

Development Activities for Existing Septic Systems

We evaluate on-site sewage system (OSS) and water sources to determine adequacy for development activities during the building permit process. This guidance document describes our process for each project type. You may find our [Remodel Guidelines](#), [On-Site Sewage System Process](#), and lists of [Septic System Service Companies](#) and [Designers and Engineers](#) helpful to your project.

What you want		What you have	Application type	Onsite requirements	Water requirements
1	Interior remodel only of an existing residence. No increase in bedrooms or footprint. No new wastewater connections. No unpermitted changes occurred that impact OSS.	N/A	None.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must provide interior remodel plan when applying to building department. Show existing and proposed rooms with labels. (e.g., bedroom; kitchen; bathroom etc.) 	N/A
2	Build a new structure with no indoor plumbing or wastewater disposal.	Credible record drawing with reserve area.	You don't need to apply if you meet the Onsite requirements column to the right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impact to OSS or reserve area. You must meet all setbacks for the activity. You have an accurate site plan for the building department with proposed and existing structures. Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines). Structure is not located in public well protective radius (see public well layer on GIS). 	N/A
		Credible record drawing but no reserve area or no record drawing.	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines). Test pit dug 2'W x 3'D for a reserve area with location labeled (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory operation and maintenance (O&M) septic inspection (<1 year). If you have no record drawing, then we require a system locate*. 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.
3	Increase footprint or square footage of an existing structure. Bumping out an existing kitchen, office, etc.. No increase in wastewater flows (no change in number of bedrooms).	Credible record drawing with reserve area.	You don't need an application if you meet all requirements in the Onsite requirements column to the right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are only increasing the footprint of the existing structure, no increase in flow. You do not need an installation permit. Your project is not located in another municipality (e.g., City of Edgewood; University Place; Buckley; etc.) Accurate site plan submitted to the building department with proposed and existing structures; add labels; setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). Setbacks do not impact OSS or reserve area. A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year old). 	N/A
		Credible record drawing with reserve area.	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.
		Credible record drawing with no reserve or no record drawing.	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines) Label location of test hole. Test pit dug 2'W x 3'D for a reserve area (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). If you don't have a record drawing, we also require a system locate*. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may also require a dye test. 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.

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4	Adding plumbing to an existing garage/shop or documenting existing plumbing in an existing garage/shop. No increase in wastewater flows, such as no additional bedrooms.	Existing permitted (or year-built pre-dates 1987) garage/shop with or without record drawing.	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). Reserve area not required. 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.
		Existing garage/shop built without permits and a credible record drawing with unimpacted reserve area.	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). Reserve area must remain unimpacted. 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection..
		Existing garage/shop built without permits and a credible record drawing without a reserve area or no record drawing.	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines) Label location of test hole. Test pit dug 2'W x 3'D for a reserve area (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). If you don't have a record drawing, we also require a system locate*. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may also require a dye test. 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.
5	Adding a new garage/shop with plumbing. No increase in wastewater flows, such as no additional bedrooms.	Credible record drawing with reserve area.	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1year). 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.
		Credible record drawing with no reserve or no record drawing.	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks (see Remodel Guidelines) Label location of test hole. Test pit dug 2'W x 3'D for a reserve area (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). If you don't have a record drawing, we also require a system locate*. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may also require a dye test. 	Public water review by water program or an individual well bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection.
6	Mobile Home Park. Individual mobile home replacement (like for like), no increase in wastewater flow.	N/A	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with tank and drainfield location and an overview drawing of the entire parcel with the individual space labeled. (see Remodel Guidelines). A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year) for the septic system serving the proposed unit. See One-compartment Septic Tank Policy for sites with one-compartment tanks. See Tank Replacement Policy if replacing a tank(s). 	Public water review by water program.

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7	<p>Replace existing structure served by OSS. (Like for like, e.g., replace mobile home with new mobile home or stick built - same bedroom count. Replace in same footprint or larger footprint – same bedroom count). No increase in wastewater flow. Consult with Health Department when replacing a burn-down or similar.</p>	Credible record drawing with a reserve area.	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks. (see Remodel Guidelines). If adding tanks to existing septic system, a septic designer must provide a design site plan. A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). 	Public water review by water program or individual well site remodel application; bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years).
		Credible record drawing but no reserve area established.	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks. (see Remodel Guidelines). If adding tanks to existing septic system, a septic designer must provide a design site plan. A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). Test pit dug (2'W x 3'D) to establish a reserve drainfield area with location labeled on site plan. (see Remodel Guidelines). The OSS wasn't substandard in our previous permitting or reviews. 	Public water review by water program or individual well site remodel application; bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years).
		No credible record drawing or record drawing is incomplete (no information to determine capacity).	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label setbacks. (see Remodel Guidelines). If adding tanks to existing septic system, a septic designer must provide a design site plan. A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). Installation of a 1,000-gallon. We may require a 2-compartment tank (see One-Compartment Tank policy). System locate* required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may also require a dye test. OSS located no less than 75ft from surface water or individual well. Test pit dug (2'W x 3'D) to establish a reserve drainfield area with location labeled on site plan (see Remodel Guidelines). Meets all setback requirements of Chapter 2 The development will not increase flow to the existing OSS (We may require Designer justification). 	Public water review by water program or individual well site remodel application; bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years).

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8	<p>Increasing wastewater flow to the OSS. Expansion of existing residence or adding Accessory Dwelling Unit (increase of bedrooms). If you are purposing an Accessory Dwelling Unit, it must meet minimum lot size requirements (see Density Determination for Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy).</p>	<p>Credible record drawing with reserve area that shows capacity to support the proposed increase in wastewater flow without changing the existing drainfield components.</p>	Remodel Office Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures; setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may also require a dye test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water review by water program or an individual well site remodel application (see below). • We require an individual well site remodel application with bacteria (<1 year and nitrate (<3 year) tests when you expand wastewater flow within an existing residence. • We require an individual well site remodel application when you add an ADU. Individual well application must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bacteria (<1 year) and nitrate (<3 year) tests. ○ One hour flow test (<3 year). ○ Meeting current construction standards (surface seal, sanitary cap, above grade). ○ We may also require other water testing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We require a chloride/conductivity test when property falls in possible salt water intrusion or no well zones of saltwater intrusion map. ▪ We require a primary inorganic test if we don't have one on record. ▪ We require an arsenic test if previous results are from prior to 2002.
		<p>Credible record drawing that shows capacity to support the proposed increase in flow without changing the existing drainfield with no reserve area.</p>	Remodel Field Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan with proposed and existing structures; setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may also require a dye test. • Test pit dug (2'W x 3'D) to establish a reserve drainfield area with location labeled on site plan (see Remodel Guidelines). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water review by water program or an individual well site remodel application (see below). • We require an individual well site remodel application with bacteria (<1 year) and nitrate (<3 year) tests when expanding wastewater flow within an existing residence. • We require an individual well site remodel application when adding an ADU. Individual well application must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bacteria (<1 year) and nitrate (<3 year) tests. ○ One hour flow test (<3 year) ○ Meeting current construction standards (surface seal, sanitary cap, above grade). ○ We may also require other water testing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We require a chloride/conductivity test when property falls in possible salt water intrusion or no well zones of saltwater intrusion map. ▪ We require a primary inorganic test if we don't have one on record. ▪ We require an arsenic test if previous results are from prior to 2002.

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8 cont.	Increasing wastewater flow to the OSS. Expansion of existing residence or adding Accessory Dwelling Unit (increase of bedrooms). If you propose an Accessory Dwelling Unit, it must meet minimum lot size requirements (see Density Determination for Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy).	Existing OSS can't meet current code. Doesn't have capacity or treatment levels needed for the proposed increase in flow, or you are adding or replacing a drainfield.	Design Remodel (expanding existing residence) Design SFR w/ADU (adding ADU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design plan submitted by a Septic Designer/Engineer that meets current code requirements. • When building an ADU with a new septic system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We require a system locate* to confirm location of the existing system serving the existing residence when this system will remain in use, no record drawing exists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water review by water program or an individual well site remodel application (see below). • We require an individual well site remodel application with bacteria (<1 year) and nitrate (<3 year) tests when expanding wastewater flow within an existing residence. • We require an individual well site remodel application when you add an ADU. Individual well application must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bacteria (<1 year) and nitrate (<3 year) tests. ○ One hour flow test (<3 year). ○ Meeting current construction standards (surface seal, sanitary cap, above grade). ○ We may also require water testing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We require a chloride/conductivity test when property falls in possible salt water intrusion or no well zones of saltwater intrusion map. ▪ We require a primary inorganic required test if we don't have one on record. ▪ We require an arsenic retest if existing inorganic panel predates 2002.

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<p>Temporary housing unit** for the care of a parent or close relative. Include "Temporary use for Medical Hardship" in the project description of your application. (See Section 35 of Environmental Health Code Chapter 2)</p> <p>9</p>	<p>Credible record drawing with reserve area.</p>	<p>Remodel Office Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan for the proposal or a design plan if adding tanks or other septic components (see Remodel Guidelines). • Medical documentation of the person's needs to receive care from the property owner. • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may require a dye test. • Designer justification if connecting to existing septic system. • Signed and notarized Temporary use for Medical Hardship-Owner Acknowledgment form. • Annual renewals required. (Submit Remodel Temporary use application with satisfactory O&M inspection and notarized Acknowledgement form). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water review by water program or if you have an existing individual well, a bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection. • If proposing a new well, you must meet all requirements for a new well per Chapter 3.
	<p>Credible record drawing with no reserve or no record drawing.</p>	<p>Remodel Field Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan for the proposal or a design plan if adding tanks or other septic components (see Remodel Guidelines). • Medical documentation of the person's needs to receive care from the property owner. • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection (<1 year). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may require a dye test. • Designer justification if connecting to existing septic system. • Signed and notarized Temporary use for Medical Hardship-Owner Acknowledgment form. • Annual renewals required (Submit Remodel Temporary use application with satisfactory O&M inspection and notarized Acknowledgement form). • Test pit dug (2'W x 3'D) to establish a reserve drainfield area with location labeled (see Remodel Guidelines). • If you don't have a record drawing, we require a system locate*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water review by water program or if you have an existing individual well, a bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection. • If proposing a new well, you must meet all requirements for a new well per Chapter 3.
	<p>Proposing a new septic system or adding/replacing drainfield.</p>	<p>Design Remodel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design plan, submitted by a Septic Designer/Engineer that meets current code requirements that includes justification for temporary use. • Medical documentation of the person's needs to receive care from the property owner. • Signed and notarized Temporary use for Medical Hardship-Owner Acknowledgment form. • Annual renewals required. (Submit Remodel Temporary use application with satisfactory O&M inspection and notarized Acknowledgement form) • Not allowed continued use as an Accessory Dwelling Unit without additional permitting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water review by water program or if you have an existing individual well, a bacteria test (<1 year) and nitrate test (<3 years). We don't require a well inspection. • If proposing a new well, you must meet all requirements for a new well per Chapter 3.

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<p>10</p> <p>Convert Single Family Residence to an Adult Family Home up to 8 residents (not including caregiver). See RCW 70.128 for general Adult Family Home requirements. See RCW 70.128.066 when seeking approval for more than 6 residents (maximum of 8).</p>	<p>Credible record drawing with reserve area.</p>	<p>Remodel Office Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan with existing and proposed structures; labeled as Adult Family Care Facility; meets setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). • Letter from a septic designer for a change in use and analysis of wastewater strength and flow. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter must state whether staff will reside on site or if staff will work in shifts. You must account for staff flows in system size. • Maximum occupancy for Adult Family Home is 2 persons per bedroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wastewater flow must include caregiver(s). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caregiver(s) can't reside in same bedroom as residents. • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection <1 year old. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may require a dye test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water will need a water letter for the change in use or individual well must convert to a Public Well (Group A or B). Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@tpchd.org.
	<p>Credible record drawing with no reserve area or no record drawing.</p>	<p>Remodel Field Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan with existing and proposed structures; labeled as Adult Family Care Facility; meets setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). • Letter from a septic designer for a change in use and analysis of wastewater strength and flow. • Maximum occupancy for Adult Family Home is 2 persons per bedroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wastewater flow must include caregiver(s). ○ Calculate wastewater flow based on number of bedrooms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caregiver(s) can't reside in same bedroom as residents. • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection <1 year old. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may require a dye test. • Test pit dug (2'W x 3'D) to establish a reserve drainfield area (see Remodel Guidelines). • If you don't have a record drawing or lack of capacity information, we require a system locate*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water will need a water letter for the change in use or individual well must convert to a Public Well (Group A or B). Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@tpchd.org.
	<p>Existing OSS can't meet current code or doesn't have capacity or treatment levels needed for the proposed plan.</p>	<p>Design Remodel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate septic design plan from a Designer or Engineer with proposed and existing structures, conforming primary and reserve septic system drainfield; setbacks etc. • Meeting all requirements for a new septic design per current code. • Letter from a septic designer for a change in use and analysis of wastewater strength and flow. • Maximum occupancy for Adult Family Home is 2 persons per bedroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wastewater flow must include caregiver(s). ○ Calculate wastewater flow based on number of bedrooms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caregiver(s) can't reside in same bedroom as residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water will need a water letter for the change in use or individual well must convert to a Public Well (Group A or B). Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@tpchd.org.

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What you want	What you have	Application type	Onsite requirements	Water requirements
<p>11</p> <p>Convert Single Family Residence to commercial business or change of use in existing commercial structure.</p>	<p>Credible record drawing with reserve area***.</p>	<p>Commercial Office Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan with existing and proposed structures; labeled with use and gallons per day; meets setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). • You may submit previous record of approval from the Health Department instead of a site plan when it still accurately represents the site (no changes in flows or structures). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The designer must mention the approved record drawing in the justification letter. • Letter from a septic designer for a change in use and analysis of wastewater strength and flow. • Application must include each business use and designated flow listed in the justification letter or on the site plan. • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection <1 year old. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may require a dye test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water will need a water letter for the change in use or Individual well must convert to a Public Well (Group A or B) Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@tpchd.org.
	<p>Credible record drawing with no reserve area or no record drawing.</p>	<p>Commercial Field Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate site plan with existing and proposed structures; labeled with use and gallons per day; meets setbacks etc. (see Remodel Guidelines). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You may submit previous record of approval from Health Department instead of a site plan if it still accurately represents the site (no changes in flows or structures). ○ The designer must mention the approved record drawing must in the justification. • Letter from a septic designer for a change in use and analysis of wastewater strength and flow. • Application must include each business use and designated flow listed in the justification letter or on the site plan. • A satisfactory O&M septic inspection <1 year old. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We may require a dye test. • Test pit dug (2'W x 3'D) to establish a reserve drainfield area (see Remodel Guidelines). • If you don't have a record drawing or lack of capacity information, we require a system locate*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water will need a water letter for the change in use or Individual well must convert to a Public Well (Group A or B) Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@tpchd.org.
	<p>Existing OSS can't meet current code or doesn't have capacity or treatment levels needed for the proposed plan.</p>	<p>Commercial Design <1000 GPD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate septic design plan from a Designer or Engineer with proposed and existing structures, conforming primary and reserve septic system drainfield; setbacks etc. • Letter from a septic designer for a change in use and analysis of wastewater strength and flow. • Application must include each business use and designated flow listed in the justification letter or on the site plan. • Meeting all requirements for a new septic design per current code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water will need a water letter for the change in use or Individual well must convert to a Public Well (Group A or B) Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@tpchd.org.

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For all proposals

If you have unpermitted changes to the OSS or on the lot that impact the OSS, we may require an additional application with fees.

*System Locate: A system locate helps estimate septic system capacity [used to expand, replace, or add a residential or commercial structure served by an existing OSS or change the use of a structure served by an existing OSS (Sec 31, table 7)].

- If the system is inadequate for the proposal, we may require a new septic design.
- A septic professional should locate the system and draw a site or design plan.
- The drawing must provide clear and accurate information about all septic components:
 - Tank(s) size, material, and number of compartments.
 - Pumps.
 - Transport line.
 - Drainfield location, length, and depth of each lateral and material used.
- The drawing must also include:
 - The septic professionals name and title/license.
 - The method used to locate and identify the components (camera scoped, located each end of laterals, dug up tank, etc.).

** Temporary Housing Unit: a mobile home (including recreation park/trailer park model RV certified under ANSI A119.5) or manufactured home which you propose to be located temporarily on a lot, parcel, or tract of land. The lot, parcel, or tract's principal use shall be a single-family detached dwelling. A parent or parents of the occupants of the dwelling must occupy the temporary housing unit, or not more than one person who is a close relative of the occupants of the principal dwelling. An occupant of the temporary housing unit because of age, disability, prolonged infirmity, or other similar incapacitation is unable to independently maintain a separate type of residence without human assistance. (See Pierce County Title 18.25)

*** Change in tenants in an existing commercial structure with a credible record drawing with no reserve area only require the establishment of a reserve area when they are increasing flow.