



City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

Building Development Department
David Gilson
Building Official

Building Official Interpretation

Residential non-engineered detached accessory structures (storage shed, playhouses, firepit, sunshade and similar uses)

As per City of Tarpon Springs adopted ordinance 6-4.2 (a), “residential non-engineered detached accessory structures (storage shed, playhouses, firepit, sunshade and similar uses) not exceeding 100 sq. ft.” do not require a building permit but do require planning and zoning approval.

We have had numerous requests to erect/install commercially available pergolas and shade structures. Often these requests are for structures that exceed the previously noted ordinance stipulation of 100 sq. ft.. In addition, the manufactures of these products do not, and will not, provide engineering to support the minimum requirements that are required by the Florida Building Code. This has caused additional expense to owners wishing to have these types of structures permitted in the City of Tarpon Springs due to the need of engaging with a registered engineer or design professional to provide engineering data.

The Florida Building Code-Building provides some relief in circumstances of this nature in the form of “alternate means of approval” section 104.11. This code section allows the Building Official to use alternate means to determine if a submission meets or exceeds the requirements of the code.

We have found through practical experience that some, not all, of the commercially available pergolas and sunshades meet generally accepted engineering practices and therefore would otherwise be approved if the engineering data existed. The method of attaching the pergolas to the Earth will still need a basic design that can be easily obtained from the internet and/or the building codes and the corresponding references. This foundation design must be submitted at time of permitting.

This alternate means of approval may be used as an option to the normal procedures that include architectural or engineering plans with the following understanding.

- Single family fee simple residential detached structures only (not including townhouses or condominiums)
- Each application will be reviewed for applicability on a case-by-case basis by the Building Official only.
- This option is available to commercially pre-packaged structures including all hardware and posts/beams only, no kits with separately purchased or fabricated materials.
- By utilizing this option, the customer agrees that if the submission is not approved, the fees paid are non-refundable.
- Approval or denial of the submission is at the sole discretion of the Building Official with no right of appeal.



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- Any commercially available structure shall have all connecting hardware and detailed instructions with dimensions and connection points via electronic means.
- This option is not applicable to any new structure attached to any existing structure at any point, i.e., the new structure must be stand alone with no requirements or options to attach to another existing structure.
- The footer/foundation for the new structure must be submitted at the same time as the structure for review as a complete package.
- The Tarpon Springs Building Department may give guidance but cannot design any portion of the project.
- The intent of this option is for the installation of one structure per residence and specifically not a group of structures or multiple structures.
- Any submission using this option will be treated as any other project regarding plans examination.
- This option is to be utilized for owner builder applicants only, for their personal residence and full time use. Any submission by licensed contractors will be done using the standard method.