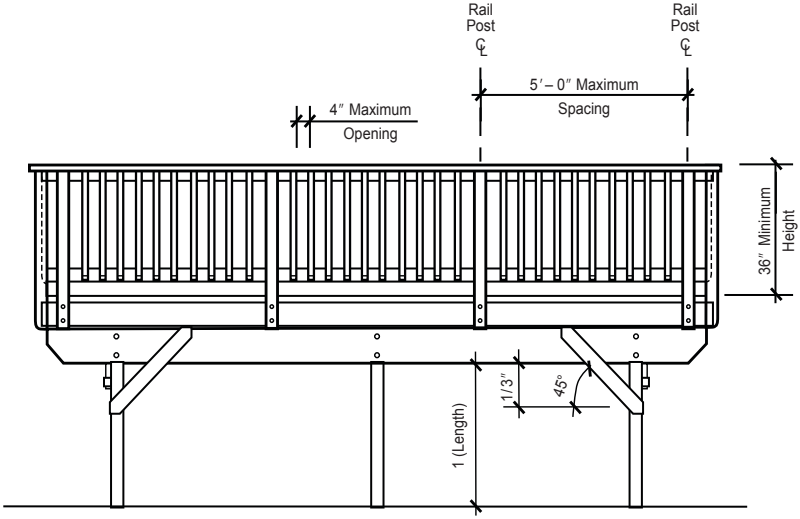


If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Wood Deck Elevations

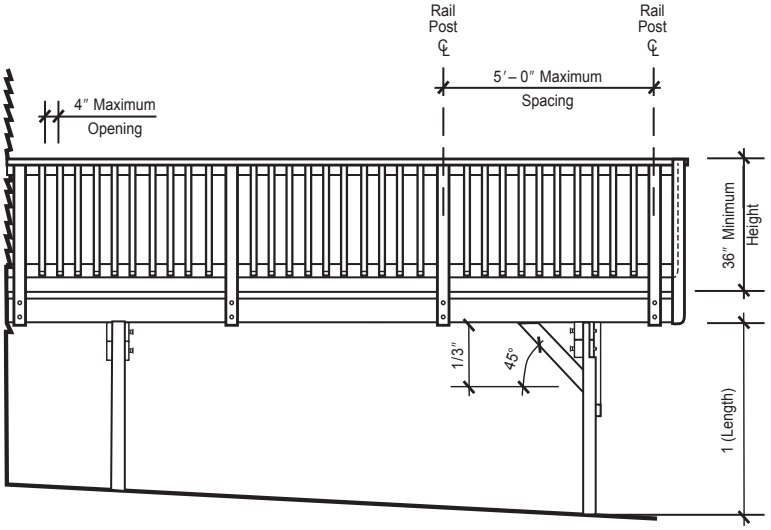
Front Elevation

Scale: 1/4″ = 1′ – 0″



Left Side Elevation

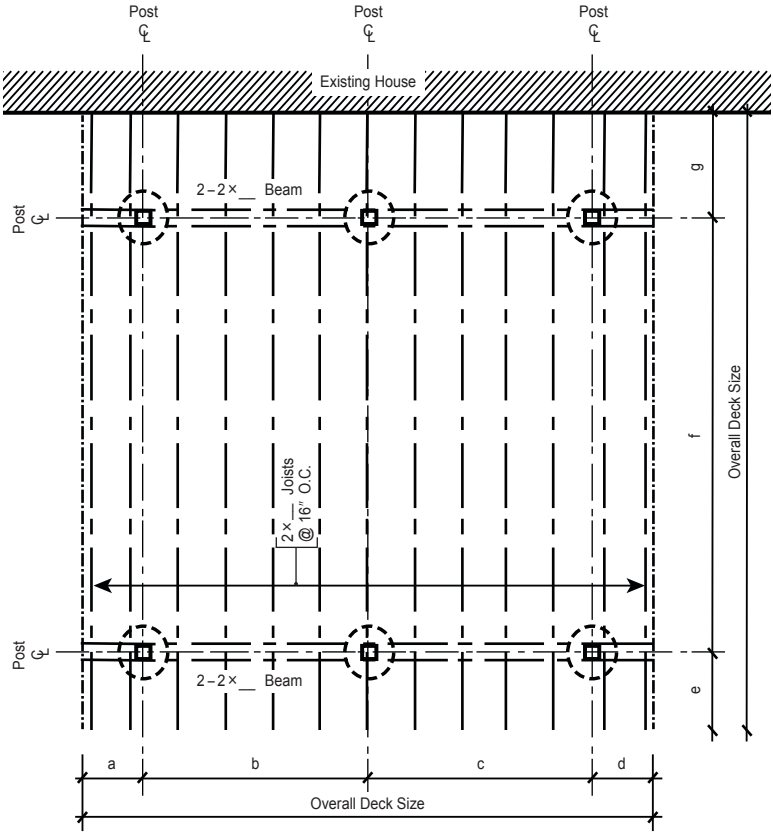
Scale: 1/4″ = 1′ – 0″



Wood Deck Framing/Foundation Plan

Framing/Foundation Plan

Scale: 1/4″ = 1′ – 0″



Notes:

1) All lumber shall be pressure treated.
2) All connectors, anchors and fasteners shall be either ZMAX™ or post batch, hot-dip galvanized steel.
3) Do not use standard carbon–steel or aluminum products in direct contact with pressure-treated wood.

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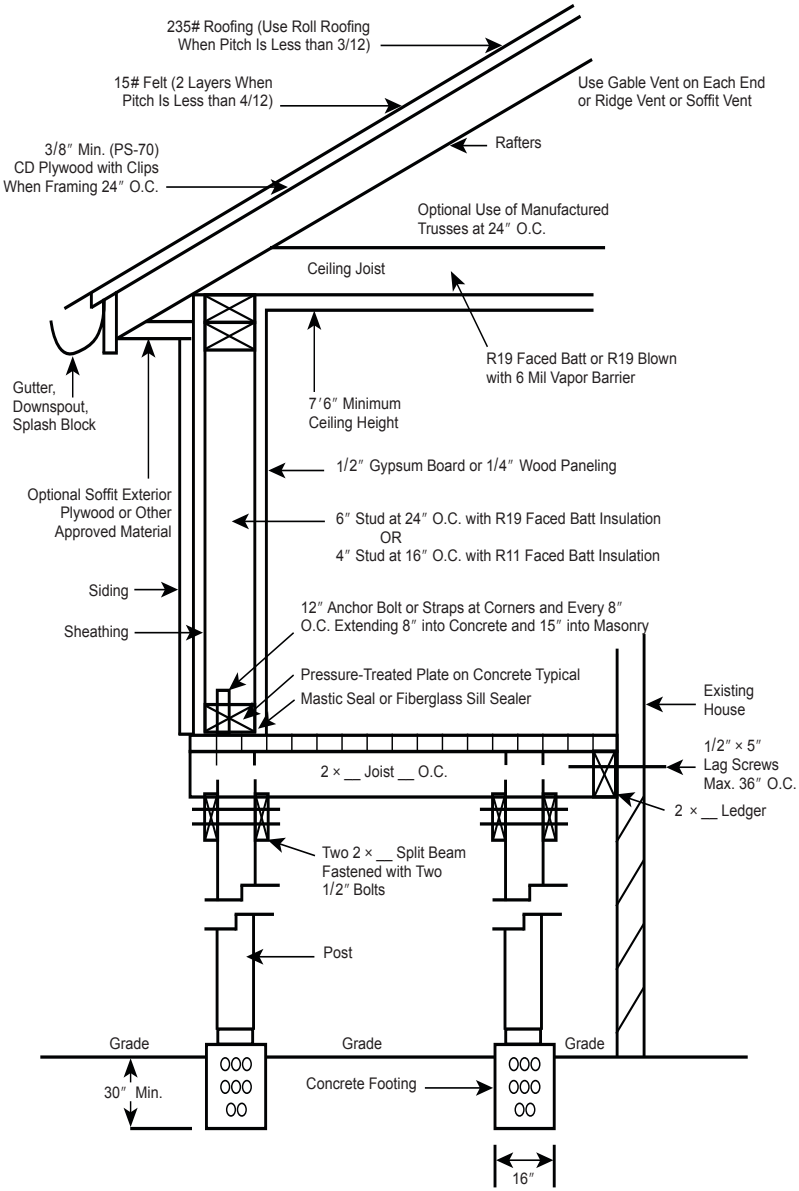
Covered Sundeck



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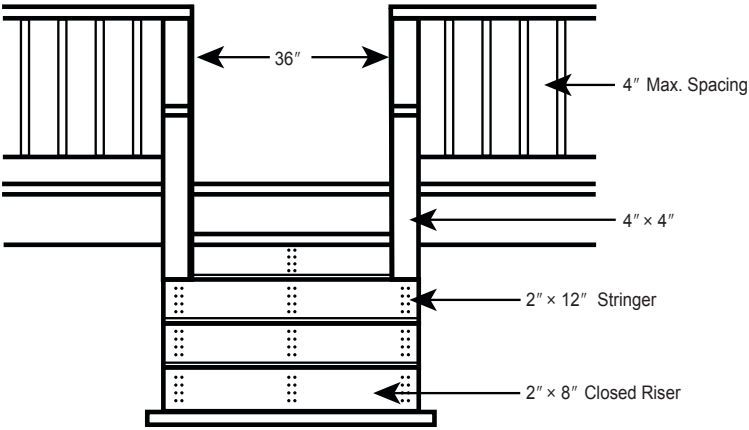
Stoops and Porches

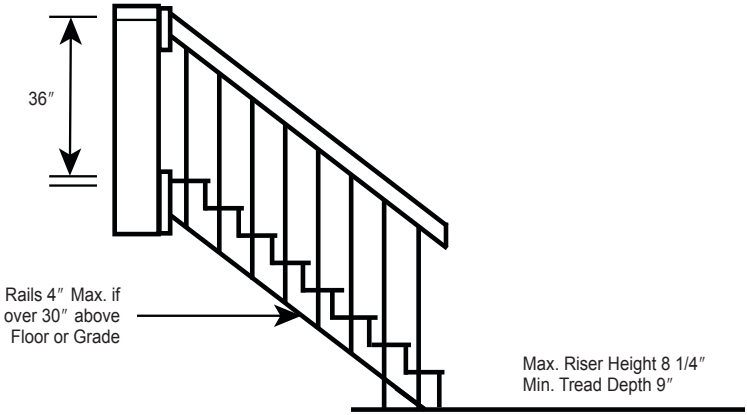
Stoops and porches differ from patios and decks in that they are usually a means of gaining access to an elevated point of entrance to a structure (*i.e.*, a back door that is above grade). Stoops are usually built of brick, block, stone or concrete. All stoops over eight inches in height will require a building permit.

If you intend to construct a stoop or porch, with the exception of the at-grade masonry stoop mentioned above, you must apply for a building permit. To apply, submit structural plans and site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable).

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Typical Stair Detail





Notes: 1) The greatest riser height within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8 inch. The greatest tread run within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8 inch.
2) When risers are closed, all treads may have a uniform projection not to exceed 1 1/2 inches.

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Sheds

Sheds are primarily used for secondary storage and as small workshops. They are closed off and protected from the elements and generally can be secured to prevent access. Residential-use sheds with floor plans less than 150 square feet can be placed on timber skids but must be properly anchored to provide stability and reduce susceptibility to overturning. No building permit or plans are required, and only one shed per lot is allowed without a permit.

To erect a shed that is greater than 150 square feet requires a permanent foundation. You must obtain a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans are also required.

Electrical work for sheds will require an application for an electrical permit by a Master Electrician licensed with Prince George's County.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Gazebos

Gazebos are generally covered, deck-type leisure structures which are detached from the principal structure. As with sheds, gazebos with floor plans measuring less than 150 square feet can be placed on timber skids but must be properly anchored to provide stability and reduce susceptibility to overturning. Gazebos exceeding the aforementioned limitations will require a permanent foundation. To erect a gazebo of any size, you must obtain a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans are also required.

Electrical work for gazebos will require an application for an electrical permit by a Master Electrician licensed with Prince George's County.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Garages

Whether attached or detached, garages are usually self-contained in that they are closed off from the elements and can be secured to prevent access. Regardless of the finished size, garages require permanent foundations.

The details and restrictions for garages discussed in this section also apply to the construction of covered or enclosed boat storage facilities on residential lots. If you intend to construct one of these structures, you must obtain a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans are also required.

If a garage requires changes to an existing driveway apron or the construction of a new driveway apron, a separate permit from the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation must be obtained.

The addition or extension of electrical wiring in attached garages will require an application for an electrical permit by a Master Electrician licensed with Prince George's County.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Carports

With the exception of a roof cover, carports are generally exposed to the elements much like a lean-to structure. The front, back and sides may be left open or screened with latticework for improved aesthetics. All carports must have permanent foundations.

The details and restrictions for carports discussed in this section are also applicable to the construction of covered or enclosed boat storage facilities on residential lots. If you intend to construct one of these structures, you must obtain a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans are also required.

Electrical work for carports will require an application for an electrical permit by a Master Electrician licensed with Prince George's County.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Plumbing Work by Homeowners

Persons who own an existing single family dwelling or conventional townhouse unit are allowed, by regulation, to perform certain plumbing work without a permit. Homeowners may also perform certain plumbing work that requires a plumbing permit, subject to specific limitations. Generally, permits are not required for the replacement of existing plumbing fixtures, except water heaters, and testable backflow devices.

The following plumbing work *may* require a permit:

a) Water, drainage and vent piping above grade that will not be concealed;

b) First time installation of plumbing fixtures on new or existing rough-ins; and

c) Installation of non-testable double check valve backflow devices.

d) Gasfitting;

e) Installation or replacement of water heaters;

f) Installation of water piping and meter rack associated with WSSC meter settings;

g) Replacement or repair of water or sewer services; and

h) Any other work not specifically allowed by WSSC regulation.

Any questions regarding plumbing work by homeowners should be referred to the ***WSSC Service Applications and Records Section*** *at (301) 206–4003.*

Additions and Alterations

Addition and alteration construction is a miscellaneous grouping of home improvement and renovation projects that are generally geared toward the enhancement of an existing principal structure. Exterior and interior additions/alterations fall into this category. There are numerous home improvement projects within this classification, some of which may require multiple permits.

Residential additions can extend outward or upward from the existing structure. Literally speaking, they are extensions of your living space.

Living areas can often be altered or created through renovations to an existing structure without the benefit of outward physical expansion. For example, a basement can be finished as a family recreation room and/or den, or it can be divided and partitioned to create an additional bedroom.

In order to perform new construction or to alter an existing structure, you must obtain a building permit and submit site plans showing existing and proposed structure location(s), including well and/or septic (if applicable). Structural plans are also required.

Electrical work for additions will require an application for an electrical permit by a Master Electrician licensed with Prince George's County.

Electrical work for alterations of existing dwellings will require an application for an electrical permit by a Master Electrician licensed with Prince George's County.

Additionally, the Health Department's Division of Environmental Health will check to ensure that the existing septic system is sized adequately for any proposed increase to living area(s), where applicable.

Like electrical work, the installation of plumbing or natural gas piping requires an application by a Registered Master Plumber/Gasfitter licensed by WSSC. Generally, the installation of plumbing by homeowners is not permitted. Installation of natural gas piping and appliances by other than Registered Master Gasfitters is *strictly prohibited*.

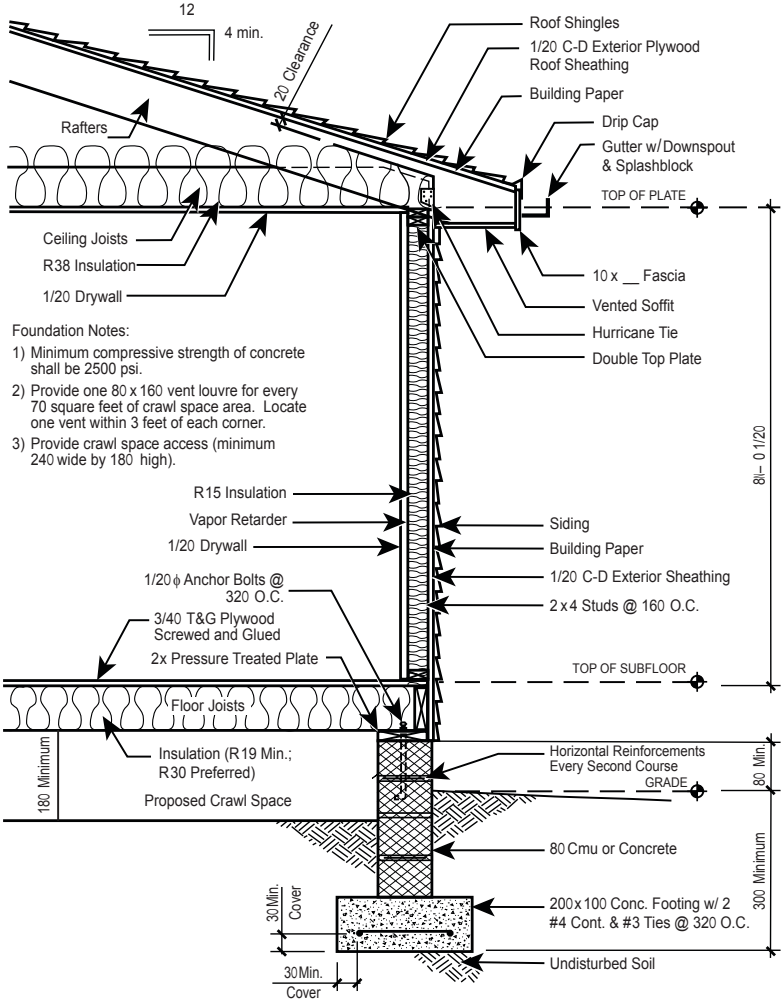
For sprinklered homes, all additions (including sunrooms and patio enclosures) must also be protected by an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with NFPA 13D.

In accordance with Prince George's County Building Code, Subtitle 4, Section 4-245(c), "Structures that undergo a complete demolition (exclusive of the foundation) due to lack of maintenance, fire, explosion or natural causes of the structure and additions to structures which exceed one hundred (100) percent of the total floor area (square footage) of the existing structure, shall be required to be fully sprinklered."

The following pages provide standard details for additional living space constructed onto existing dwellings.

If you are located in a subdivision with a Homeowner's Association (HOA), a separate approval from the HOA may be necessary. Unless erected by the homeowner, all home improvement projects require a contractor who is licensed with the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

Wall Section
Crawl Space



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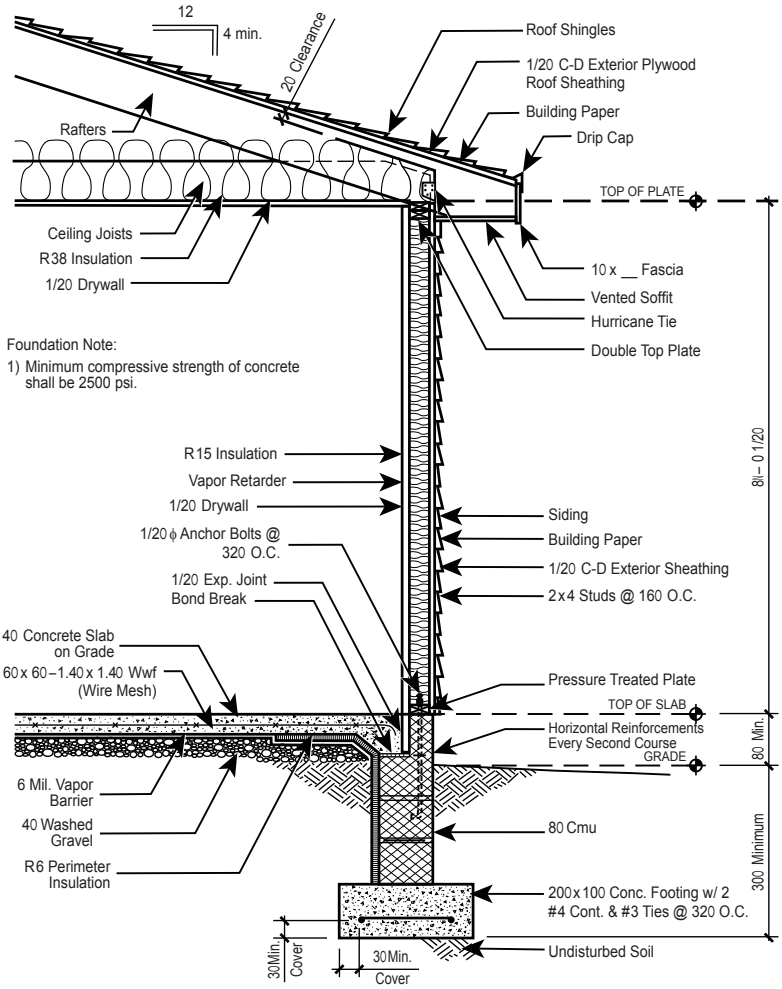
Wall Section
Slab on Grade



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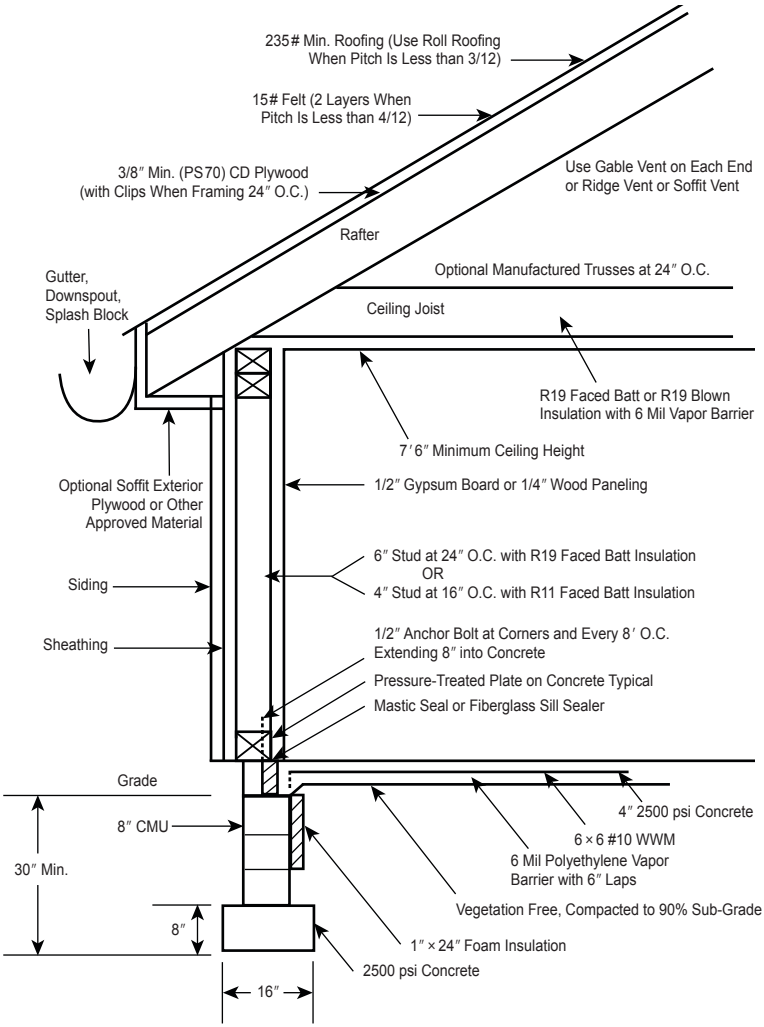
Concrete Masonry Unit and Slab Construction for Additional Living Space



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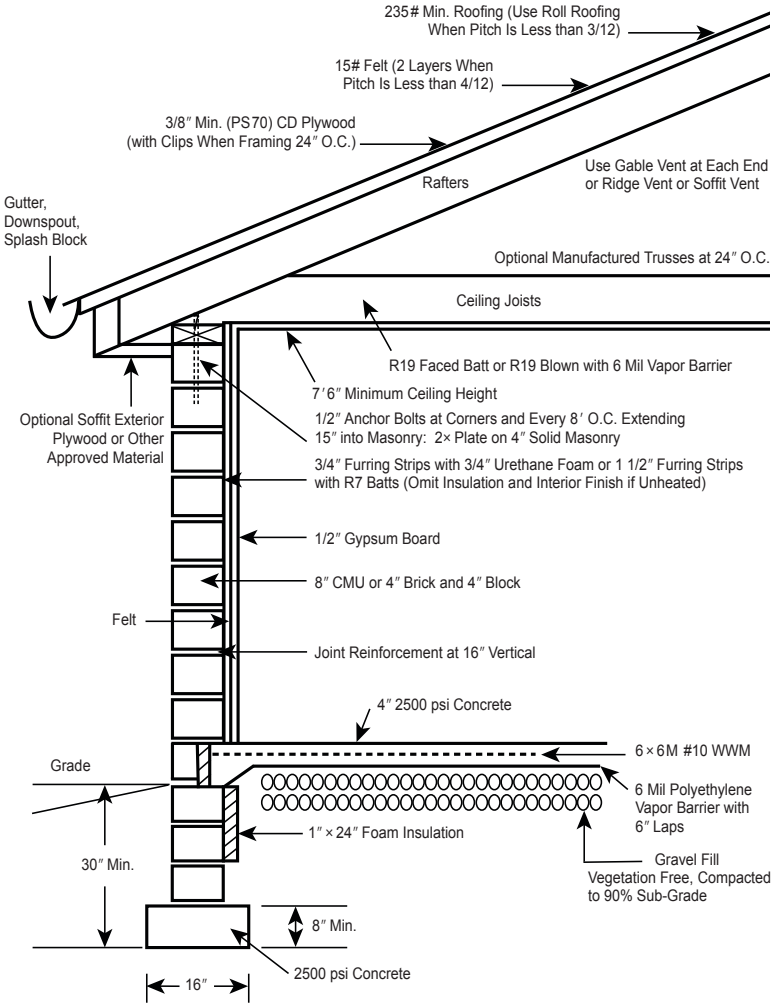
Concrete Masonry Wall with Block Foundation for Additional Living Space



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Rushern L. Baker, III
County Executive

DEPARTMENT OF PERMITTING, INSPECTIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement

9400 Peppercorn Place, 1st Floor
Largo, MD 20774