
TRPA PERMITTING PROCESS

This guide provides the general steps for applicants to establish a new land use or complete a property improvement in the Lake Tahoe Region.

For a more in-depth overview of the TRPA permitting process, see the [TRPA Permitting Procedure Manual](#) or the [information packet specific to your project type](#).

Need Assistance? We're here to help. To speak with a permitting technician, call 775-589-5333, email trpa@trpa.gov, or [schedule an appointment](#).

I. PRE-APPLICATION

Step 1: **Determine if your project requires TRPA review and approval.** Some activities may be considered “Exempt” or “Qualified Exempt” from TRPA review and will not require a TRPA permit. Reference the [Exempt Activity Information Packet](#) and the [Qualified Exempt Activity Information Packet](#). Activities that are “Exempt” or “Qualified Exempt” from TRPA environmental review and approval are listed in Code section 2.3 (and chapter 82 for the shorezone). Activities not listed as an exempt or qualified exempt activity will require a TRPA permit.

Step 2: **Look up existing property information.** Visit the [Parcel Tracker](#) and use the location address to determine what records are available relating to your property, such as: general permit records, compliance status, applicable fire district and local plan, and more.

Step 3: **Understand site considerations and what is allowable.** Visit the [Parcel Tracker](#) and use the location address to look up basic planning information on a property including land capability and coverage, development rights, stormwater compliance status, known TRPA deed restrictions, and the TRPA permit history.

The Parcel Tracker also includes a link to the applicable [Local Plan](#). Local plans describe planning considerations at the neighborhood scale, including allowed land uses, uses requiring a special use permit, and other design standards for the area.

Generally-applicable development standards, such as land coverage, height, Best Management Practices (BMPs), and design guidelines are outlined in the [TRPA Code of Ordinances](#).

The [Local Plan](#), [Parcel Tracker](#), [TRPA.gov Permitting Tab](#), [Permit Review Map](#), [design review guidelines](#), and [Procedure Manual](#) are frequently-used resources.

Step 4: **Understand scenic considerations.** Properties that are visible from Lake Tahoe or a scenic roadway corridor (e.g. State Routes, US Highway 50, Pioneer Trail, etc.), recreation areas,

or bikeways must comply with additional site and design standards. To learn more, review [Scenic Considerations](#) online.

Step 5: **Complete any necessary verifications or determinations.** These may be necessary before submitting a project application. If a property has never received a TRPA permit, a [Land Capability Verification or Site Assessment](#) will likely be required. These provide information on development potential and verify what is legally existing on the property today.

Depending on the parcel and project specifics, additional verification or determination may include: existing coverage verifications, development rights verifications or allocations, soils hydrology determinations, or historic resource determinations. If the project includes alteration of structures greater than 50 years in age, you will first need to apply for a [historic determination](#) to assess if the property is an eligible historic resource.

The [Parcel Tracker](#) is the best resource to determine if the necessary verifications have already been made.

Step 6: **Determine if your property is located within the FEMA 100-year floodplain.** Additional development, grading, and filling of lands within the floodplain are prohibited. Areas within the FEMA 100-year floodplain can be viewed [online](#). Floodplain boundaries may need to be determined in a project area.

Step 7: **Check the title report.** Prior to submitting a project application, it is important to review a current title report. Any easements on the property will need to be shown on submitted plans. An applicant must receive authorization from all interested parties (e.g. parties or entities to whom the bond, assessment, back taxes, fees or liens are owed) for *certain* activities such as development right transfers.

Step 8: **Obtain the necessary development rights for your project. (New construction or new units ONLY.)** [Development rights](#) are land use units someone must acquire before a unit is constructed. Development rights include single and multi-family residential units of use (RUUs), residential bonus units, tourist accommodation units (TAUs), and commercial floor area (CFA). Residential units of use (RUUs) are formed by combining a potential residential unit of use (PRU) and a residential allocation.

Development rights may be acquired through an allocation assignment by the local building department, through a transfer or conversion, or assignment of a residential bonus unit for deed-restricted properties. If the property is already developed or was developed in the past, then there may be existing or banked rights available. The [Parcel Tracker](#) is the best resource to determine what development rights are already associated with a property. Visit [TRPA.gov](#) to learn more about development rights.

Step 9: **Determine level of review.** Levels of review describe if public noticing or a public hearing will be required, and if the application is a [minor](#) or general application.

Some projects will require a public notice and hearing before the Governing Board or Hearings Officer. These are specified in the [TRPA Code of Ordinances](#) Section 2.2.2. Other

projects require public notice with a staff level approval. Many shorezone applications use this process. Projects requiring notice are listed in the [Rules of Procedure](#) Article 12.

For standard staff reviews, expedited reviews are available for certain [minor applications](#). These are projects that are relatively simple in scope and present a lower environmental risk. A determination or permit for minor applications is typically issued within 40 days. Projects must meet certain criteria to qualify.

Step 10: **Understand which fees to expect and how much.** All applicable project and activity fees are listed in the [fee schedule](#), which is updated annually. Fee categories include service fees, project review fees (i.e. application fees), mitigation fees, monitoring fees, administrative fees, and shorezone fees. To learn more about which fees to expect with a project, see the [TRPA Permitting Procedure Manual](#).

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Step 12: **Determine whether assistance may be needed.** Many improvements require technical plans prepared by surveyors or engineers. For complex applications, property owners and applicants often hire planning and permitting consultants to coordinate with technical specialists and manage the permitting process. TRPA hosts a service provider list found [here](#). Application requirements are listed on [TRPA Applications and Forms](#) webpage and discussed in more detail in this manual.

II. APPLICATION SUBMITTAL & REVIEW

Step 13: **Determine where to apply for a permit.** TRPA has memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Placer County, El Dorado County, the City of South Lake Tahoe, and agencies such as public utility companies and land managers. That means those entities can permit some projects on behalf of TRPA. Each MOU is slightly different so it is important to check and see if another agency is able to process a specific application. [Use this guide](#) to know where to apply.

Step 14: **Prepare existing and proposed site plans, floor plans, and elevation drawings.** The application checklist included in this packet lists all elements that must be included on these plans. There are sample plans available [online](#).

Step 15: **Complete and submit your online application to TRPA via the [Accela Citizen Access Database](#) available at [www.trpa.gov](#).** Each project category has a [TRPA Application and Form](#) listing specific items that are required at the time of submittal. TRPA created [sample](#)

[plans](#) to help applicants determine what site plans, elevations, floor plans, coverage tables, BMP calculation sheets, and scenic assessments should look like. Application [filing fees](#) are also due at the time of submittal.

Step 16: **Completeness review.** Once an application is received, TRPA will complete an initial review of materials within 30 days, or 15 days for minor applications. The initial review ensures all checklist items, correct fees, and the correct application was provided, as well as ensuring the application was submitted to the correct agency. If the application is missing any checklist items, TRPA will send an incomplete letter to the applicant listed on the application.

Step 17: **Application assignment and review.** Once your application is complete it will be assigned to a planner for review. This planner will be the lead on the project, meaning the primary point of contact and the person completing project review and issuing the permit. You can view who is assigned to your project by visiting the [Parcel Tracker](#) and typing in the TRPA file number received when the application was submitted.

TRPA holds itself up to the standard of issuing a permit in 120 days or less (or 40 days for minor applications), determined from the time that all information needed to review the project is provided (i.e. once the completeness review is final).

Review times vary based on application volumes and staffing. The planner will review the project to ensure it meets the requirements of the TRPA code of ordinances and local plan.

If additional information is required to ensure the project meets code requirements, the planner will send an email requesting the additional information. When additional information is requested, the time for review is paused until the applicant is able to provide all required information.

III. PERMIT & CONSTRUCTION

Step 18: **Conditional permit or determination issued.** Once the review is completed, a conditional permit or determination will be issued. Conditional permits will be issued with conditions that must be satisfied before the permit can be “acknowledged” (i.e. finalized). Construction may not begin until these conditions are met, the permit is signed, and the final plans are stamped. Such conditions may include revisions to plans, payment of fees, a security deposit, or submittal of additional information. Conditional permits typically need to be acknowledged within three years of approval.

At this step in the process, the permittee should submit a building permit application and any other required applications to the applicable County or City. Designs should be consistent with the TRPA permit and conditions.

Step 19: **Permit acknowledgement.** This is the final phase of the permit approval process. At this phase, the property owner or permittee is “acknowledging” that they understand and will abide by all conditions of the permit during their project. Applicants need to address all the requirements of the conditional permit with the planner. Once the conditions have

been met, the planner will stamp the plans and sign the permit. Mitigation and monitoring fees may be required with permit acknowledgement.

Step 20: **Request a pre-grade inspection.** Prior to any site grading or construction, an applicant or their representative will need to request a pre-grade inspection [online](#). This is an on-site meeting between the TRPA Compliance Inspector and homeowner/contractor to review the installation of construction BMPs, go over permit conditions, and discuss general construction practices. All construction projects, except for work that is exempt or qualified exempt, require a pre-grade inspection.

Step 21: **Request a final inspection.** At the completion of a project (including revegetation and installation of stormwater systems), an applicant or their representative will need to request a final inspection [online](#). The Compliance Inspector will inspect the project to ensure all permit conditions have been met. The security deposit will be released once the project passes the final inspection. Some permits will have additional security that is held for several years after project completion. This often occurs for scenic mitigation on lakefront properties.