Office of Innovation & Technology

Permit Navigator
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Permit Navigator? What does it do?
The Permit Navigator is a pilot project designed to help users determine what permits and approvals they need for selected types of residential and commercial projects. The Permit Navigator walks users through a series of questions about their projects and brings them to a summary page linking them to additional information on phila.gov that will support them in continuing with the permitting process.

Residents can apply for permits online at eCLIPSE.phila.gov 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Please note: The Permit Navigator tool does NOT integrate with eCLIPSE. The permit navigator is an informational tool only and does not replace nor interfere with the current permit processes.

The Permit Navigator is a pilot project. What does that mean?
This is a pilot project that will help the City evaluate whether this type of tool is helpful for residents. As such, only certain uses are included in the tool to give both the City and residents the opportunity to test the tool and provide feedback. Quantitative and qualitative data from the tool will be closely monitored and evaluated during the pilot period, which will help allow the City to determine next steps based on the merits of the technology and user experience. If this project is successful, the project may expand with additional uses over time.

How will the city evaluate this pilot?
The City will use anonymous and aggregated user information to assess how many people use the tool, which permits they are using it for, and what their experience like. In addition, the project team will conduct focus groups and information sessions to gather feedback. If you would like to be included in these or want more information, please reach out to the Smart City team at SmartCityPHL@phila.gov.

Why did the City decide to build a Permit Navigator?
City departments, including the Department of Commerce, the Department of Licenses and Inspections, the Department of Planning and Development, and Smart City PHL partnered to build a Permit Navigator tool **in response to requests from business owners and homeowners for assistance complying with permit requirements.**

Which uses does the permit navigator include?

At this time, the Permit Navigator includes selected residential and commercial use cases. Residential use cases include permits for renovations to existing one- or two-family homes.

Business use cases include primarily commercial storefronts, including:

- Commercial services use
  - Assembly and entertainment
  - Body art service
  - Building services
  - Business support
  - Casino
  - Financial services
  - Maintenance and repair of consumer goods
  - Movie theater
  - Nightclubs and private clubs
  - Personal credit establishment
  - Personal services
  - Prepared food shop
  - Radio, television, and recording services
  - Sit-down restaurants
  - Smoking lounge
  - Take-out restaurants
  - Visitor accommodations
- Office use
  - Business and professional
  - Medical, dental, and health practitioner (group)
  - Medical, dental, and health practitioner (individual)
- Public, civic, and institutional use
  - Adult care
  - Child care center
  - Group child care
- Retail sales use
  - Building supplies and equipment
  - Consumer goods
  - Drug paraphernalia stores
  - Food, beverages, and groceries
  - Pets and pet supplies
  - Sundries, pharmaceuticals, and convince sales
  - Wearing apparel and accessories

I don't see my type of project in the tool. Why?

The Permit Navigator is a **pilot project** only. At this time, our goal is to understand if this tool is helpful to residents for determining which permits are needed for selected projects and their associated costs. The key to the pilot process is careful evaluation. Our evaluation will inform our next steps.

I need a permit for an event I am having, but I am not sure how to obtain it and the tool doesn't tell me how. What should I do?
Special events permits have been and will continue to be handled by the Office of Special Events, separately from the regular permit process. Please visit https://www.phila.gov/departments/office-of-special-events/ to obtain a permit for special events or contact ose@phila.gov with questions regarding special events.

Does the Permit Navigator integrate with eClipse?
No, the Permit Navigator does not integrate with eClipse. The tool is for informational purposes only and **does not replace the existing permitting process that utilizes eCLIPSE**. Users of the tool should use the information provided for informational purposes only.

Why doesn't the Permit Navigator integrate with eClipse?
The Permit Navigator is designed for **informational purposes only**. We'd like to evolve towards a situation in which users can find out what permits they need and apply for them from the same portal, but we're not there yet.

Is the zoning information in the Permit Navigator up to date?
The Smart City team, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Planning and Development communicate on a regular basis to ensure the tool is as up to date as possible. The City also has an excellent GIS program that will provide data to the vendor. However, the zoning information provided in this tool is subject to a delay of up to 30 days while our systems are updated, so users will want to look at the City's Atlas tool at atlas.phila.gov.

Do I have to create a username and password to use the Permit Navigator?
While a username and password are not required to start using the tool, it is helpful to create them if you would like to save your project information for future reference or manage multiple projects over time.

The user information being collected by this platform will be protected and will not be used for any purpose other than, in aggregated and anonymized formats, to improve the user experience of the portal.

I have feedback to give to this tool. Where can I send this to?

All feedback can be sent to the Smart City team at SmartCityPHL@phila.gov, who will be actively monitoring feedback to inform expansion plans.

What if I need help with a specific type of project or need help navigating the tool?
Please use the "Contact Us" button found on the tool, and someone from the correct department will get back to you as soon as possible.