



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
DEPARTMENT OF PERMITS, LICENSES & INSPECTIONS
JOHN P. ROBIN CIVIC BUILDING

PLI's Guidelines for Floodplain Permits	Issued: October 1, 2022
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PURPOSE: Outline requirements and process for Floodplain permits.

PLI'S GUIDELINES FOR FLOODPLAIN PERMITS

1. General. The following general requirements shall apply to all Floodplain Permits:

- a) Applicability. Floodplain permits are required for all construction and/or *development* in a floodplain overlay district.¹ **This policy shall take effect on October 1, 2022.**
- b) Defined Terms. This policy identifies defined terms by italicized text. Terms defined in referenced ordinances and/or this policy shall have the meaning identified in the referenced ordinance.² Terms not defined shall have ordinarily accepted meanings such as the context implies. The following terms are referenced in this policy:
 - i) ASCE/SEI 24. Standard 24 - Flood Resistant Design and Construction, 2014 version.
 - ii) Based Flood Elevation (BFE). The elevation shown on the *FIRM* for Zone AE that indicates the water surface elevation resulting from a flood that has a 1-percent (1%) or greater chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.
 - iii) Development. Includes the construction, reconstruction, renovation, repair, expansion, or alteration of buildings or other structures; the placement of manufactured homes; streets, and other paving; utilities; filling, grading and excavation; mining; dredging; drilling operations; storage of equipment or materials; and the subdivision of land. See the *Floodplain Ordinance* for additional information.
 - iv) FEMA. The Federal Emergency Management Agency.
 - v) FIRM. Flood Insurance Rate Map.
 - vi) Floodplain Administrator. The Zoning Administrator or their designee.³

¹ PCC Section 906.02.D.2

² PCC Section 906.02.J.2

³ PCC Section 906.02.D.1

- vii) Floodplain Ordinance. PCC Section 906.02. FP-O, Floodplain overlay district.
- viii) IRC. The International Residential Code as applicable per Section 403.21 of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC).
- ix) IBC. The International Building Code as applicable per Section 403.21 of the UCC.
- x) Permit. Floodplain permit authorizing development within a floodplain overlay district.
- xi) PCC. *Pittsburgh City Code*
- xii) Regulatory flood elevation (RFE). The *base flood elevation* plus a freeboard safety factor of one and one-half (1-1/2) feet.
- xiii) Substantial Damage Repair. Applicable if the total cost of restoring the structure to its before-damaged condition would equal or exceed fifty (50) percent or more of the market value of the building; see the *Floodplain Ordinance* for additional information.
- xiv) Substantial Improvement. This is applicable if the total cost of the proposed development equals or exceeds fifty (50) percent of the market value of the building; see the *Floodplain Ordinance* for additional information.
- xv) UCC. *The Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code*.

- c) Reviewers. PLI Combined Construction Plans Examiners shall perform reviews of floodplain permits on behalf of the Floodplain Administrator.⁴
- d) Required License. The *permit* shall require a valid PLI contractor or trade license per PLI's current Licensing Rules and regulations.
- e) Relationship to PLI Permit. The following business practices apply to all *permits*:
 - i) Required Permit. A *permit* is required for all *development* within a floodplain overlay district. A separate *permit* is required for each building.
 - ii) Number of Permits. The applicant may submit one of the following:
 - (1) A separate *permit* for each required PLI permit.
 - (2) A single *permit* for all required PLI permits as follows:
 - (a) The *permit* identifies appropriate work scopes for all required PLI permits.
 - (b) The submitted documents demonstrate compliance with technical requirements associated with all PLI permits such as the elevation of equipment relative to the base and regulatory flood elevations.

2. Fees. The fees for Floodplain Permits shall comply with the following:

- a) Fee. The floodplain permit fee is due at the time of application.
- b) Refunds. The floodplain permit fee is nonrefundable except in the event an application is submitted or requested in error.

⁴ PCC Section 906.02.D.1

3. **Permit Configuration.** Floodplain permits are configured based on structure type, work type, and work scopes as follows:
- a) **Structures types.** The applicant shall select the appropriate structure type as follows:
- i) **Residential – single-family** is applicable to:
 - (1) Structures regulated by the *IRC*:
 - (a) Detached single-family dwellings and townhouses 3 stories or less in height.
 - (b) Structures accessory to a single-family dwelling.
 - ii) **Residential – two-family** is applicable to:
 - (1) Structures regulated by the *IRC*:
 - (a) Detached two-family dwellings 3 stories or less in height.
 - (b) Structures accessory to a two-family dwelling.
 - iii) **Commercial – all other uses** is applicable to:
 - (1) Structures regulated by the *IBC*:
 - (a) Dwelling units in a mixed-use structure (contains non-residential uses).
 - (b) Building with three or more dwelling units.
 - (c) Attached single-family dwellings and attached two-family dwellings.
 - (d) Detached single-family dwellings, detached two-family dwellings, and townhouses more than 3 stories in height.
 - (e) Non-residential uses.
 - (f) Structures accessory to the commercial structure.
- b) **Work Types.** The applicant shall select the appropriate work type as follows:
- i) **New Construction.** Applicable to the construction or installation of new buildings or structures including those built on existing footings and/or foundations.
 - ii) **Substantial Improvement.** Applicable to all development including alterations, repairs, moving, demolishing, or enlarging of existing buildings or structures with a cost that constitutes a *substantial improvement*.
 - iii) **Substantial Damage Repair.** Applicable to all repairs of existing buildings or structures with a cost that constitutes *substantial damage*.
 - iv) **Non-substantial Improvement.** Applicable to all development including alterations, repairs, moving, demolishing, or enlarging of existing buildings or structures, that do not constitute a *substantial improvement* or a *substantial damage repair*.
- c) **Work Scopes.** The applicant shall select the appropriate work scopes as follows:
- i) **Building Work.** Applicable if the proposed development requires a PLI building permit.
 - ii) **Mechanical Work.** Applicable if the proposed development requires a PLI mechanical permit.
 - iii) **Electrical Work.** Applicable if the proposed development requires a PLI electrical permit.
 - iv) **Fire Alarm Work.** Applicable if the proposed development requires a PLI fire alarm permit.
 - v) **Suppression System Work.** Applicable if the proposed development requires a PLI suppression system permit.

- vi) Plumbing Work. Applicable if the proposed development requires an ACHD plumbing permit.
- vii) Site Work. Applicable if the proposed development requires a PLI land operations permit and/or a PLI Storm Water permit.
- viii) Other. Applicable if the proposed development does not require a PLI permit.
- ix) Development Not In Floodplain. Applicable if the subject property is located in a floodplain overlay district but the development is located outside of the floodplain overlay district boundary.

4. **Application Requirements**

- a) Fees. All applicants shall pay the floodplain fee per PLI's current fee schedule.
- b) Application. All applicants shall complete an application to include:
 - i) Identifying the applicable structure type, work type, and work scope(s) per Section 3 of this policy.
 - ii) Providing a work description identifying all planned *development* and all proposed *development* under the *permit*.
 - iii) Identifying the current market value of the building and the source of this value:
 - (1) Allegheny County Real Estate Assessment (building value only).
 - (2) Certified appraisal.
 - iv) Identifying the *development* cost as follows:
 - (1) Building Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI building permit and/or *development* that is exempt from PLI permit requirements.
 - (2) Mechanical Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI mechanical permit.
 - (3) Electrical Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI electrical permit.
 - (4) Fire Alarm Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI fire alarm permit.
 - (5) Suppression System Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI suppression permit.
 - (6) Plumbing Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI plumbing permit.
 - (7) Site Work Subtotal. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development* that requires a PLI land operations permit and/or storm water permit.
 - (8) Total Project Value. The cost to provide all labor and materials associated with the proposed *development*, including *development* not requiring a PLI permit. The OneStopPGH portal automatically totals the values associated with items 4.b.iv 1-7. Due to this, at least one of these items shall have a value greater than zero (0).

- v) Identifying the source of the *development* costs per the following options:
 - (1) Professional construction estimate.
 - (2) Construction contract.
 - vi) Identifying the job location – the location within the site or building where the proposed *development* shall occur.
- c) Non-Substantial Improvement Work Type. PLI may request the following additional documents as deemed necessary for *permits* for *non-substantial improvement* work type:
- i) Copy of the certified property appraisal to confirm accuracy of the identified current market value of the building.
 - ii) Copy of the professional construction estimate or construction contract to confirm the accuracy of the identified *development* cost.
- d) New Construction, Substantial Improvement, Substantial Damage Repair Work Types. The applicant shall submit the following additional documents for New Construction, Substantial Improvement, or Substantial Damage Repair work types:
- i) FEMA Documents: The following *FEMA* documents sealed by a PA-licensed surveyor, engineer, or architect shall be provided:
 - (1) “Floodplain Elevation Certificate”
 - (2) If the building is not elevated, “Residential Floodproofing Certificate” or “Non-residential Floodproofing Certificate” as applicable.
 - ii) Drawings. Site plan and/or plans sealed by a PA-licensed surveyor, engineer, or architect with the following information:
 - (1) All proposed grading.
 - (2) The boundary of the floodplain and associated hazard (A, AE, floodway).
 - (3) The based flood elevation.
 - (4) The regulatory flood elevation.
 - (5) The lowest floor elevation and the elevation of the floor above based on the North American Vertical Datum of 1988.
 - (6) The location and type of floodproofing (dry or wet).
 - (7) The location of flood vents, as applicable.
 - (8) The location and elevation of electrical components.
 - (9) The location and elevation of all machinery and equipment.
 - iii) Structural Statement. A PA-licensed engineer shall certify that the proposed construction or development has been adequately designed to withstand the pressures, velocities, impact and uplift forces associated with the base flood. The statement shall also indicate the type and extent of proposed floodproofing.⁵ This statement may be included on the submitted drawings or provided as a separate document/report.
 - iv) Floodway. A PA licensed architect or engineer shall certify that the proposed construction or *development* will not increase the base flood elevation at any point and provide a PLI No-Rise Certificate.⁵

⁵ PCC Section 906.02.D.4

- v) AE Area/District. A PA licensed architect or engineer shall certify that the proposed construction or *development* will not increase the base flood elevation more than one (1) foot at any point within the community.⁵ This statement may be included on the submitted drawings or provided as a separate document/report.
- vi) Material Storage. A written statement from a PA licensed architect or engineer included on the submitted drawings or provided as a separate document/report that:
 - (1) Identifies the type, amount, location, and purpose of any materials or substances intended to be used, produced, stored, or maintained on-site.⁵ The statement shall identify all materials and substances that are buoyant, flammable, explosive, or in times of flooding, could be injurious to human, animal, or plant life; storage elevation; and/or means of floodproofing.
 - (2) Identifies all materials and substances considered dangerous to human life per the *Floodplain Ordinance*⁶ and the safeguards incorporated into the design of the proposed structure to prevent leaks or spills.⁵
- vii) Excavation and/or Fill. *Development* that includes grading and/or fill shall provide an erosion and sediment control plan including a statement that the plan meets the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection requirements. This statement may be included on the submitted drawings or provided as a separate document/report.

5. **Process**. The process for a *permit* shall follow PLI's standard process including all of the following steps:
 - a) Submission. This step includes a completeness check performed by PLI Application Technicians to verify the submission of all required types of documents.
 - b) Review. This step includes the PLI review of the submission for compliance with applicable requirements based on the submitted documents. PLI shall provide the applicant either a plan review summary identifying required revisions to achieve compliance or an approval notice.
 - c) Permit Issuance. This step includes applicant identification of the contractor or trade license who is responsible for the *development*, the contractor or trade license holder's acceptance of the permit assignment, payment of remaining fees, and confirmation of valid license.
 - d) Inspection. The step includes PLI inspections to verify construction and development are in accordance with *permit* approval and *Floodplain Ordinance* requirements.
 - e) Permit Completion. PLI shall perform an audit of completed *permits* per the direction of the Building Code Official to ensure the performance of all required inspections and that all *permit* requirements have been met.
6. **Inspections**. Inspections for *permits* shall comply with the following:
 - a) License Holder Responsibilities. The license holder is responsible to:
 - i) Installation of Work. Install all work in conformance with PLI approved drawings.
 - ii) Maintain Record of Drawings. Maintain a copy, hard copy or electronic, of PLI approved drawings for use by the PLI inspector.
 - iii) Post Permit. Post copy of the *permit* where visible at the job site.

⁶ PCC Section 906.02.F.4

- iv) Request Inspections. Request inspections per PLI's current policies and procedures.
 - v) Access and Means to Inspect. Provide access and the means to perform inspections, including equipment to verify the relative elevation of elements.
 - vi) Notification of Changes. Notify the Inspector, Inspection Supervisors, and Building Code Official immediately of any modifications to floodproofing and/or if any element is installed at an elevation below that identified on the approved *FEMA* Floodplain Elevation Certificate (identified in Item C1 as "Construction Drawings").
 - vii) Close-out Documents. Submit the following close-out documents:
 - (1) *FEMA* "Floodplain Elevation Certificate" sealed by a PA-licensed surveyor, engineer, or architect as follows:
 - (a) Submit prior to the lowest floor elevation inspection with Item C1 identified as "Building Under Construction" with item C2.a updated per as-built condition.
 - (b) Submit prior to the utility and/or equipment inspection with Item C1 identified as "Building Under Construction" with item C2.e updated per as-built condition.
 - (c) Submit prior to the final inspection with Item C1 updated for "Finished Construction" updated per as-built conditions with "BUILDING PHOTOGRAPHS" section completed.
 - (2) If the building is not elevated, "Residential Floodproofing Certificate" or "Non-residential Floodproofing Certificate" as applicable sealed by a PA-licensed surveyor, engineer, or architect submit prior to the final inspection.
- b) Non-Substantial Improvement Work Type. The following inspections are required:
- i) Lowest floor elevation. Applicable for horizontal additions, and development that includes new and/or replacement foundations.
 - ii) Utility and/or equipment. Applicable to new electrical components (service and/or distribution equipment) and/or new equipment.
- c) New Construction, Substantial Improvement, Substantial Damage Repair Work Types. The following inspections are required:
- i) Lowest floor elevation. Applicable for all permits.
 - ii) Floodproofing – rough. Applicable for all permits.
 - iii) Floodproofing – boarding. Applicable for all permits.
 - iv) Utility and/or equipment. Applicable for all permits.
 - v) Final. Applicable for all permits.
- d) Inspection Types, Purpose, and Sequence. The following inspection types are associated with these *permits*:
- i) Lowest floor elevation. The Inspection shall confirm the lowest floor elevation is at or above the elevation identified on the approved *FEMA* Floodplain Elevation Certificate (identified in Item C1 as "Construction Drawings").
 - (1) Sequence. Required after placement of the lowest floor, including the basement, and prior to further vertical construction. Failure to complete and/or pass this inspection

shall result in the failed inspection for the foundation inspection on the associated building permit.

- ii) Floodproofing - Rough. The inspection shall confirm that concealed materials are "water-resistant" and that all flood vent locations (as applicable) are in accordance with approvals and code requirements.
 - (1) Sequence. Required prior to the framing inspection on the associated building permit. Failure to complete and/or pass this inspection shall result in a failed framing inspection on the associated building permit.
- iii) Floodproofing – Boarding. The inspection shall confirm that installed sheathing materials are "water-resistant" and are installed in accordance with approvals and code requirements.
 - (1) Sequence. Required prior to the boarding inspection on the associated building permit. Failure to complete and/or pass this inspection shall result in a failed boarding inspection on the associated building permit.
- iv) Utility and/or equipment. The inspection shall confirm that all electrical components and all machinery and equipment have been elevated as required by the *Floodplain Ordinance* and the *IBC* or *IRC*, as applicable.
 - (1) Sequence. Required prior to the final inspections on the associated sub permits. Failure to complete and/or pass this inspection shall result in a failed final inspection on the associated sub permits.
- v) Final. The inspection shall confirm that finishes, floodproofing, and flood vents are in accordance with approvals, *Floodplain Ordinance*, and the *IBC* or *IRC* requirements, as applicable.
 - (1) Sequence. Required after installation of all floodproofing, finishes below the *RFE*, and flood vents (as applicable). Failure to complete and/or pass this inspection shall result in a failed final inspection on the associated building permit.