

DUE DILIGENCE 101

A PERMIT EXPEDITER SERIES BY PERMIT ADVISORS



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Due Diligence

It can not be stated and repeated enough: the most important aspect of permitting is making sure you are prepared before you submit. This requires Due Diligence or your research prior to submitting plans to the city. As mentioned in previous chapters of this series, one mistake can cause your permit to be rejected and force the entire permitting process to start over again. This results in a loss of time, money, and patience; which is not what you want. However, with the proper Due Diligence, you can go into the project submittal confident that there are zero mistakes in our plans. Unfortunately, you cannot prepare for everything, but using the tools we have cumulated throughout years of successfully permitting large-scale projects, you can come close.



Scope of Work

The phrase **'scope of work'** essentially means: “what construction work is being proposed?”

Knowing the full scope of work can play an important role in the due diligence process as it can help you narrow down the critical paths that you will need to take throughout the permitting process.

Here are a few questions that should be on your mind when obtaining details on scope of work and learning what departments may be engaged:

Is there any proposed exterior or site work?

If there are any work to the exterior of the building or site, Planning may be concerned and have additional requirements and/or reviews. The city may have a clear-cut process if there is any exterior work or, depending on how extensive the work is, can handle the review at different levels (i.e. administrative level, director level, architectural committee, planning commissions, city council, etc.).

Is there any racking being proposed?

Depending on the type of racking being proposed, additional review and/or permits may be required by the jurisdiction's Building and Fire departments.

Is there on-site food preparation or pre-packaged foods?

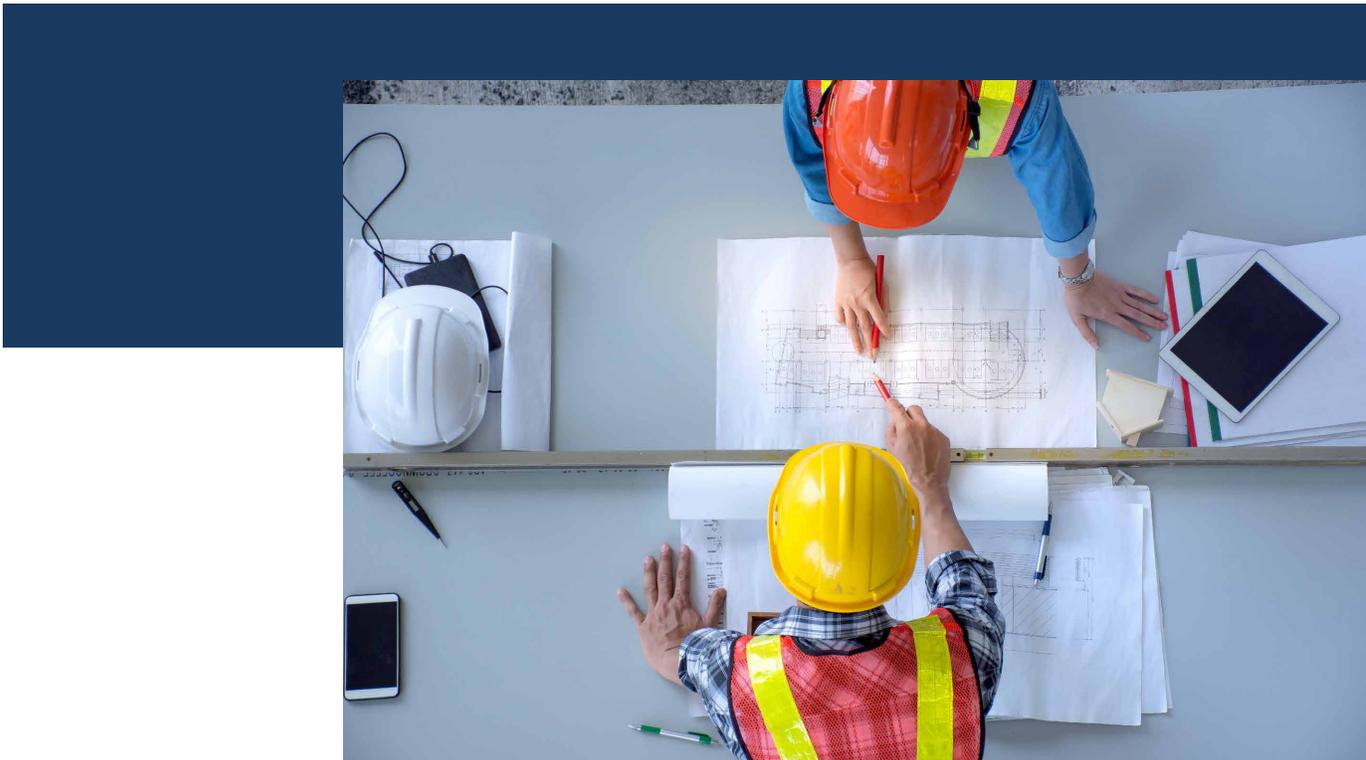
Any proposed new or remodel of/to a restaurant will require an Environmental Health review. Sometimes with commercial retail, if the store sells pre-packaged food items a plan review and/or health permit may be required from Environmental Health as well.

Scope of Work (cont'd)

Are there any activities that are special to the project/client?

The sale of any alcoholic beverages or the existence of a proposed outside patio typically will require additional permits or reviews. These topics are best to discuss with the Planning/Zoning departments to confirm if there are any special requirements.

Based on the magnitude of the work being proposed, you should start laying out the departments in which departments will require more focus and clarification.



Due Diligence (cont'd)

What jurisdiction is this project located in (what city)?

A project's location will dictate which government agency has jurisdiction (or authority) over the site. The authority having jurisdiction is usually the City the project is addressed in. However, this is NOT a guarantee.

This question serves as the initial step to verify you are speaking to the correct permitting authority. This question ensures you are not wasting time and resources speaking to the wrong parties.

Do we have to submit to other jurisdictions (e.g. County, State)?

This question is a general question posed to staff to quickly identify if there are external agencies to be aware of (Fire, Health, Sanitary, etc.). It is best to provide staff with the project's scope to guide their answers. For example, staff might point you toward the appropriate Environmental Health agency if they are informed that the project is a food facility.

What Departments will need to review the project beside Building?

This is a general question to determine which internal departments are involved in review. Permitting staff will generally be able to inform you of which departments need to provide approval for building permit. Depending on how staff responds, you may learn that reviews with these internal departments (Planning, Fire, Public Works, Engineering, Water, Env. Health) must be individually pursued.

Due Diligence (cont'd)

Does Building route plans to the other depts./Fire Dept. or do we submit to each dept. separately?

This is a follow-up to the previous question to determine how plans are handed-off to applicable parties. Permitting intake staff will usually route drawings to involved reviewers. Responsibility of reaching out to all departments might remain with the applicant.

Are Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing permits separate review?

Building-up on your understanding of the permit intake process, this confirms if mechanical, electrical, or plumbing reviews are consolidated in your future submission, or if these permits must be individually pursued. We are wanting to avoid a situation where plans have completed review with the City, but only approved for architectural scope. This is an unacceptable delay and must be identified in the early due diligence stages.

Be aware that in some instances, review can be consolidated with permits remaining separate. In this scenario, the City reviews the complete set of drawings at once but requires individual trade contractors to submit their own application at the counter.

The past six questions help build your understanding of City/County workflow. These establish the baseline of how drawings/documents are routed and handed off to involved reviewers. By this point, you should have a clear understanding if additional coordination is required.

Due Diligence (cont'd)

How many sets of plans are required?

How many sets of plans will the City need to accept the project's application? The City will want to ensure they are not deficient plan sets when routing the drawings out to reviewers. The number of plan sets required may change based on scope of work (if additional reviewing parties are triggered).

Reach out for clarification if submitted drawings need (original) wet signature and seal or if (digitally placed) electronic signature and seal are acceptable. It is usually the architect's preference to print their signature and seal as it saves time. Cities may be strict in wanting wet s/s for their records.

How many sets of Structural Calcs are required?

Structural calculations are supplemental documents to provide when pursuing projects with structural scope. Reviewers will reference the document in their review. Multiple copies may be required to ensure the City can retain a set for their records.

What is the initial Plan Check review time?

Inquire with staff what their current projected review time is for your type of project. It is best practice to ask multiple staff members of varying roles to build confidence in your projection. For example, a Permit Technician can quote a general timeframe, but a Plan Reviewer will have a more accurate idea of their workload. Conversely, a Plan Reviewer can give you a projection of their review but might not have insight on other reviewing parties or the greater process like a Permit Technician might have.

Due Diligence (cont'd)

What is the recheck review time?

Subsequent reviews (rechecks) often have priority with Plan Reviewers. Rechecks are typically completed in a quicker time frame than initial reviews. Reviews by appointment may be offered at this point. It is important to understand the review time frame after initial comments are received.

Is there an Expedited Plan Review available?

Some jurisdictions offer expedited (or accelerated) reviews. Projected time frames need to be secured to determine if expedited programs are worth potential additional cost.

What is the approximate plan check fee?

Inquire with staff if an upfront plan review fee is owed at the time of submittal. Inquire how this fee is calculated. If you have this information on-hand (typically project valuation and square footage), you may want to ask staff to provide you with the amount ahead of filing.

What is the approximate permit fee?

Inquire with staff how total permit fees are calculated. They will likely refer you to a City Fee Schedule. Many fees cannot be determined until plans have completed review as they are placed after the fact. If this is the case, inquire for a general estimate

Do we need Landlord Approval?

Identify if landlord approval is required for building permit. Specifically, identify if landlord approval is required at-time of intake or at-time of permit issuance. Landlord approval may take the form of their signature of a form or application (original or digital), an authorization letter, a stamp on drawings, or a combination of the previous three.

Due Diligence (cont'd)

Do you take mail-in submittals?

Ask staff if they accept mail-in submittals via Fedex shipment. Some cities have no issue with accepting complete packages through courier/delivery services. Other cities are strict in wanting new projects to be filed in-person at the Building Department counter.

What items do you need for submittal other than Plans?

Ask staff what paperwork is required to be provided with the construction drawings for review. Typical items are provided as a checklist. Be specific with asking who is responsible for completing each form. For example, you (as the agent/applicant) may complete the Building Permit Application, but staff might want the Architect to fill out a separate construction valuation verification form.

What items do you need for submittal other than Plans?

Prior to this question, it is expected that you've walked through the City's website to build a general idea of what standard paperwork exists. Follow-up and ask if there are other forms you should be aware of.

Is an Asbestos Report required for plan review?

Asbestos Reports or Asbestos Surveys may be required if the project involves demolition work. Cities may ask that you provide a report to prove that asbestos containing building materials will not be touched/affected by construction. It is important to identify this early as the lead-time for this report can span 2 to 4 weeks. We want to avoid a situation where intake is denied and postponed until a report can be provided.

Due Diligence (cont'd)

Can Fire Sprinkler review be a deferred submittal?

Fire Sprinkler and Fire Alarm plans are typically handled as a deferred or separate permit from the main Building Permit. You will want to know if Cities require these plans to be included with the rest of the drawings. Failure to do so may cause additional delay until someone on your team is able to produce these drawings. If a fire prevention contractor is not already selected, this can be a delay of at least 4 weeks.

Is a separate permit requirements for 8' or 10' storage racks?

Storage racks may be handled as separate permits from the main Building Permit. Cities that require this will typically have a threshold height that determines if a separate permit is required.

Do you require contractor info. upfront?

Confirm with staff if new applications require General Contractor information upfront, or if a project can be submitted with "General Contractor out for bid/to be determined". Permits are typically pursued before you have confirmed which General Contractor will be hired to execute on the work. In certain instances, a City will want the GC registered with the project before reviewing plans.

What are the current Building codes?

Confirm with staff what the current adopted Building Codes are. Information provided online or through handouts are often outdated. You may need to reach out to a Plan Reviewer for full confirmation as Permit Technicians may not be confident in their answers.

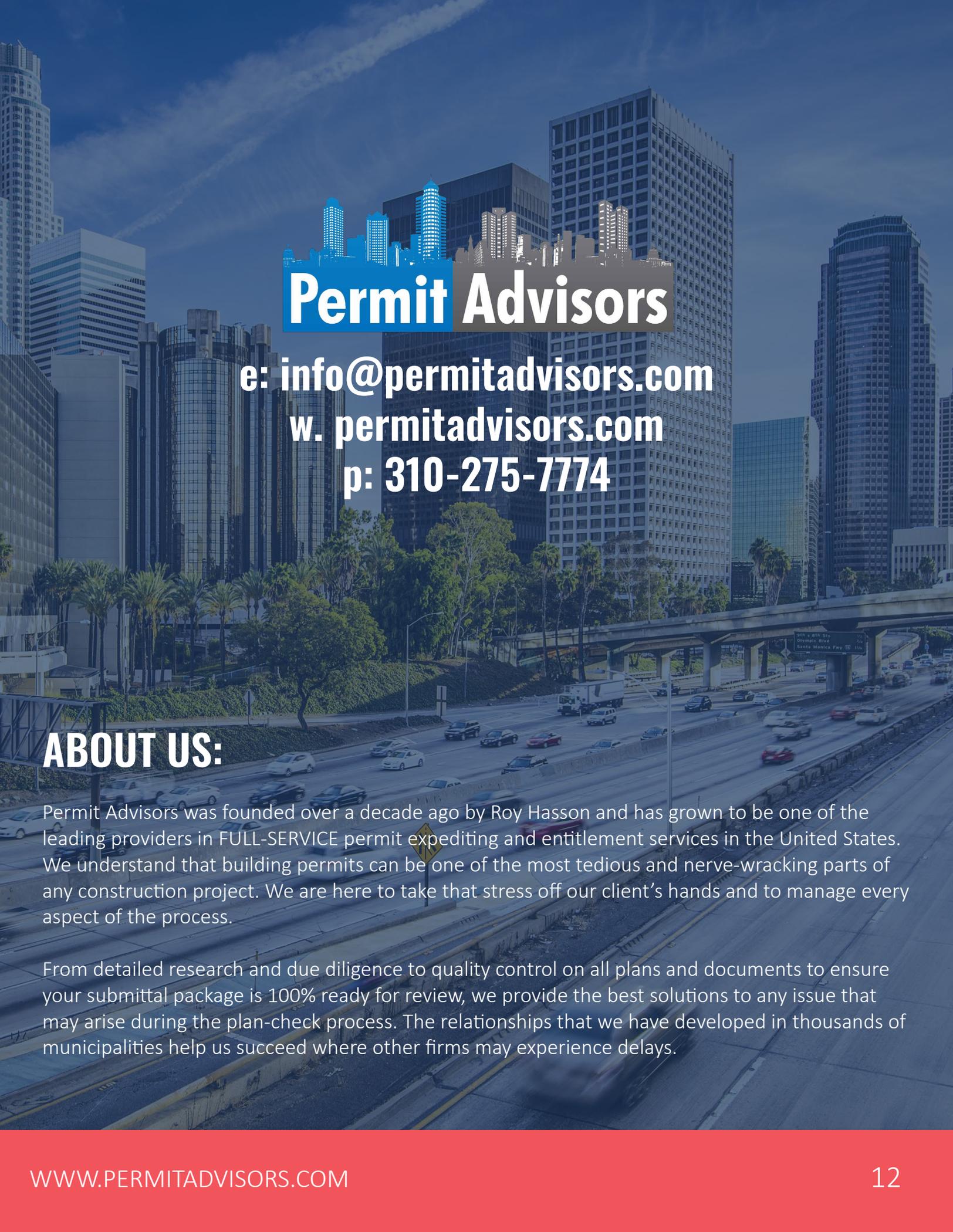
Due Diligence (cont'd)

Can we pull an Early Start or Demo Permit?

Projects may run close to their construction start deadline if review is prolonged. It is important to provide your team with alternative plans that might allow them to start work. Cities/counties might have formal demo or early start permit processes in place to allow for timely starts.

Do you think we need to go through Planning Review for this project?

Inquire with staff if the proposed work will trigger a separate Planning review process that must be taken care of before Building Permit is released. Processes that occur outside of Building plan review must be identified and planned for.



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ABOUT US:

Permit Advisors was founded over a decade ago by Roy Hasson and has grown to be one of the leading providers in FULL-SERVICE permit expediting and entitlement services in the United States. We understand that building permits can be one of the most tedious and nerve-wracking parts of any construction project. We are here to take that stress off our client's hands and to manage every aspect of the process.

From detailed research and due diligence to quality control on all plans and documents to ensure your submittal package is 100% ready for review, we provide the best solutions to any issue that may arise during the plan-check process. The relationships that we have developed in thousands of municipalities help us succeed where other firms may experience delays.