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Plan Review and Permitting Guidelines for the New Construction or Remodeling of a Food Service Establishment



This guide is to help you through the food service plan review process. Use the checklist starting on page 15 to make sure that you have all of the necessary information for your plan packet.

Alternative formats are available upon request.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FOOD PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

This guide is for use by restaurateurs, architects, contractors, equipment suppliers, food service operators, beverage-related businesses and other interested professionals. The purpose of this guideline is to provide the basic requirements for formal Public Health — Seattle & King County (PHSKC) plan review of new and remodeled food service establishments.

The requirements within this guide apply to any retail establishment offering food or beverages which includes but is not limited to restaurants, delis, bars, wine tasting rooms, taprooms/growler stations, distillery tasting rooms, caterers, fast food operations, cafés, grocery stores, and school kitchens.

Actual requirements are detailed in Title 5 (The Food Code) and the Washington State Retail Food Code:

- King County Board of Health (BOH) Code Title 5 www.kingcounty.gov/boh/code
- Washington State Retail Food Code Chapter 246-215 Washington Administrative Code (WAC) - www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/FoodWorkerandIndustry/FoodSafetyRules
www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/332-033.pdf

Important points to remember:

- **Please read the guide:** Read this entire guide prior to submitting plans. Contact the plan review line if you have any questions (206-263-7833 or ehfoodandfacilitiesplan@kingcounty.gov)
- A **menu analysis** is a critical part of the plan review process. The type of food and/or beverage, method of preparation, and service style will influence the types of equipment required. A proposed menu or list of products is required along with your plans for review.
- **Plan for success!** Starting a food and beverage-related business takes time and requires a lot of planning. Various agencies at the local and state levels have many different regulations and requirements. Always check with the local building department or building official for specific land use, building, zoning,

plumbing, electrical, mechanical requirements. Each agency has different requirements so it is best to communicate with them 'early' in the planning process.

The **Restaurant Success website** is a helpful resource that provides a general overview of navigating through the various regulations and requirements for businesses within the City of Seattle. The planning process can also be applied to opening a food service business outside the City of Seattle. Always check with your local building department or building official for specific requirements and timelines. <https://www.seattle.gov/office-of-economic-development/small-business>.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Two-Step Plan Review Process

Before starting construction or remodeling your food service operation, there is a 2-step "plan review" process that you must go through with Public Health — Seattle & King County (PHSKC).

- **Step 1:** Submit plans and required information to PHSKC for review before construction/remodeling begins. Resolve comments, if any, and receive approval.
- **Step 2:** Provide the final plumbing inspection and complete self-preoperational inspection check list to the Plan Reviewer prior to scheduling the Preoperational Inspection before opening for business or once the remodel has been completed.

Flow Chart

The following page has a flow chart to offer a visual guide on the plan review process.

Applicant gathers the Cover Sheet and copies of the following:
Site Plan – Menu – Floor Plans – Equipment List – Plan review questionnaire

Applicant submits a completed plan packet and fee online at [Public Health Permit Center](#)

Plan reviewer reviews the plan packet

Plans, menu, and/or other information revised & resubmitted

Plans and menu Approved?

NO

The applicant is provided with written comments or questions to resolve prior to approval.

YES

Applicant contacts other agencies for their approval and

Approval letter and stamped plan will be provided to the applicant when plans are approved.

Applicant builds or remodels the facility

Applicant obtains the final plumbing inspection/permit approval and submit complete self-preoperational check list.

Applicant pays for the operating permit prior to the preoperational inspection

Follow the instructions on the approval letter/email to schedule a pre-operational inspection. One (1) week advance notice.

Preoperational inspection conducted

NO

YES – CONGRATULATIONS!

Correct the items. Pay the return preoperational inspection fee.

Preoperational inspection passed?

Okay to open. Permit to operate will be issued.

CONSTRUCTION PLAN REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

In accordance with the provisions of Title 5, the Code of the King County Board of Health Rules and Regulations 05-06 (The Food Code), a plan approval must be obtained from Public Health — Seattle & King County (PHSKC) before constructing, enlarging, altering, converting or remodeling any building for use as a food service establishment.

Plans and specifications may also be required if PHSKC determines that they are necessary to assure compliance with the requirements of the Food Code, including, but not limited to a menu change or change in the facility's method of operation. The following is required to process and approve the food service establishment plans as well as to obtain final approval to open for business:

1. **Water system approval:** Please provide the name of the water district on the food plan review application confirming that the facility is connected to an approved water system. Documentation such as a utility bill (for existing facilities) or a water availability letter/certificate (new construction) may be requested during the review process. Please contact your building department or water district for more information.

Please note that you will likely need to meet the requirements for a Group A water system and be approved for your proposed use by the Washington State Department of Health's Drinking Water Program.

www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/WaterSystemAssistance/TNCWaterSystems

2. **Sewer/septic system approval:** Please provide the name of the sewer district on the food plan review application confirming that the facility is connected to an approved sewer or septic system approved for food service use. Documents such as a utility bill (for existing facility) or a sewer availability letter/certificate (new construction) are acceptable for sewer system documentation if requested during the review process.

If your facility is on a septic system, please contact the Bellevue Eastgate SOD at (206) 477-8050 for further assistance. The septic system will need to have a valid [Maintenance Report](#) filed with the PHSKC. Additional information can be found on their website at www.kingcounty.gov/oss

NOTE: The septic and well systems must be approved 'before' plans can be accepted for the food plan review process.

3. **Submit your plans and application online at [Public Health Permit Center](#)**

kingcounty.gov/PublicHealthPermits (more information)

4. **Menu:** Submit the proposed menu. List all food and beverages you intend to serve and sell.
5. **Submit complete information:** The plans must include sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with Title 5, The Food Code. Please refer to the “***Checklist for General Construction and Equipment Requirements for Food Service Establishments***” section for more information.
6. **Plans must be clear and legible:** Plans may be prepared by an architect, draftsman, contractor or owner. All plans must be clear and legible. This must also include outdoor dining areas.
7. **Plan review notification:** The applicant will be notified after the plans are approved or additional information is needed to complete the approval process. Plans that are incomplete, have a multitude of changes or otherwise are not approved will require revisions before approval may be granted. Revised plans and information requested shall be submitted within 20 business days from the date of notification. Revised plans and additional information can be submitted electronically as a pdf.
8. **Approved plan set:** The applicant shall receive a copy of the approved floor plan, approval letter, permit application, preoperational checklist and plan review comment sheet. An approved set of plans must be at construction site until the final PHSKC preoperational inspection has been made.

9. **No changes shall be made without PHSKC approval:** If any changes on the plans are desired after approval has been obtained, additional approval from PHSKC must be obtained for such changes. Amended plans shall be required and an additional plan review fee may be required.
10. **Obtain building permits and land use authorization:** Before commencing construction, a building permit must be obtained from the appropriate local building department. Be advised that some building departments may not accept or approve construction plans or release permits until the plans have been stamped and approved by Public Health — Seattle & King County. Please contact the local building department for timelines and requirements and confirmation that your proposed use of the property and structure conforms to local land use requirements.
11. **Complete construction and install equipment:** All construction and equipment installations are subject to a final PHSKC preoperational inspection. If there are any questions during the construction/remodeling phase and well before facility opening, the applicant or owner must call the Plan Reviewer to avoid possible delays in opening.
12. **One (1) week advance notice for the pre-operational inspection:** When the construction/remodel is almost completed, a preoperational inspection is required. The food service establishment shall not be cleared to open for business until final approval is granted by the Plan Reviewer. Appointments for the preoperational inspection must be coordinated at least one (1) week in advance to prevent opening delays.

Purchase an annual operating permit online. This is a separate fee from the initial plan review fee. The applicant/owner must have clear evidence of payment of the Application to Operate a Permanent Food Service Establishment. Fees are based on a level of risk and type of operation. Permit fees can be found at <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/environmental-health/service-fees>

- NOTE: It is the owner's responsibility to annually renew this permit prior to the expiration date (March 31st) or incur additional fees. If the facility is served by a septic system, proof of a valid [Monitoring Report](#) will also be required.
 - The facility must conform to the latest set of approved plans.
 - Obtain final approval of building and plumbing permits by local agencies. (i.e., final sign off on respective plumbing and building permits, etc.).
 - Utilities (electric, gas, potable water) must be provided at the time of the preoperational inspection.
 - If you do not pass the pre-operational inspection, the fee for a return preoperational inspection is \$504.00 (for two hours of activity and travel time), plus \$252.00 per hour after two (2) hours.
13. **Plan review invoice:** An invoice may be sent to you if the total plan review activity times and preoperational inspection went beyond the base time (3 or 4 hours). Please pay this bill within 30 days to avoid the possibility of closure.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. The Food Plan Review Contact

If you have questions, please contact the plan review line. If they are not available, please leave a voice message and they will return your call.

206-263-7833 or ehfoodandfacilitiesplan@kingcounty.gov

***PLEASE KEEP IN MIND STAFFING AND OFFICE ACCESSIBILITY
MAY BE IMPACTED. PLEASE REACH OUT TO OUR MAIN LINE
PHONE NUMBERS AT
206-263-9566 OR 206-477-8050 FOR CURRENT INFORMATION.**

2. Plumbing Permits – for both the City of Seattle & Unincorporated King County

For all City of Seattle and Unincorporated King County Plumbing Plan Review or Permit questions, please send an inquiry to: planreviewinfo@kingcounty.gov or visit their website at www.kingcounty.gov/plumbing

Note: Contact your local building department for plumbing permit in other cities in King County.

3. Where and How to Submit Plans

Submit your plan review application and fee online using [Public Health Permit Center](#)

See more information at kingcounty.gov/PublicHealthPermits

4. **Plan Review Fees** (*The plan review fee is not refundable*)

Each project has an initial 'base fee'. The base fee includes all of the plan review activity times which includes but is not limited to the office reviews, email and phone correspondence, initial pre-operational inspection and travel time.

- a. **New construction:** Projects that are new construction or tenant improvement (conversion of an existing space to a food service establishment), or has been closed for 365 days (1 year) or more is a 4-hour base fee, or **\$1008.00, plus \$252/hour for any time spent after 4 hours.**
- b. **Remodel:** For establishments proposing a remodel, the plan review fee is a 3-hour base fee, or **\$756.00, plus \$252.00/hour after 3 hours.**
- c. **Multiple plan review in one facility:** In a large facility with multiple food service operations (hotel, grocery, etc), each operation requires a separate plan review (and eventually, a separate permit).
 - o The first plan review with either be a new construction fee **\$1008.00** or a remodel fee **\$756.00** plus the **\$252.00** hourly rate.
 - o Each additional operation will be **\$756.00**, plus **\$252.00** after 3 hours
- d. **Resubmittal fee (\$252.00 per hour):** Please also be advised that once your plans are approved, you will be charged for a plan resubmittal fee of **\$252.00** should you decide to subsequently change the equipment floor plan.

- e. **Penalty fees:** If the food service business has begun operating without the required plan review or permit, the food service operations owner will be charged a penalty fee of one-half (50%) the plan review fee and a penalty fee equal to one-half (50%) of the applicable permit fee (per section Title 2.10.090 Penalty for commencing operational without approval).
- f. **Return pre-operational inspection fees:** If you do not pass the first pre-operational inspection, a fee of **\$504.00** must be paid before the inspection is scheduled.

6. Can I Check on the Status of My Plans?

Yes, you can check the status of your plan submittal by logging in to your account in the [Public Health Permit Center](#)

- Select the “Dash Board” on the top menu, then click on “My Permits”.
- Select the application of interest.

The status of the application will be listed in the summary tab.

7. Where can I find out if my business is in Unincorporated King County, has a well system or is on a septic system?

There are various areas that may be within the city limits, in another county, or in unincorporated King County. A helpful online tool is the KCGIS Parcel Viewer. www.kingcounty.gov/operations/GIS/PropResearch/ParcelViewer.aspx

Other helpful sources are the building department, water district or the Wastewater Program (please refer to the Additional Sources page for more information).

8. What do I need to prepare for the pre-operational inspection?

- a. **Purchase an annual operating permit.** The operations permit fee is renewed annually. Fees are based on level of risk and type of operation. Permit fees can be found at www.kingcounty.gov/ehs/fees.
- b. **Obtain final approval of building and plumbing permits by local agencies.**
- c. **Submit complete self-preoperational inspection check list to the plan reviewer.**

If you've completed the three items above, follow the instructions on the approval letter/email to schedule a pre-operational inspection. Plan reviewers need at least one (1) week advance notice to schedule the inspection so please plan ahead!

Remodel projects of existing food service establishment also require a pre-operational inspection before you can start using the newly remodeled space. An operating permit may be already on-site, but if not, you will need to purchase a permit before the pre-operational inspection.

CHECKLIST FOR GENERAL CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

1. **Food Plan Review Online Application** – please visit our website www.kingcounty.gov/foodsafety/business
 - a. **Food Plan Review Application and fee.** Complete all sections of the Plan Review Application and pay the plan review fee online.
 - b. **Plan review Questionnaire.** Provide answers for every item.
2. **Utility Information** – please provide the name of the water district and sewer district on the Food Plan Review Application.
 - a. **Water system verification.** Facilities will either be connected to public water or to a well system.
 - i. **Public water system.** If you are connected to a public water system, please provide the name of the water district on the food plan review application. If additional information is needed, you may be asked to provide one of the following:
 - New construction: A “water availability letter/certification” from your local building department or water district that includes the site address and parcel.
 - Existing facility: A recent (within one year) utility bill with the site address. Your landlord may be able to provide you with a copy of the utility bill.
 - ii. **Private well system** (if applicable): Please obtain approval demonstrating that its use meets the requirements for a Group A water system. Contact the Washington State Department of Health’s Drinking Water program for more information.
www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/WaterSystemAssistance/TNCWaterSystems
 - b. **Sewer/Septic Verification.** Facilities will either be connected to a public sewer connection or to an approved for food service use septic system.

- i. **Public sewer availability.** If you are connected to a public sewer system, please provide the name of the sewer district on the food plan review application. If additional information is needed, you may be asked to provide one of the following:
 - o New construction: A “sewer availability letter/certificate” showing that the facility will be connected to an approved sewer system. Contact your local water district or building department for more information.
 - o Existing facility: A recent (within one year) utility bill with the site address. Your landlord may also be able to provide a copy of the utility bill.
- i. **Septic system (if applicable).** If your facility is on a septic system, please provide a written approval from Public Health’s Wastewater Program.
 - o An approved for food service septic system is required “prior” to submitting plans for review. Please be aware that if the facility does not have a septic system approved for the proposed use, the food plan review process will be delayed. The approved septic system must have a current Maintenance Report on file with PHSKC, WAC 246-272A-0275 Operation, monitoring and maintenance - Food service establishments.
 - o For more information, please contact the Bellevue Eastgate Wastewater Program Sanitarian of the Day (SOD) at (206) 477-8050.

3. Site Plan

- a. The site plan is a drawing that shows your business in relation to streets, sidewalks, septic system (if applicable), well system (if applicable), parking, and garbage/recycling areas.
- b. Show the location of the outdoor dumpster or garbage facility.

4. Menu

- a. Provide a copy of your menu. List all food and beverage to be served.
- b. Describe preparation and style of service. In general, please describe the food preparation procedures and style of service.
 - o Will foods be cooked to order?

- Will you have a buffet for breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner? Is the buffet area shown on the plans?
 - Are there going to be any overnight and unattended cooking and hot-holding? If yes, a written plan is required for foods that will be unattended (no one is present or available) and cooked and held hot overnight.
- c. Describe any specialized processing methods. Certain processes will require a variance from the Food Code and/or HACCP before the plans will be approved.
- Smoking food for preservation rather than for flavor enhancement
 - Curing food
 - Using food additives or adding components such as vinegar as a method of food preservation than as a method of flavor enhancement or to render a food so that it is not potentially hazardous
 - Display tanks for molluscan shellfish (oyster or clams)
 - Reduced oxygen packaging; vacuum packaging; sous vide

5. Floor Plan with the Equipment List/Schedule – please see the Sample Floor Plan

Equipment Details: Using equipment certified by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) – Accredited certification program is considered to be in compliance with the Food Code. Other equipment meeting food safety standards may also be allowed.

Plumbing. All plumbing work must be done by a commercial plumber under a plumbing permit from the appropriate jurisdiction. Plumbing systems shall be designed, constructed and installed according to law (applicable local, state, and federal statutes, regulations and ordinances.)

Square footage

- a. Provide the square footage of the entire facility (include kitchen, restrooms, storage areas, outdoor seating areas, etc.)

Sinks

- a. **Handwashing sinks.** Handsinks (or handwashing sinks) are required in all food preparation, food service and warewashing areas.
 - i. Handsinks must remain accessible, **conveniently located** AND within 25 feet of all areas where food or beverages are handled, prepared or served.
 - i. This may require more than one handsink per food service. Handsinks must be equipped with mixing faucets or combination faucet, hand soap and paper towels.
 - i. The minimum hot water temperature allowed at all handsinks is 100 degrees Fahrenheit at the tap through a mixing valve. Ideally, the hot water should be 100-120 F. Self-closing or metering faucets shall provide a flow of water for at least 15 seconds.
 - iv. A splashguard is required between the handsink, adjacent fixtures, food-contact surfaces, or open storage shelving if less than 18 inches of lateral separation exists. The splashguard divider shall be constructed of durable, nonabsorbent, and easily cleanable material. The height of the splash guard shall come up to the height of the faucet.
- b. **Dishwashing sinks.** A 3-compartment sink is required. The size of the compartments of the 3-compartment sink must be large enough to accommodate the largest utensil or equipment used in the establishment.
 - i. Provide the depth x height x width of each compartment or a copy of the equipment information (cut) sheet.
 - i. Drainboards, utensil racks, or tables large enough to accommodate all soiled and cleaned items shall be provided for necessary utensil holding before cleaning and after sanitizing. Please show the drain-boards, racks, or shelves on the drawing.
 - i. Commercial dishwashing machine (optional). A commercial dishwashing machine may also be added in addition to the required 3-compartment sink.
 - iv. Provide the make and model of the dishwasher or a copy of the equipment information (cut) sheet.

- c. **Food preparation sink(s).** A separate sink is required for the washing, rinsing, draining, cooling, soaking, thawing or other process that requires placement of food in a sink. One or more preparation sinks may be required based on your operation. Separation between ready-to-eat food and raw animal protein preparation is required. The food preparation sink must have an indirect waste drain line.
- d. **Dump or work sink(s).** This sink is required for the disposal of liquid waste in addition to sinks necessary for washing, cleaning and sanitizing. This sink can also be used to rinse utensils in between use (i.e. knives, blender pitchers, espresso milk steamer cups, rinsing growlers, etc).
 - i. A handsink cannot also be used as a dump/work sink.
 - i. This is a separate sink with its own hot and cold faucet.
 - i. A work/dump sink is required in bars, taverns, wine/distillery tasting rooms and beer tasting taprooms.
 - iv. Show the location of the work/dump sink on the plans.
- e. **Dipper well:** Proper storage of in-use utensils is required. If installed a dipper well shall have an indirect drain.
- f. **Mop sink.** A mop sink (or service sink or janitorial sink) with hot and cold water is required. A vacuum breaker must be provided for a service sink if a hose will be attached to the faucet.

Restrooms

- a. Employee restrooms. Employee restrooms are required. Employees may use the same restrooms provided to the public provided they are located within 200 feet.
- b. Public restrooms. Public restrooms are required with any on-premise consumption of food and beverages.
- c. Public restrooms must be conveniently located and available during all hours of operation.
- d. Customers cannot go through any food preparations area or unpackaged food storage areas to reach the restrooms, as customers must not interfere with any part of the food service operation.

NOTE: It is strongly recommended that handsinks are connected to the main hot water heater instead of using an insta-hot unit under each handsink. Insta-hot may not consistently provide the minimum temperature of 100 F.

Water Heater. The water heater must be large enough to meet the peak hot water needs of the facility.

- a. Specify the location, type of water heater (gas, electric, tank-less, on demand) and the storage capacity (gallons).
- b. Please provide the manufacturer and model of the unit.

Grease trap/grease interceptors. Businesses serviced by the City of Seattle's drainage and waste utility are required to install a grease-capturing device.

- a. If the device of choice is an "interceptor" it should be sized according to the Uniform Plumbing Code.
- b. Please call 206-263-9566 for additional information or visit the Seattle Public Utilities' (SPU) website at www.seattle.gov/utilities/businesses-and-key-accounts/drainage-and-sewer/fats-oils-and-grease
- c. Other jurisdictions may have similar requirements so check with your local jurisdiction.

Floor drains. Indicate floor drains in all areas where floors are subject to wetting.

Refrigeration and freezer units. Provide adequate refrigeration and freezer units (walk-in coolers, reach-in refrigerators, sandwich prep refrigerators, refrigerated display cases, freezers, etc.) for the storage and cooling of foods.

- a. Provide the make and model of all refrigeration units (catalogue cut sheets) must be included.
- b. All refrigeration units must hold foods at 41 degree Fahrenheit or below.
- c. Internal display thermometers must be available.

Details of the cook line

- a. List and provide the location of all equipment that will be used to cook and reheat. This includes but is not limited to deep fryers, stoves, grills, microwaves, etc.

Hot holding equipment

- a. List and provide the location of all hot holding equipment such as soup pots, steam tables, etc.

Ventilation (hood system). Ventilation must be adequate so that all areas are kept reasonable free from excessive heat, steam, condensation, vapors, fumes or objectionable odors.

- a. Show mechanical exhaust ventilations systems.
- b. Exhaust hoods must be designed to prevent grease or condensate from dripping into the food and the filters or baffles must be readily removed for cleaning.
- c. Contact the local building department for specifications and/or if a hood system is required for the type of food preparation activities that will occur on site.

Work stations details.

- a. List and provide the location of all worktables, counters, stationary cutting blocks, etc.)

Shelving for adequate storage space.

- a. Show all storage areas and cabinetry.
- b. Food storage must be six (6) inches off the floor.

Self-service areas. Food on display must be protected from contamination by the use of packaging; counter, service line or salad bar food guards; display cases; or other effective means.

- a. Indicate self-service areas with sneeze guards (buffet lines, salad bars, self-service condiments self-service beverage stations, etc). Provide details of the sneeze guards such as the elevations and dimensions.

6. **Finish Surface Information.** Floors, walls and ceilings must be smooth, durable and easily cleanable.

- a. Specify the finish of the floors, walls, and ceilings in all areas. Please provide the type of paint that will be used.

- b. Floors, walls, and ceilings must be smooth, non-toxic, non-absorbent, durable and easily cleanable. Paint must be washable; at least semi-gloss or high gloss.
- c. Coved base. Floor wall junctions must have a coved base.
- d. Wood surfaces. All wood surfaces (doors, trim, shelves, cabinets, etc.) must be sealed. Paint applied to surfaces must be 'washable'. Please provide the type of paint that will be used.
- e. No exposed plumbing or wiring.
- f. All equipment and cabinetry must be flush mounted (or smooth and sealed) to counters, walls or floors, or be raised/located to allow for cleaning.
- g. Equipment and storage areas prohibited under sewer lines.
 - i. Food, food preparation, and food service equipment storage areas are prohibited under sewer lines that are not shielded to intercept potential drips.

7. Customer Seating

- a. Show all tables and chairs (inside, outside, bars, banquet rooms, etc.)

8. Other Details and Miscellaneous Items

- a. Light fixtures. All light fixtures must be shielded or shatterproof.
- b. Employee accommodations. Lockers or other suitable facilities shall be provided for the orderly storage of employee's clothing and other possessions.
 - i. Show locker areas/dressing rooms or explain where employees will store their belongings.

9. Please include the following statements on all copies of your plans:

- a. "PHSKC inspection required before opening"
- b. "No changes will be made without PHSKC approval"