

OCCUPANCY PERMIT INSPECTION RESALE OF EXISTING SINGLE FAMILY HOMES

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Penn Hills has a requirement for an occupancy permit for the change of ownership, change of occupancy, or change of tenancy for every home in the Municipality. The ordinance places the burden of obtaining this permit on the current owner prior to the change or transfer of occupancy or ownership. The intent or policies behind the ordinance are simple:

1. Penn Hills is a bedroom community. The heart and soul of our tax base is the single-family home. We must do what we can to keep our homes in good condition.
2. It should be, and is, unlawful to sell a home that has building code violations.
3. Building code standards are minimal standards. They should apply to all homes in all neighborhoods. The goal is to protect the health and safety of the new occupants.

We realize that an occupancy permit is yet another document and another set of regulations that adds to the already cumbersome process in buying and selling real estate. The Municipality is, however dedicated to rigorous enforcement of this ordinance. At the same time, we realize that individual properties occasionally have unique circumstances. The Penn Hills Department of Code Enforcement is willing to work with all parties in resolving these issues.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The fee is currently \$50.00 with checks or money orders made out to the Municipality of Penn Hills.
2. Forms are available at the Department of Code Enforcement, 102 Duff Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235, 412-342-1192.
3. Applications can be processed by mail, but complications can be more easily resolved in person. Anyone can apply with the verbal permission of the current owner. Be prepared with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all parties involved together with a choice of dates and times for inspection and the photo ID of the applicant. Someone must be at the home to meet the inspector.
Scheduled inspections are performed Monday through Friday from 9:30 A. M. – 2:30 P. M. on the hour.
4. An inspection usually takes less than half an hour. The inspector will usually write up any problems and hand over a copy of the occupancy permit at that time.

5. Apply for the permit as early as possible allowing the maximum number of days between the date of inspection and the date of closing. This allows time for any corrections and the re-inspection.

TYPICAL PROBLEMS

Every house is unique and everything is possible, but over the course of many years of occupancy permit inspections, we have compiled the following list of typical problems:

1. Missing smoke detectors.
2. Handrails, both interior and exterior.
3. A solid core wood 1 - 3/4" or 1 - 3/8" door or an approved equivalent between the integral garages and basements is required.
4. Integral garages often require drywall or other interior finishing if they have exposed joists.
5. Broken window glass.
6. Missing street numbers.
7. Missing red recycling containers.

STANDARD PUNCH LIST

An inspector can list a violation of any municipal code – zoning, building, property maintenance, plumbing, sanitation, and many others. The following punch list, however, may be of some help:

- I. **Exterior Structure**
 - a. **Sanitation** – All exterior property areas and premises shall be maintained in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition, free from any accumulation of rubbish or garbage.
 - b. **Accessory Structures** – All accessory structures, including detached garages, fences, and walls shall be maintained in a structurally sound condition.
 - c. **Street Numbers** – Each structure of which a street number has been assigned shall have the number so assigned displayed in a position easily observed and readable from the public right-of-way (3" x 1/2" Arabic in nature).
 - d. **Structural Members** – All supporting structural members of all structures shall be kept structurally sound.
 - e. **Roofs** – The roof shall be structurally sound, tight, and not have any defects that might admit rain.
 - f. **Chimneys** – All chimneys, cooling towers, smoke stacks, and similar appurtenances shall be maintained structurally safe, sound and in good repair.
 - g. **Stairs and Porches** – Every stair, porch, fire escape, and balcony shall be maintained in sound condition and good repair.

- h. **Windows and Door Frames** – These components shall be maintained so as to exclude rain, and substantially exclude wind from entering the dwelling or structure.
- i. **Openable Windows** – Every Window, other than a fixed window, shall be capable of being easily opened and shall be held in position by window hardware.
- j. **Door Hardware** – Every exterior door and its hardware shall be maintained in good condition. Door locks on all doors entering dwelling units shall be in good repair and capable of tightly securing the door.
- k. **Exterior Handrails** – Every flight of stairs that are four or more risers high shall have a graspable handrail (2" diameter—no 2x4, etc. permitted) on at least one side of the stair.

II **INTERIOR STRUCTURE**

- a. **Structural Members** – These components shall be maintained structurally sound, not showing any signs of deterioration, which would render them incapable of carrying the imposed loads.
- b. **Interior Surfaces** – These components shall be maintained in good, clean and sanitary condition. Peeling paint, cracked or loose plaster, decayed wood and other defective surface conditions shall be eliminated.
- c. **Sanitation** – The interior shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition, free from any accumulation of rubbish, refuse, or garbage.
- d. **Handrails and Guardrails** – Every flight of stairs that are four or more risers high shall have handrails. Every open portion of a stair, landing, or balcony that is more than thirty inches above the floor or grade below shall have guardrails. Handrails shall be not less than thirty inches or more than thirty-four inches high, measured vertically above the nosing of the tread or above the floor of the landing or balcony. Guardrails shall be not less than thirty inches high above the floor of the landing or balcony. Every handrail and guardrail shall be firmly fastened and capable of bearing normally imposed loads and shall be maintained in good condition. Every handrail is required to be easily graspable (2" diameter)—no 2x4, 1x6
- e. **Light** – All spaces or rooms shall be provided sufficient light so as not to endanger health and safety.
- f. **Toilet Rooms** – Every bathroom and water closet compartment shall comply with the light and ventilation requirements for habitable spaces as required by Section ES-401.2, except that a window shall not be required in bathrooms or water closet compartments equipped with an approved mechanical ventilation system. Air exhausted by a mechanical ventilation system from bathroom or

water closet compartments equipped with an approved mechanical ventilation system from bathroom or water closet compartment must be exhausted to the exterior and may not be recirculated to any space, including the space from which it is withdrawn.

- g. **Clothes Dryer Exhaust** – Clothes dryer venting systems shall be independent of all other systems and shall be vented in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- h. **Below Grade Rooms** – Rooms partially or completely below grade shall not be used as habitable spaces unless:
 - 1. Floors and walls are water tight so as to prevent entry of moisture;
 - 2. Total window area, total openable window area and ceiling height are in accordance with this code;
 - 3. Required minimum window area of every habitable space is entirely above the grade adjoining such window area, and;
 - 4. Means of egress and emergency escape are provided in accordance with this code.
- i. **Plumbing Fixtures** – All plumbing fixtures shall be maintained in a safe and usable condition.
- j. **Sewage System** – All fixtures shall be properly connected to a public sewer or a properly functioning septic system. Municipal inspectors will not routinely dye test sewers or septic systems. Every waste stack and sewer line shall be free of obstructions and leaks.
- k. **Heating Facilities** – Furnaces, fireplaces and other heating devices shall be properly installed and vented.
- l. **Smoke Detectors** – A working smoke detector must be installed in each bedroom and on each level of the house.
- m. **GFI's (ground fault interceptors)** – Will be required near sinks (kitchen, laundry, and bathroom), for all outlets above a kitchen countertop and for all exterior outlets.
- n. **Carbon Monoxide Detectors** – Carbon Monoxide Detectors are required near bedrooms & on the same level as the gas furnace & hot water tank.

III. ACCESSORY STRUCTURES/GARAGES

- a. Integral garages shall have one-hour fire-rated walls and ceilings. Drywall finishing is often required.
- b. Doors between integral garages must be 1 3/4" or 1 3/8" solid core wooden doors or an approved equivalent.
- c. Doors shall have sweeps or sills.

- d. Garages separated by a breezeway may also require fire-rated construction.
- e. Detached garage door devices and other accessory structures must be maintained structurally sound and free of code deficiencies.
- f. Automatic garage door devices will be tested for safety features.
- g. Swimming pools – both in-ground and aboveground pools must meet fencing and safety requirements.
- h. Elevated decks and balconies must have properly designed guardrails.

IV. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- a. Conversions to two family units, granny flats, carriage house apartment, etc. can only be approved with applications for multi-family occupancy permits.
- b. An inspector will look for other common zoning violations such as junk cars, rubbish and debris, business activity, setbacks, etc.
- c. Inflow and infiltration – A dye test on single-family homes is automatically required. Any possibility or suspicion of the inflow of storm water from down spouts, driveway drains, waterproofing systems, natural springs, or wet basements into the sanitary system will trigger an independent dye test from a qualified inspector at the owner's expense.

This list is not all inclusive. It was prepared to generally assist homeowners, real estate agents and other parties in understanding the occupancy permit process. Codes and ordinances change on a daily basis. Please contact the Penn Hills Department of Code Enforcement with specific questions (412-342-1192).

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PUNCH LIST FOR INSPECTORS

1. OK COMPLIES
2. INSTALL EXTERIOR/INTERIOR HANDRAILS ANYWHERE THERE ARE 4 OR MORE RISERS.
3. REPAIR/REPLACE FRAYED ELECTRICAL CABLE.
4. INSTALL WORKING SMOKE DETECTORS IN EACH BEDROOM AND ON EACH LEVEL & CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS NEAR FURNACE AREA & NEAR BEDROOMS..
5. NEEDS 1 3/4" OR 1 3/8" SOLID CORE WOOD DOOR BETWEEN GARAGE AND BASEMENT.
6. GARAGE CEILING MUST BE ONE-HOUR FIRE-RATED, TAPED & SEALED.
7. FIRE STOPPING NEEDED ON ONE-HOUR FIRE-RATED WALL FROM GARAGE TO BASEMENT.
8. ALL BROKEN WINDOWS MUST BE REPAIRED/REPLACED.
9. INSTALL EXHAUST FAN IN BATHROOM.
10. REPAIR/REPLACE ALL MISSING RECEPTACLE COVERS.
11. GARAGE DOOR OPENER MUST RETRACT; IF NOT, REPAIR/REPLACE, REMOVE.
12. GUIDE RAILING NEEDED WITH PROPER SPACING BETWEEN DOWN RAILS 4" MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE.

13. FRONT STOOP LANDING MUST BE MINIMUM OF 3' X 3' WITH MAXIMUM STEP OF 8 ¾" TO TOP OF THRESHOLD.
14. REPAIR/REPLACE FRONT STEPS IN ACCORDANCE WITH 1996 BOCA CODE.
15. SCRAPE & PAINT EXCESSIVE PEELLING PAINT.
16. REPAIR/REPLACE GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS.
17. SUBJECT TO FIRE MARSHALL'S REPORT.
18. VENT ON WATER HEATER NEEDS REPAIRED/REPLACED.
19. ADDRESS NUMBERS MUST BE 3" X ½" ARABIC AND VISIBLE FROM THE STREET.
20. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS NEEDED NEAR EXIT DOORS NFPA #10
21. EXIT LIGHTING REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH 1996 BOCA CODE.
22. SMOKE AND HEAT DETECTION SYSTEM REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PENN HILLS' AMENDMENTS TO 1996 BOCA CODE.
23. KITCHEN SYSTEM REQUIRES ANSEL SYSTEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH FIRE MARSHAL'S APPROVAL.
24. SPRINKLER SYSTEM REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PENN HILLS' AMENDMENTS TO 1996 BOCA CODE.
25. DYE TEST REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ORDINANCE #2080 WITH A \$20 PERMIT FEE. **DYE TEST FORMS MUST BE FILED WITH THE MUNICIPALITY *AFTER* THE TEST HAS BEEN COMPLETED.**
26. SECURED KEY ACCESS SYSTEM (KNOX BOX) REQUIRED UNDER ORDINANCE #2092.
27. BALLISTERS ARE REQUIRED (4" SPACINGS) WHERE FALL IS 30" OR GREATER.
28. REPAIR/REPLACE EMERGENCY LIGHTING.
29. ELECTRICAL INSPECTION REQUIRED BY THIRD PARTY INSPECTION AGENCY.

30. BUILDING PERMIT REQUIRED FOR \$2,000 OR MORE OF FAIR MARKET VALUE WITH PROPER DRAWING.
31. \$50 PERMIT FEE REQUIRED FOR EACH FIRE ALARM/SPRINKLER INSTALLED.
32. \$50 PERMIT FEE REQUIRED FOR ANY FIRE PERMIT (UNDERGROUND TANKS, BALSTINGS, ALARMS, ETC.)
33. ALLEGHENY COUNTY PLUMBING DIVISION OR A REGISTERED PLUMBER MUST PERFORM PLUMBING INSPECTION.
34. PANIC HARDWARE REQUIRED ON EXIT DOORS;
REPAIR/REPLACE/INSTALL.
35. FURNACE AREA TO BE INSPECTED IN ORDER TO MEET REQUIREMENTS OF BOCA MECHANICAL CODE.
36. DIRECTIONAL EXIT SIGNS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH 1996 BOCA CODE.
37. EXTRA PLUMBING FIXTURES WILL REQUIRE PERMIT FEE OF \$50/FIXTURE.
38. PROPERTY MAINTENANCE OF GRASS MUST BE KEPT AT A UNIFORM HEIGHT OF 10" OR LESS.
39. G.F.I. (GROUND FAULT INTERCEPTOR) WILL BE REQUIRED NEAR SINKS (KITCHEN, LAUNDRY AND BATHROOM), FOR OUTLETS ABOVE KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS AND FOR ALL EXTERIOR OUTLETS.

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