



Guide to Permitting



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

CITY OF NEW BEDFORD GUIDE TO PERMITTING

The City of New Bedford is committed to an open, streamlined and transparent permitting process.

New Bedford recognizes that a streamlined, transparent, and efficient permitting process is vital to attracting sustainable new investment and job growth. Recognizing that the permitting process can be a lengthy process that may lead to unnecessary delays and increased expenses, the City of New Bedford has implemented an open, streamlined and transparent permitting process that expedites all projects, both large and small, within the city.

By creating a streamlined and fully transparent permitting process, the city aims to foster communication between permitting boards, commissions and developers; to standardize forms and applications, and to provide the right contacts and necessary resources to aid applicants and the general public through what can be a complex and unfamiliar process.

This guide provides information that will:

- Guide applicants and the general public through the city's application and approval process
- Outline the functions of the Permitting Task Force
- Establish a checklist of permitting granting boards and departments and the actions that require review and approval
- Offer suggested best practices
- Provide useful links to additional information

The Application & Approval Process. A streamlined and fully transparent permitting process begins with active collaboration and meaningful communication among city officials, permit applicants, consultants, and other community stakeholders. Land use changes resulting from construction, new development, adaptive reuse, redevelopment and other such changes are subject to an array of regulations and ordinances managed largely by municipal departments, boards, and commissions. New Bedford's goal is to approve projects as efficiently as possible. With good preparation and communication many projects—even large projects—can be approved within 60 days.

Included within this guide is a list of city departments with contact information and brief descriptions of what role they play in the regulatory process. A flow chart describing the process one would follow in the permitting process gives a snapshot view of what to expect during this phase of development. Additional information in this guide offers a comprehensive look into the City's permitting application and approval process since the timeframes for application review, public hearing notices, appeal periods, and fees can vary for each permit.

Should you have any questions we encourage you to contact the City Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development – Planning Division for assistance.

We are ready to work with you!

Working your idea... If you have a project that you want to see approved and built in New Bedford, there are a few important steps that will help get you there. Here's what we recommend:

- 1 Establish Good Communication Early on**
We encourage applicants to begin working with us as early as possible in the development of a project to establish good communication with the necessary city agencies. Why? Good communication is the best way to provide you with assistance through what can be a complex and unfamiliar process. This is critical to ensure that in developing your project, the right steps are efficiently and swiftly navigated at the outset—and throughout—the permitting process.
- 2 Create a Permitting Plan**
Whether it is a small addition or a large commercial development, the permitting flowchart in this booklet will guide you through the required actions/approvals for a project prior to submitting a formal application and help you in creating your own permitting plan.
- 3 Utilize the Permitting Task Force**
While anyone can request a pre-application meeting, applicants with complex development projects are strongly recommended to attend a pre-application meeting of the Permitting Task Force as described in detail elsewhere in this booklet. This allows for an informal review of your development in its conceptual design stage, identifying potential issues that may/will arise for the municipality, the applicant and impacted stakeholders.
- 4 Work with Experienced Professionals**
In many cases projects have been delayed due to incomplete or insufficient application materials being submitted. This can become frustrating for the applicant and the city department reviewing the application. It is important for applicant to work with engineers, architects and other land development professionals who have experience with the type of project you're proposing and the permitting process through which it must travel.
- 5 Submit a complete application**
Many projects that initially provide complete applications to city departments often gain their requisite approvals through the permitting process within a 60-day timeframe. However, it should be noted that projects with complicated environmental constraints requiring multiple state and federal agency reviews or other issues beyond the control of the City may have an extended timeframe.

The Permitting Task Force. The city has streamlined its permitting process to ensure clarity and accessibility for all prospective projects regardless of project scale with an eye toward enhanced business expansion and recruitment. To help accomplish this, a Permitting Task Force serves as a “one-stop” shop where applicants may meet with representatives from a variety of city departments relevant to their specific project. The Permitting Task Force is comprised of a representative from each city department, board and/or commission that is regularly involved in New Bedford’s permitting approval process.

The Permitting Task Force is primarily made up of representatives from the following departments, boards and commissions, as each project may require:

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|---------------------------|--|---|
| ▪ Planning Board | ▪ Building Department
(Inspectional Services) | ▪ Board of Health |
| ▪ Zoning Board of Appeals | ▪ Public Safety | ▪ Licensing |
| ▪ Conservation Commission | ▪ Department of Public
Infrastructure | ▪ New Bedford Economic
Development Council |
| ▪ Historical Commission | | |
| ▪ Traffic Commission | | |

The city’s Permitting Task Force meets with potential applicants on a weekly basis when they are either in a conceptual development phase or preparing for permitting. Such pre-application meetings are at the option of the applicant but are encouraged as they reinforce proactive planning with applicants and help to ensure that projects move efficiently through the city’s permitting process. These task force meetings assist applicants to understand the permits that they must apply for, the order in which they should apply, and what specific expectations—paperwork and timing—they face in going through the permitting process.

This pre-application process is an important part of the overall development process, providing a collaborative forum where applicants can discuss their plans with multiple departments at one time, get their questions answered and ready themselves for the specific types of relief and/or permitting they will need to undertake their project.

The City of New Bedford takes pride in the way it conducts its permitting process and is ready to assist all applicants. To set up a Permitting Task Force meeting to review your project, please contact the Department of Inspectional Services at 508-979-1540.

City Department Guide. The following chart briefly highlights the functions undertaken by each respective city department as it relates to the permitting process.

DEPARTMENT	FUNCTIONS RELATED TO PERMITTING
<p>Department of Inspectional Services (DIS)¹ Danny Romanowicz, Commissioner</p>	<p>This department ensures construction safety and enforces, issues and revokes permits under the provisions of the MA State Building Code for all construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, demolition, removal, inspection, installation of mechanical equipment, etc. DIS also ensures code compliance associated with building safety, ingress and egress, energy conservation, and sanitary conditions and conducts annual inspections of required buildings and enforces specialized codes such as the Architectural Access Code, the Plumbing & Gas Codes, the Electrical Code and the provisions of the City’s Zoning Bylaw, Sign Bylaw, and other related regulations. The Commissioner serves as the Zoning Enforcement Officer.</p>
<p>Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development (DPHCD) Patrick J. Sullivan, Director</p>	<p>The Planning Division of this department guides public and private land use decisions, maintains the livability and character of the city and protects the environmental integrity of the city by ensuring that development and construction is in conformance with the City’s Zoning Bylaw, Sign Bylaw, Subdivision Rules and Regulations, and long/short term development plans.</p>

¹ (Also known as the Building Department)

City Department Guide. *Continued.*

DEPARTMENT	FUNCTIONS RELATED TO PERMITTING
<p>Department of Public Infrastructure (DPI) Zeb Arruda, Commissioner</p>	<p>The DPI oversees the Water, Waste Water, Street Infrastructure and Engineering Divisions. The Department is responsible for reviewing and approving all water and sewer utility work including assessment of service eligibility, project design basis as well as material and construction standards. The Engineering Division provides comprehensive engineering and technical support and services that promote infrastructure improvements. The Division provides a wide range of technical assistance and engineering services and provides recommendations to the city boards and commissions and reviews projects for compliance with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.</p>
<p>Fire Department Michael Gomes, Fire Chief</p>	<p>Ensures fire truck access and adequate water supply in case of fire. Ensures building has required fire alarms, sprinklers, and other devices. Ensures appropriate exit paths for evacuations if needed. Ensures potentially hazardous activities such as welding are done safely.</p>
<p>Licensing Board Nicholas Nanopoulos, Director</p>	<p>The Licensing Board operates in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws. It is the Licensing Board’s responsibility to consider the impact of its approval in the granting of new or the renewal of existing licenses, and the impact said license will have in the neighborhood, as well as to the overall betterment to the City of New Bedford. The Licensing Board also conducts violations hearings as warranted to ensure the public’s safety.</p>
<p>Traffic Commission Scott Downing, Executive Secretary</p>	<p>The Traffic Commission is responsible for the review and approval of all curb cuts and street signage. It also serves as the operating agent for the city’s public parking garages.</p>
<p>Health Department Brenda Weis, Director</p>	<p>The city’s Health Department ensures the protection of the public health by enforcing state and local health codes and regulations.</p>
<p>Conservation Commission Sarah Porter, Conservation Agent</p>	<p>The Conservation Commission is charged with preserving the character and natural resources of New Bedford through oversight of the location and scope of all construction activities within wetland jurisdiction including the 100-foot Buffer Zone to wetlands, the 100-year floodplain, Certified Vernal Pool Habitats, and coastal zone management.</p>
<p>New Bedford Economic Development Council Derek Santos, Executive Director</p>	<p>The NBEDC is a nonprofit organization comprised of 250 successful leaders in business, education and government led by a nine-member Board of Directors. The Council sets the agenda for the city’s key strategic economic development areas and the coordination and implementation of economic programs and initiatives.</p>

Guide to Commissions, Boards and Departments. The following provides a snapshot into the kinds of permits and approvals available along with the correlating adjudicating contact information and meeting schedules as may be applicable.

PERMIT/APPROVAL	AGENCY/DEPARTMENT	MEETING SCHEDULE
Permits relative to the construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, demolition, use, occupancy, and maintenance of all buildings and structures	Department of Inspectional Services Danny Romanowicz, Commissioner 133 William Street, Room 308 - 508.979.1540 Danny.Romanowicz@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/inspectional-services/	N/A Office is open to the public 8am -4pm
Site Plan Review, Special Permit Subdivision Review & Approval Form A	Planning Board City Planner Jennifer Clarke, AICP 133 William Street, Room 303 - 508.979.1488 Jennifer.Clarke@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/Planning/planning.html	Wednesday evenings monthly. Generally, 2 nd Wednesday of the month but varies
Approving authority for most special permits, variances, signs, comprehensive permits, and administrative appeals.	Zoning Board of Appeals 133 William Street, Room 303 - 508.979.1488 Jennifer Clarke, City Planner Jennifer.Clarke@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/Planning/planning.html	4 th Thursday of the month
Line & grade applications, Sewer/storm drain permits., Water permit, NPDES	Department of Public Infrastructure Zeb Arruda, Commissioner 1105 Shawmut Avenue 508.961.3054 Zeb.Arruda@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/dpi/overview_admin.html	N/A
Determines the appropriateness of any changes to buildings and structures located within the boundaries of the Historic Districts that are visible from public ways. Demolition Review	New Bedford Historical Commission Anne Louro, Preservation Planner 133 William Street, Room 303 508.979.1488 Anne.Louro@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/NRHistoric/NBHC/AboutUs.html	1 st Monday of the month Application due 21 days in advance of meeting
Issues licenses for the following: Car Dealer, Auto Body Repairs, Motel/Hotel, Common Victualler – Food Service Establishment Entertainment, Licenses to Sell Alcoholic Beverages	Licensing Board Nicholas Nanopoulos, Director 133 William Street, Room 206 508.979.1457 Nicholas.Nanopoulos@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/licensing/licensing.html	4 th Monday of the month Application due 21 days in advance of meeting
Commercial curb cuts	Traffic Commission Scott Downing, Executive Secretary 51 Elm Street (Elm Street Garage) 508.979.1766 Scott.Downing@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/traffic/traffic.html	3 rd Wednesday of the month
Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) No prior approvals are required. Notice of Intent (NOI) Certificate of Compliance, Enforcement Orders	Conservation Commission Sarah Porter, Conservation Agent 133 William Street, Room 301 508.979.6188 Sarah.Porter@newbedford-ma.gov http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/Environmental/EnvironmentalStewardshipMain.html	1 st and 3 rd Wednesday of the month Application due 12 days in advance of meeting

Departmental Specifics. The following section is intended to highlight several of the key processes involved in moving a development project through permitting.

Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development

Planning Division: Planning and Zoning Approval Process

Planning staff are responsible for managing a wide range of land use approvals which are then presented to the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals. In many cases, these approvals require input from a number of other City departments and divisions, in particular Conservation, Historic Districts, Public Infrastructure (Engineering and Water/Sewer), Fire, and Police. The planning and zoning staff review projects for conformance with the Zoning Bylaw, Subdivision Rules & Regulations, and other land use rules. This staff also coordinate the review process among the different departments, consolidate comments from departments and, upon project approval, prepare the board or commission's decision, which may include conditions recommended by all reviewing departments.

When planning or zoning approval is not required but a project is within wetlands or historic jurisdiction, prospective applicants are still encouraged to contact the appropriate division staff for guidance.

Planning Board Reviews and Permits :

- ANR Approval Not Required Subdivisions
- Preliminary subdivision
- Definitive Subdivision
- Subdivision Amendments
- Site Plan Review Approval
- Modifications of Site Plan Approvals
- Special Permits (general)
- Special Permits (for common driveway, parking if zero parking exists)

Zoning Board of Appeals' Permits :

- Special Permits (general)
- Variances
- Comprehensive Permits
- Appeal of Building Inspector's Decision
- Findings
- Waivers from Parking Requirements and Design Standards
- Signage

Submittal Requirements

The submittal requirements for a specific application will vary depending on the nature of the project, scope, and individual department review triggers. At a minimum, most applications will require:

- A detailed site plan, prepared and stamped, by an engineer or surveyor.
- Architectural drawings of any buildings to be constructed.
- Details regarding stormwater, sewer, water, or road connections.
- Erosion and sedimentation control plans.
- Stormwater management plan.
- Stormwater design calculations.
- Utility connection information

Process Overview

The graphic below provides an overview of the process. For projects that also require approval from other boards or commissions, applicants are encouraged to work with the City Planner and staff from the appropriate departments to determine how to coordinate different approvals. The timing varies depending on the project, as decisions from one commission may lead to changes in the project that may have an impact on another application.

1	Applicant Submits Permit Application and Attachments Planning
2	Staff Review Application for Completeness
3	Applicant Submits for Approvals from Other Boards. Project is Scheduled for Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals
4	Planner Routes Application to Departments
5	Departments Provide Comments to Planner
6	Planner Consolidates Comments and Provides to Applicant
7	Applicant Revises Documents
8	Staff Conducts New Review (The preceding three steps repeated until all issues addressed)
9	Notice is posted in papers and sent to abutters
10	Planner prepares Staff Report for Board. Board Provides Comments / Feedback
11	Applicant Revises Project Based on Comments if Needed
12	Applicant Receives Required Approvals or Recommendations from Other Boards / Committees
13	Board Directs Planner to draft decision and conditions of approval
14	Board votes on decision

Permitting Process Flow Chart. The following provides a snapshot into the steps one might follow going through the Planning Department.

