

## Ten Things to Know Before Renovating or Building in the Town of Chevy Chase

- 1. Do I need both a Town and a County Permit?** You need a permit from both the Town of Chevy Chase and Montgomery County in order to undertake a building project that changes the three-dimensional shape of your house, for new fences, and for walls greater than 30” in height. You may need a Montgomery County permit (electrical, mechanical, or plumbing), but not a Town permit, for a project that does not change the exterior dimensions of your home. You need a Town permit, but not a Montgomery County permit, for replacement fences and for walls 30” or less in height. For more information on Montgomery County permitting requirements, please call 240-777-6200.
- 2. What if my project can’t comply with the Town’s building regulations?** If your project cannot conform to Town building rules, you may request that the Town Council grant a variance. In evaluating a request, the Council looks at topographical hardship, comments from concerned residents, the impact on neighboring residents, and other exceptional conditions.
- 3. I’ve developed schematic plans, now what?** If your project increases the square footage of any single floor of your home by more than 500 square feet, the Town requires a Pre-PAC (Pre-Permit Application Consultation) meeting. Your immediate neighbors will be invited to this meeting. This is a great chance to meet your neighbors and address specific concerns they may have about your project.
- 4. What else does the Town look at?** Before the Town issues a building permit, a project must pass the following review steps (the size threshold that triggers the requirement is in parenthesis): Pre-PAC (500+ s.f. on any floor), water drainage plan (700+ s.f. new impervious surface), zoning review including setbacks and height (all), tree protection (all), site management meeting (500 + s.f on any floor), and site management conditions (all). Also, the Town will not issue a building permit without a copy of an approved Montgomery County permit. Details on each of the review requirements follows.
- 5. What is a Water Drainage Plan?** If you add more than 700 square feet of impervious surface to your lot, a civil engineer or land surveyor needs to develop a water mitigation plan to ensure that your project will not adversely impact your neighbors. Impervious surfaces include the footprint of a new house, new additions, patios, walkways or driveways.
- 6. What Tree Protection is required?.** All trees on a property greater than 24” in circumference must be protected during construction. If a 24” tree cannot be protected or must be removed, you must apply for a removal permit. The Town Manager will issue a permit only if the tree is dead, hazardous, or on the Town’s list of undesirable trees. In all other cases, you must file an appeal seeking to remove a tree based on the standards of the Town’s Tree Ordinance. This appeal is decided by the Town’s Tree Board.
- 7. What are important Zoning Requirements?** Raised structures cannot cover more than 35% of your lot under current regulations. The Town’s setbacks rules differ from those of the County. The side and rear building setbacks are determined by a formula – so each lot’s setbacks are unique. There is a setback calculator on the Town’s website. The front setback for a house is the “established building line,” which is determined by the average setback of houses along a block, or 25 feet, whichever is greater. Buildings can be no higher than 35 feet to the highest point on the roof, or 30 feet to the midpoint between the eaves and ridge of a roof.
- 8. What are Site Management Meeting Requirements/Conditions?** If your project increases the square footage of any single floor of your home by more than 500 square feet, the Town requires a Site Management meeting. Your immediate neighbors will be invited to this meeting to discuss the specific construction site conditions during construction. Additionally, the Town does a review of each building project and can add specific site management conditions as necessary.
- 9. What are the Town’s fence and wall regulations?** The Town requires a permit for both new and replacement fences and walls. Fences and walls cannot be more than 6.5’ tall. Front yard fences and wall are not allowed by right, but may be requested of the Council through the Town’s variance process (see point 2 above). Structures 11” high or less are not considered to be walls unless two or more of them are terraced. Corner lots have two front yards, one along each street.
- 10. Our Town Staff Is Here to Assist You.** The process is less difficult than it seems, and the Town is prepared to help guide you through all of the steps to successful and compliant completion of your building project. If you have any questions, or need clarification any of the Town’s building regulations, please call the Town Office at 301-654-7144 or refer to the Town Code which is available online.