



Contact Us

**24-Hour
Inspection Line:**
(850) 981-7050

Main:
(850) 981-7000

Email
developmentservices
@santarosa.fl.gov

Fax Number:
(850) 623-1208

Behind the Scenes: Process for Permitting Signs

What once took several days to accomplish, with visits to two different offices, two applications, and two fee payments, has now been reduced to a one-stop, 15 minute process.

Signs that are installed in Santa Rosa County are subject to both Land Development Code and Building Code regulations. In the past, to receive a permit for installation of a sign, an applicant was required to submit one application to the Planning & Zoning Department and a second application to the Building Inspections Department. Since the creation of the Development Services Center, that process has improved greatly.



Now an applicant for a sign permit only needs to submit one application to the Development Services Center. Reviews for compliance with the Land Development Code and the Building Code are conducted "behind the scenes" by a planner and a building code plans examiner while the customer waits. When the application is approved, only one fee is paid. The process typically takes no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Sign permitting is just one of a number of review and approval processes that have been streamlined since the creation of the Development Services Center and we are always looking for additional ways to save our customers time and money. If you have suggestions regarding the permitting process or the regulations, please share those with Beckie Cato at bekiec@santarosa.fl.gov or Rhonda Royals at rhondar@santarosa.fl.gov. Beckie and Rhonda can also be contacted by phone at (850) 981-7000.

Quick Links



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April-June 2013 Reports

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Landscaping and Tree Protection: Business Friendly Code Changes

The County Land Development Code addresses landscaping and tree protection in four separate ways:

- right-of-way landscaping
- parking area landscaping
- buffers
- tree protection and mitigation

In June, the board of county commissioners approved changes to the Code to better balance the community development need for landscaping and tree protection with the needs of business owners. This article highlights some of the key changes adopted.

Landscaping of Existing Developed or Redeveloped Properties

Previously, the code required that when an existing, developed property was modified, the landscaping of the site had to be brought up to current code requirements. This requirement was particularly difficult for small business owners moving into existing

Santa Rosa's Development Service Center was created to provide a collaborative and comprehensive approach to customer service. The DSC enables residents and property owners to accomplish all of their development related county business at one location, with the help of well trained and organized county employees.

How's our customer service? www.santarosa.fl.gov/customerservice/survey.html

buildings with plans to add to the building or to the parking area. The code now contains a threshold below which landscaping is not required. Specifically, if additions to buildings do not increase the floor area in excess of 8 percent of the ground floor area of the principal structure or 500 square feet, whichever is less, no new landscaping is required. In addition, if the addition of parking spaces does not exceed 25 percent or 20 spaces, whichever is less, no additional landscaping is required.

Right-of-Way Landscaping

Right-of-way landscaping is a provision of the code that requires the planting of new trees based upon the width of the property. Traditionally, plantings have been installed along the front of the property adjacent to the right-of-way which resulted in trees blocking visibility of businesses, visibility of signs, and interference with overhead utility lines. The recent changes retain the requirement to plant trees, the number of which is based upon the width of the property along the right-of-way line, but allows those trees to be planted anywhere on the site. New provisions allow for the substitution of shrubs for trees when the trees would impact overhead utility lines or limit the visibility of a business and other locations are not feasible, prohibits the planting of trees within 20 feet of overhead utility lines, and exempts the Rural Protection Zone from the right-of-way landscaping requirements.

Parking Area Landscaping

The planting of trees to provide shade in paved parking areas can sometimes result in limited visibility of a business. Previously, the code required parking lots to have one tree planting island at the end of every 12 parking spaces which limited parking lot design options and resulted in trees being planted in front of the businesses. Recent changes to the code allow trees in parking areas to be planted within or adjacent to paved parking areas and encourages the creative design and spacing of landscaped areas to accomplish the intent to relieve the expanse of paving without blocking visibility of the business. The number of trees required to be planted remains the

same, with one tree required for every 12 parking spaces. In addition, when the required parking area trees would limit the visibility of a business, and alternative locations are not feasible, shrubs may be substituted for trees at a ratio of 4:1.

Protected Tree Mitigation - Option to Pay a Fee in Lieu of Planting Trees

The land development code identifies specific trees that are considered "protected" in Santa Rosa County. When protected trees are removed from a development site, the impact of that removal must be mitigated by the planting of new trees. The number of mitigation trees to be planted is based upon a mitigation schedule that is provided in the code. For example, if a live oak with a diameter of 18 inches at breast height is removed, four inches of mitigation caliper must be planted. That mitigation could take the form of two, two inch trees or one four-inch tree. In some cases, it is difficult to locate mitigation trees on-site without blocking the visibility of a business or sign, or without impacting overhead utility lines. In such cases, a new option is now available to pay a fee in lieu of planting mitigation trees. The fee is established at \$130 for each inch of mitigation required, with those payments deposited into the county's tree mitigation fund to be used for purchasing, planting, and maintaining trees on public property.

These new requirements not only apply to new development, but apply to existing development sites as well. Any existing development may make changes to existing landscaping provided that it complies with the current code. Such changes require no permit or submittal of a site plan, but staff are available to meet with property owners to discuss their landscaping plans to ensure that they comply with the current code.



Minor Land Clearing

The land development code was recently revised to make it easier to receive a permit for minor land clearing prior to the approval of a site plan or subdivision plat. Minor land clearing is defined as "Any activity that removes vegetative ground cover without disturbing the soil and without the removal of protected trees." As previously written, a land clearing permit was required for the clearing of any property, the land clearing application required the submittal of a site plan and tree survey, a 10 foot buffer of existing vegetation was required to remain along the right-of-way line, and adequate storm water control was required to be provided. The new code language includes the following:

- The site plan submitted does not have to be prepared by an engineer, or a simple sketch may be provided
- A statement signed by the property owner indicating that no protected trees will be removed may be submitted instead of a tree survey
- A buffer of existing vegetation is only required adjacent to incompatible uses, not along the right-of-way line
- Storm water control is not required

The following uses are specifically exempt for the requirement to apply for a minor land clearing permit:

- Agriculture or silviculture activity in an agriculture zoning district
- Lots or parcels of land for the construction of one single family or duplex structure
- Property maintenance activity such as bush hogging, mowing or tree trimming.

The application for minor land clearing can be found on-line at www.santarosa.fl.gov/developmentservices/ For more information, please contact Jennifer Tilden at jennifert@santarosa.fl.gov or Leslie Statler at leslies@santarosa.fl.gov. Jennifer and Leslie can also be reached by phone at (850) 981-7000.

Recently Approved Development Orders - April 4 to July 12

- Tiger Point Office Park, parking lot, 3404 Santa Rosa Dr., Gulf Breeze
- Milton Chevrolet Show Room, remodel, 5925 Highway 90, Milton
- Hidden Treasure Watersports, outdoor amusement, 8673 Navarre Pkwy., Navarre
- Milton Forklift, repair facility, 7687 Johnson Rd., Milton
- C&S Signs, new manufacturing & assembly structure, 8895 S Lynn Rd., Milton
- Guarantee Title of Northwest Florida, change of use to office, 4284 Justice Ave., Pace
- Taminco, chemical plant expansion, 4575 U.S. 90, Pace
- Pace Barefoot Espresso, vendor, 8673 Navarre Parkway, Navarre

Recently Approved Certificates of Occupancy

- Messenger Warehouse, addition, 5880 Commerce Road. Milton Estimated cost of construction \$40,000,
- Maskery Crematory, new building, 2346 New York St., Jay. Estimated cost of construction \$50,000
- McKenzie Buick GMC, remodel and accessory building, 6500 Caroline St., Milton. Estimated cost of construction, \$600,000,
- Reserve Point Townhomes, 6 townhouse units, 8857-8871 White Ibis Way, Navarre. Estimated cost of construction, \$356,000
- Pace Patriot Townhomes, 4 units, 4453-4461 Governors St., Pace. Estimated cost of construction, \$240,000
- Milton Storage Center, new storage building, 6065 Vanity Fair Road Bldg 2, Milton. Estimated cost of construction \$75,000.
- Hampton Inn & Suites, new hotel, 61 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze. Estimated cost of construction \$7,100,000.
- The Strand, interior remodel, 203 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Unit B, Gulf Breeze. Estimated cost of construction \$40,000.
- PT Solutions, interior remodel, 4338 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze. Estimated cost of construction \$45,000.
- SLS Properties of North Florida, interior remodel, 3781 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze. Estimated cost of construction \$48,000.
- Santa Rosa Medical Center Sleep Lab, interior remodel, 5992 Berryhill Road, Suite 204, Milton. Estimated cost of construction \$95,000.
- Oak Ridge Gun Range, interior remodel, 1889 Cowen Road, Gulf Breeze. Estimated cost of construction \$150,000.
- Gulf Breeze Treatment Center, interior remodel, 350 Pensacola Beach Road, Gulf Breeze. Estimated cost of construction \$530,000.

What is Erosion Control?

Erosion control is the practice of preventing or controlling wind, water and sediment erosion on land development and construction sites. Proper perimeter erosion control measures should be in place before site disturbance occurs to capture sediment and control run-off onto adjacent properties and roadways. The developer or contractor should plan construction activities in phases in order to help reduce the erosion potential of the site. By clearing only the areas that are being developed will make it much easier to prevent and control erosion. Proper placement, adequate amount and appropriate materials are key principles of controlling erosion. Methods of perimeter controls include: silt fencing, temporary diversion berms, mats and blankets (straw bales) or a combination of different methods. Perimeter controls should be inspected routinely by the developer or contractor, especially after a runoff event, to ensure methods being used are still adequate or if repairs are needed.

A well planned and well maintained land development area or construction site with adequate perimeter controls in place can prevent off- site sedimentation.

2013 is a Renewal Year!

Florida Business Tax Receipt.

What happens if I don't renew?

It is important for you to know that if you are not going to renew your competency card, you should strongly consider placing the card in an inactive status. The cost to inactive your competency card is \$75 and this fee inactivates your competency card for two years. You can inactivate your card for three consecutive renewal periods for a total of six years.

If you do not renew or inactivate your competency card, you run the risk of having to retest for both your trade and business

and law. Retesting is much more expensive than inactivation. The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation will issue your Registered Contractor's License only if you carry a current competency card from your local jurisdiction. Failing to have a current competency card may jeopardize your "active" status with the State of Florida. As a reminder, the state requires that you maintain CEU's during any inactive period.

If you have any questions regarding inactivation or licensing in general, please call (850) 981-7000 and speak with one of our permit technicians.

This is a renewal year for all Santa Rosa County Competency Cardholders, Active and Inactive. Biennial renewals expire on October 31 of every odd year. All Active and Inactive Santa Rosa County Competency Card holders must renew by November 1; after that date, competency cards not renewed are subject to late fees. Our MILTON office will accept renewals between 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. If renewing by mail, please send a self-address stamped envelope for the returned competency card. You will need to provide **a copy of your current State of Florida Registration and your current**