

**HUMBOLDT COUNTY BUILDING DEPARTMENT
CHECKLIST FOR HOMEOWNERS CONSIDERING A BUILDING PROJECT**

The information in this handout is general in nature. For more specific information individuals should research specific sections of county and state law. We emphasize homeowners do lots of research. The more you know the better your project will go.

WHERE TO START

- ✓ Contact your local Building Department for information. This office has handouts and information that will assist you with your proposed project.
- ✓ Locate all utility lines before you start the design of your project.
- ✓ Locate your septic system. The septic tank is required to be a minimum of 8 feet from any building or structure
- ✓ Is your existing electrical service large enough for the new construction your proposing.
- ✓ Develop a site plan as one of your first items.
- ✓ Always check with the Planning Department (775-623-6393) for zoning questions and required setbacks. The Building Department also has setback requirements. These requirements are setbacks from property lines, on front, rear, sides and between buildings.
- ✓ Verify that your lot is not in a designated flood area.
- ✓ Manufactured houses have many different requirements. If you add on to a manufactured home ask for specific information regarding building requirements.
- ✓ You should have your assessor's parcel number available for permit inquiries. You can contact the Assessor's office (623-6310) for this information.

PERMITS

- ✓ Most projects will require a building permit, however there are some projects that do not require permits. Check with the building department before beginning any projects.
- ✓ Permits are also required for electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling systems.
- ✓ There are fees for building permits so plan your budget for these costs.
- ✓ No work including excavation should begin on any project until the required permits are obtained.
- ✓ Permits are typically good for one year and may be voided after one year from issuance date. Extensions may be granted by the Building Official. If not a new permit is required to be obtained if the project is not completed within one year.
- ✓ Septic system permits and inspections are issued by the Nevada State Health Division. (775-623-6588) If you add bedrooms or additional plumbing you may have to increase the size of your septic system.
- ✓ Domestic wells do not required permits however, you are required to hire a Nevada licensed well driller. We recommend you request general information from the well driller regarding your well. This information shall include size, depth of well, water level, casing depth, water pressure and gallons per minute, pump size, etc.

PLANS

- ✓ Make sure you find out what plans are required by the Building Department.
- ✓ Plans are required to be submitted to the Building Department and will go through a plan review for compliance.
- ✓ Plans typically for any large project shall be drawn to scale.
- ✓ Review county handouts for required plans submittal. If there is any special construction there may be special engineering required.
- ✓ Keep doing rough sketches. The more you sketch and the more suggestions you get will tend to improve the design. Some suggest cardboard models to scale to represent furniture layouts.
- ✓ Verify your elevations. Check to see how roof lines will come together.
- ✓ Check grade in areas of new construction. If the area is low you will need to make provisions for maintaining the required grade.
- ✓ Draw plans on standard size paper. Make sure drawings can be reproduced. Label everything on plans.

- ✓ If you have someone draw plans these people are required to comply with the state architects and engineers laws. This person should also be aware of code requirements in order to prepare drawings for submittal to the Building Department.

CONTRACTORS

- ✓ Hiring an unlicensed contractor will hold you, the owner, responsible for complying with county codes, correcting any construction problems and bad workmanship. You can be held responsible for an unlicensed contractor's illegal acts. You can be held liable for on the job injuries, taxes or insurance. Remember unlicensed contracting is a crime so beware of unlicensed contractors.
- ✓ Shop around for a licensed Nevada contractor. Make sure they have the appropriate license for bidding on your project.
- ✓ Plan your project carefully and be specific. Have accurate plans or drawings prepared for contractors to bid. If you have specific products in mind for your project make it clear to the contractors bidding the project. Have all your contractors bid on the same plans and specifications.
- ✓ Get at least three written bids from contractors licensed in the State of Nevada by the Nevada Contractors Board. Be sure the contractor includes their license number. When starting your bidding process, be sure that all of your potential contractors are viewing the same set of prints when you review prices and terms.
- ✓ Make sure the contractor is not bidding over their license limit. The Building Department or the Contractors Board can verify this information.
- ✓ Beware of bids substantially lower than other bids. The contractor may have made a mistake or is not including all the work quoted by the other contractors. Remember: If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. You could request a construction cost breakdown if you want to evaluate the bids.
- ✓ Check the contractor's license before signing any contracts
 - b. License number
 - c. Limit
 - d. License classification
 - e. Check current standing with the State Contractors Board (775-688-1141)
- ✓ Ask for references and check them out. Visit sites and examine the work the contractor has completed or is currently constructing
- ✓ A general contractor is required by law to hire sub-contractors for electrical, plumbing, heating, and cooling. Make sure you get the sub-contractors names and check to see if they have the proper licensing.
- ✓ Understand the contract and make sure everything is included in the contract. Anything you sign may become a contract. Don't let them rush you.
- ✓ Keep copies of all documents throughout the construction project.
- ✓ Make sure the contractor includes a warranty clause which states when warranty begins, length of the warranty period, warranty coverages and exclusions under the warranty. Do not sign the contract if a warranty is not included and if it is included make sure you clearly understand the warranty language.
- ✓ Have everything in writing. No work should be performed without your authorization. Make all changes in writing signed by owner and contractor.
- ✓ Make frequent inspections of your project including a final walk through.
- ✓ Pay directly to the contractor only. Never pay employees or salesmen. Make sure your payment plans are in the contract or all parties are clear on payment schedules.
- ✓ The contractor is required by law to obtain the required building permits.
- ✓ Beware if you are asked to pay money in advance or pay the entire job in advance.
- ✓ If you decide you will be an owner/builder keep in mind that you will need to make yourself familiar with building permit requirements, general code requirements, and inspection requirements.
- ✓ For more information see "Get A Contractor Who's On The Level" issued by the Nevada State Contractors Board

INSPECTIONS

- ✓ Find out from the Building Department what inspections are required.
- ✓ Make sure your ready when you request inspections. Re-inspection fees may be charged if the inspection is not ready or does not pass inspection.
- ✓ An inspection is required to be requested 24 hours in advance. This is based on normal working days.
- ✓ Remember to call for a final inspection on your project.

REFERENCES

- ✓ The codes currently adopted are the 2012 International Residential Code and related codes and the 2011 National Electric Code. These books are available at the Building Department for review and at the Humboldt County Library.
- ✓ There are well written self help and illustrated guides on the market to help the homeowner with proposed construction projects. Make sure these designs are written to comply with the International Building Codes
- ✓ The Building Department will provide you with handouts and technical information that will assure your project complies with the code.