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10 THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION

A Permit Application Checklist for Commercial Architects

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INTRODUCTION

Fortunately, you don't have to do it alone. Permit expeditors can give you your time back so you can focus on the most important parts of your job. But how do you know when it's time to hire one?

When it comes to commercial construction projects, a well-prepared building permit application can make all the difference. Get it right, and you're set for a smooth, timely approval process. But if even one detail is off or missing, you could be facing costly delays.

As a commercial architect, you know firsthand how challenging permit applications can be – the volume of information required, the varying standards from one location to another, and the constant shifts in local regulations. Keeping on top of it all can quickly become overwhelming.

That's where partnering with a permit expeditor from the outset proves invaluable. Experts in permitting, like the team at Scout Services, can guide you through the complex application process, identify potential roadblocks, and streamline each step. By bringing a permit expeditor on board early, you can stay on schedule and avoid many common obstacles that slow down approvals.

To help set you up for success, we've created this checklist of 10 essential items for commercial building permit applications. **Read on to learn what to include and how involving a permit expeditor from the start can make your project smoother from day one.**



Quick Checklist:

10 ESSENTIALS FOR A COMPLETE PERMIT APPLICATION

Before diving into the specifics, here's a high-level checklist of the top items every commercial building permit application needs. You can use this as a quick reference to ensure you're on track:

Scope of Work – Clear and comprehensive project description, including any structural, electrical, or plumbing work.

Construction Plans – Site plans, structural drawings, and architectural plans formatted to meet local standards.

Engineering Calculations – Accurate calculations and reports to support the construction details.

Zoning Information – Confirmation of zoning compliance based on local ordinances.

Environmental Assessments – Required assessments if the project impacts local environmental resources including asbestos reports, environmental air districts

Compliance Documents – Fire safety and other essential compliance documents per code including water, sewer, and landscape reviews and approvals.

Up-to-Date Forms – Ensure all application forms are current and complete.

Contractor Licensing – Valid certifications for all contractors and subcontractors involved.

Regulation Reviews – Verification that local building codes and regulations are met.

Health Department Approvals – Necessary if food service or other health-regulated operations are involved.

For architects working on complex commercial projects, involving a permit expeditor early can help make sure you have every item covered. Keep reading to learn how each part of this checklist works and where a permit expeditor can simplify the process and prevent delays.

Section 1:

PROVIDE A CLEAR DESCRIPTION OF THE SCOPE OF WORK

One of the most critical parts of any building permit is a clear, detailed scope. For commercial projects, you'll need to include specifics like the exact modifications to be made, the types of work involved (e.g. structural, plumbing, electrical, etc.), and the overarching project goals. The more precise and comprehensive you are, the less you risk miscommunications with the permitting authorities.

Vague or incomplete project scopes often result in delays, rework, or additional requests for clarification – all of which can push your project timeline back and increase costs.

You can avoid this completely by bringing in permit expeditors from the beginning. The experts at Scout will review your project scope to ensure that every required detail is included from the start. With the right details in place, your project will be positioned for a more efficient and successful review process.

Section 2:

INCLUDE THESE ACCURATE AND CLEAR CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS AND PLANS

As any commercial architect knows, construction drawings and plans are the core of any permit application. But the requirements for these documents – which ones you submit, the formatting, and the details – can be extensive. Each piece, from site plans and structural drawings to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) diagrams, must meet local standards. Ensuring this can be overwhelming.

The permit expeditors at Scout can streamline this process by helping you organize and verify the completeness of your documents before submission. Not only will this ensure your applications get into review on the first go, but it will also help you avoid the frustration of rework and resubmissions.

Section 3:

SUBMIT PRECISE ENGINEERING CALCULATIONS AND REPORTS

Beyond the scope of work, the required drawings and documents, and the application itself comes some of the finer details involved in the commercial construction permitting process. We're talking about things like engineering calculations (e.g. load calculations) and reports (e.g. soil reports). Each of these is vital to demonstrating the safety and viability of your project.

At Scout, our permit expeditors are well-versed in the nuances of these requirements. This support can be the difference between your project staying on schedule and being delayed due to some missing component.



Section 4:

UNDERSTAND ZONING INFORMATION — AND HOW THEY CAN AFFECT THE PROJECT

Zoning regulations are another big factor that can impact your commercial construction project. While architects may be adept at handling zoning requirements in familiar areas, it can become a challenge if you're working in a new municipality.

At Scout, our permit expeditors can support architects by conducting a thorough review of local zoning regulations to provide clarity on any restrictions and ensure compliance early in the process. This proactive approach reduces the risk of costly redesigns due to zoning conflicts.

Section 5:

KNOW WHEN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS ARE NEEDED

While not always required, environmental assessments can be necessary for projects in certain locations or with certain scopes. When needed, these assessments involve detailed reports that address environmental impact, which can add a lot of time and complexity to your permitting process.

At Scout, our expeditors are here to be your guides through this process. We identify the necessary offices that will need to review a project and guide your team through the items required, timing and submission of these processes, while remaining compliant and on schedule.

Section 6:

PREPARE FOR RIGOROUS COMPLIANCE DEMANDS, INCLUDING FIRE SAFETY

Complying with safety regulations is essential to getting your commercial building permits, and it's especially critical when it comes to fire safety. But fire codes can vary significantly from one municipality to another, so your plans need to include detailed information to demonstrate adherence to both local and national codes.

To help you prepare this information, our permit expeditors at Scout can assist with compliance and help ensure you have the accurate documentation you need for each of the different offices that need to review the plans.



Section 7:

AVOID DELAYS — AND MISSING, INCOMPLETE, OR OUTDATED FORMS

One of the most challenging parts of the commercial building permit application process is the fact that every municipality requires specific forms, and sometimes the requirements even vary by project scope. Missing, outdated, or incomplete forms are among the top causes of permitting delays.

At Scout, we specialize in helping architects avoid these pitfalls by verifying that all necessary forms are up-to-date and accurately completed before submission. This way, nothing slips through the cracks and you can maintain project momentum.

Section 8:

VERIFY AND COMPILE CONTRACTOR LICENSING AND CERTIFICATIONS

Commercial architects know the importance of working with licensed contractors and subcontractors. Almost every (if not all) municipalities across the country require this. But once again, incomplete documentation can be an issue here. It can even lead to project shutdowns.

Scout permit expeditors do all of the legwork, such as identifying if a contractor is not licensed, if their license is out of date, and what documents are needed for licensing. We are here to verify the completeness and accuracy of all related documentation to ensure it meets city, state, and national requirements.

Section 9:

STAY ON TOP OF LOCAL REGULATIONS

Local regulations, including zoning, building codes, and environmental standards, can vary widely between municipalities and are subject to change. For architects working across multiple locations, keeping up with these changes is critical but challenging.

At Scout, we maintain a database of 7,700+ municipalities and stay informed on any updates to these local regulations. This allows us to provide you with insights on recent and upcoming developments, local nuances, and anything else that will give you a proactive edge.





Section 10:

HEALTH DEPT APPROVAL

For commercial projects that involve food service – especially restaurants but grocery stores and retail locations also fall under this category – additional approval from the health department is typically required. On top of that, these reviews are often managed by a separate office, which adds another layer to the permitting process.

To support architects in this, the permit expeditors at Scout help identify where these health-related applications need to be submitted and manage the process for you. It's just another thing we can do to lighten your workload to ensure everything related to your permits is covered.

A QUICK OVERVIEW FOR THE BEST USE CASES FOR PERMIT EXPEDITERS

- **Multi-Site Retail Rollouts:** Large retail expansions involving multiple locations.
- **High-Density Urban Projects:** Complex projects in cities with extensive regulatory demands.
- **Specialty Installations:** Telecom, solar, and other specialized projects.
- **Time-Sensitive Projects:** Those with strict deadlines that require fast, reliable approvals.
- **Multi-Site Signage Programs:** Including installations and other tenant improvements.
- **Warehouse Fulfillment Installations:** Projects involving large equipment like racking and conveyor systems.
- **Restaurant Chains:** Chain locations that need standardized permitting across multiple jurisdictions.

STREAMLINE THE PROCESS WITH LOCAL PERMITTING SUPPORT FROM SCOUT SERVICES

Our permit expeditors at Scout streamline the often complex and time-consuming permitting process, providing a clear path forward for your project. By involving us early — especially in large-scale, time-sensitive, or high-regulation projects — we're here to help ensure smoother and more efficient approvals.

We're proud to offer nationwide permit expediting services with the local expertise you need.

Connect with us today to get started:

[CONTACT US](#)

