



## **Guidelines for Residential Partial Demolition**

### **1. Introduction**

In many improvement projects, the existing walls are often part of the scope of work. This can involve either removing or demolishing, modifying, or repairing exterior walls, depending on the project's goals. When this happens, the contractor applies for an alteration permit or addition/alteration permit if there is an extension of the existing building.

Depending on the extent of demolition, a demolition permit may be required. In 2023, Section 8-27 of the County Code, "Demolition or removal of buildings", was amended to establish a threshold that triggers the requirement for the demolition permit:

*Demolition* is defined as tearing down or destroying an entire building or structure, or sixty-seven percent or more of first story exterior walls of a one-family or two-family dwelling unit. *Demolition* includes the conversion of an exterior wall into an interior wall. Basement and cellar walls are not considered exterior walls.

If a demolition permit is required, a new home building, land development and trade permits are also required to rebuild and typically expand the original existing structure.

Please note that depending on the extent of the demolition and the condition of the remaining structure, it may be more cost-effective to demolish the entire building and rebuild.

### **2. Definitions**

The following words and terms, whenever they occur in this document, are defined as follows:

*Addition.* An extension or increase in floor area, number of stories or height of a building or structure

*Alteration.* Any construction, retrofit or renovation to an existing structure other than repair or addition. Also, a change in a building, electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing systems that involves an extension, addition or change to the arrangement, type or purpose of the original installation.

*Dwelling Unit.* A single unit providing complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for sleeping, cooking, and sanitation.

*Exterior Wall.* Walls that define the exterior boundaries of a dwelling unit conditioned space.

*Major Alteration Projects.* Projects that include substantial demolition requiring a demolition permit

### **3. Purpose**

This document provides guidance on how to calculate the threshold, clarifies what permits and documentation is needed for plan review, and explains other requirements for permit processing.

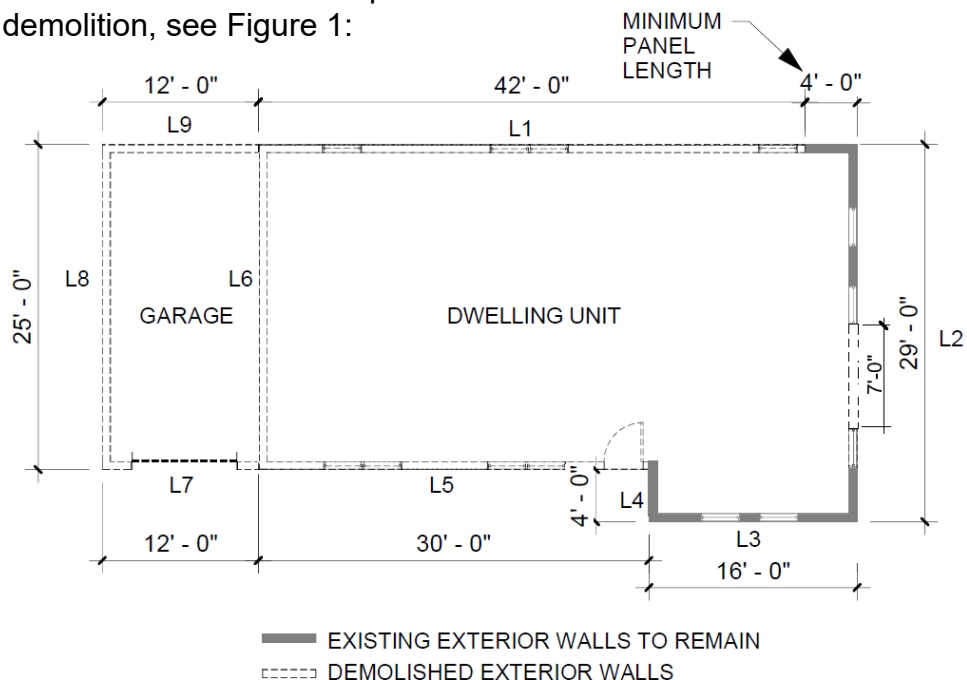
#### 4. Determine the amount of demolished walls

Any modification to the structural elements of a wall including removal, relocation, alteration, enclosure, or reconstruction may be considered a demolition. For exterior walls, these changes must be included in the demolition calculations.

Specifically, exterior walls that are temporarily moved or shifted to accommodate foundation work or excavation are also considered demolished, even if they are reinstalled.

According to the County Code, the removal of sixty-seven percent (67%) or more of the first-story exterior walls (above the basement or foundation level) of a one-family or two-family dwelling constitutes a demolition and requires a demolition permit.

To determine if 67 percent or more of the exterior walls were demolished (threshold), calculate the total length of the existing walls, then calculate the total length of the walls to be demolished, and finally calculate the ratio of those total lengths. Exterior wall coverings (siding) and drywall may be removed from the entire wall. The minimum panel length in the remaining wall is 4' or the horizontal projection of let-in-brace and at least one panel in the wall must remain for a wall to be considered remaining after demolition, see Figure 1:



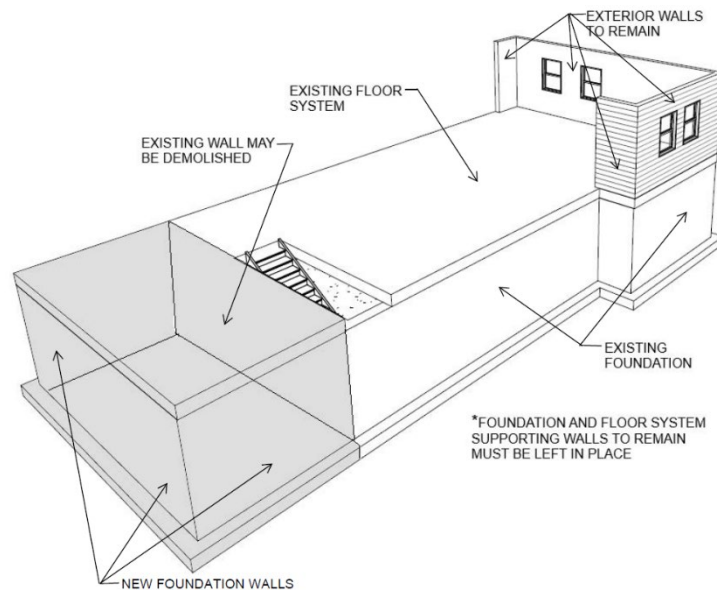
WALLS	EXIST	DEMO	REMAIN
L1	46	42	4
L2	29	7	22
L3	16	0	16
L4	4	0	4
L5	30	30	0
L6	16	16	0
L7	0	0	0
L8	0	0	0
L9	0	0	0
Total	141	95	46

Percent of  
demolished  
walls

67% = 95/141 Demolition Permit Required

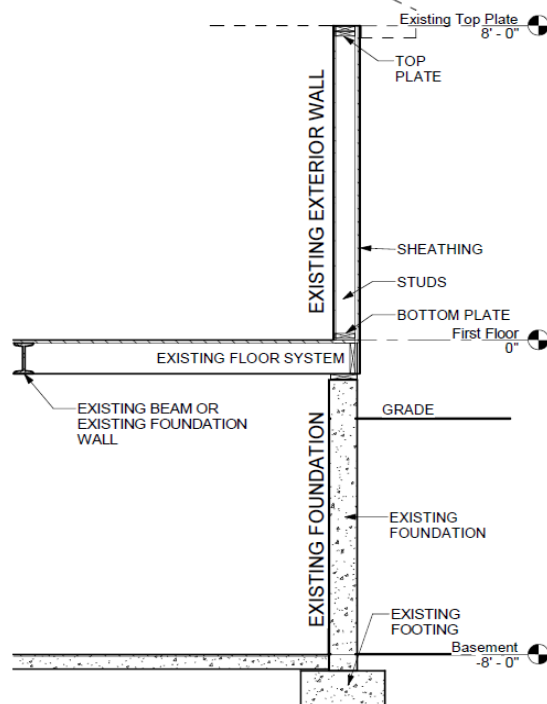
**FIGURE 1**

When the scope of work is to rebuild a new house, walls that form basements and cellars must be left in place in their entirety and are excluded from the threshold calculation. If the foundation walls of the new house enclose the existing foundation walls, those portions are allowed to be demolished, see Figure 2.



**Figure 2**

Existing floor systems that support the remaining first story exterior walls must be left in place between bearing supports, see Figure 3.

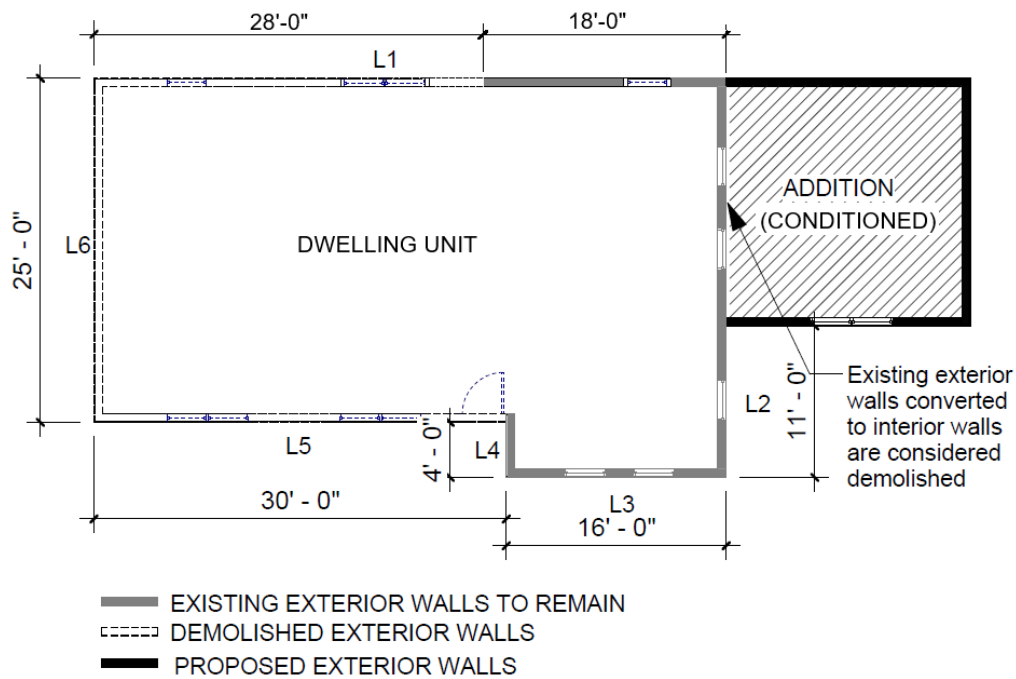


**Figure 3**

A wood or cold-formed steel framed wall is considered demolished if bottom plate, top plate, studs, sheathing or other original bracing are altered, for example:

- Removal of the existing sheathing
- Replacing sheathing where sheathing is damaged
- Adding sheathing where sheathing was non-existent
- Enlarging or altering the location of existing doors and windows. Many modifications to windows are allowed and are not considered to be demolition. Windows that are replaced with new windows of the same size do not result in any demolition if the header and king studs are not impacted. A windowsill, including cripples and bottom plate, may be removed to create a larger window or door. Windows can be widened and only the portion of the wall where the king stud previously existed at the end of the new window is included in the calculations.
- Removal or alteration of the floor system supporting the bottom plate, see Figure 3

If an exterior wall, or portion thereof, is enclosed by a new wall or a conditioned addition is constructed to the outside of an exterior wall, then the exterior wall is considered demolished as that exterior wall will no longer be exterior to the dwelling and must be included in the calculation of the total length of the walls to be demolished, Figure 4.



	EXIST	DEMO	REMAIN
L1	46	28	18
L2	29	18	11
L3	16	0	16
L4	4	0	4
L5	30	30	0
L6	25	25	0
Total	150	101	49

Percent of demolished walls 67%= 101/150 Demolition Permit Required

Figure 4

## 5. Permits required

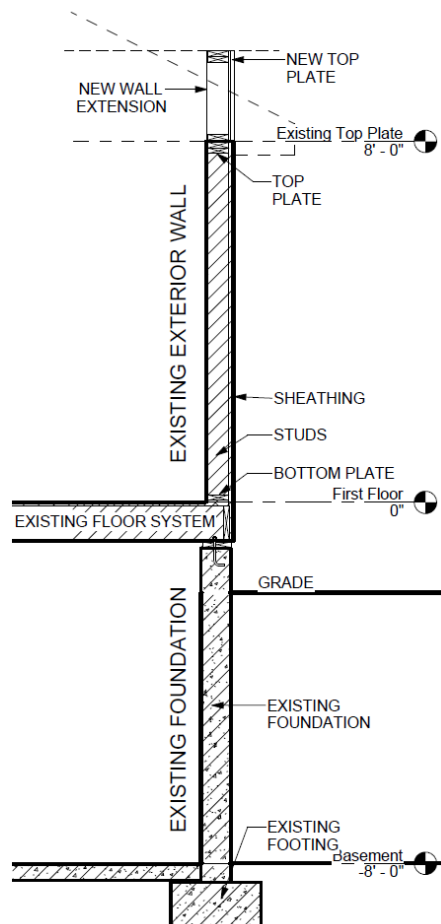
For alteration projects that include partial demolition, an [alteration](#) or [addition](#) permit is required. If the project includes both alteration and addition to the structure, an addition/alteration permit will be issued. Land development permits and trade permits may be required as well.

For major alterations projects, a [demolition](#), a [new home building](#), land development permits and trade permits are required such as Sediment Control and Right-of-Way permits (for working in the public right-of-way).

## 6. Permit documentation required

Include demolition plans with the alteration or new home building permit, clearly showing the areas to be demolished and their location.

Structural modifications to the remaining walls, such as extending the wall height may need to be assessed for their load bearing and wind bracing capacity, see Figure 5. A licensed design professional must evaluate any alterations to the walls to certify compliance with building codes and regulations for new construction, while ensuring safety and structural integrity of the rebuild home.



**FIGURE 5**

## 7. Mandatory meeting before building permit issuance

A mandatory meeting with the applicant or homeowner and plan reviewers is required before issuing a new house building permit to discuss and confirm the requirements and conditions of the permit.

Field visits may be required before proceeding or during construction to ensure the conditions of the permit are not exceeded.

Plan reviewers may require a meeting before issuing an alteration or addition/alteration permits where substantial demolition occurs.

## **8. Inspections**

If damage to the remaining building is discovered during construction, contact DPS inspectors immediately to discuss the situation before proceeding.