



Frequently Asked Questions About

INNOCENT PURCHASER STATUS for CODE VIOLATIONS

What is an innocent purchaser?

An innocent purchaser is a property owner who purchased real property and who, at the time of purchase had no knowledge that the real property contained unpermitted development in violation of Pierce County Code. A purchaser may be disqualified from obtaining innocent purchaser status depending upon the date of the real estate purchase and several other factors.

Who has the burden of proof?

The burden of proof of innocence is on the property owner.

Are there any limitations?

Yes, there are limitations to the innocent purchaser exemption. Although you may be shielded from some enforcement actions, any violation described in a violation notice, will remain an unresolved violation on the property. Alerts will remain in our permit tracking system to alert staff that unresolved violation(s) remain on the property. Any new proposed development must comply with all application/permit requirements and you may be required to resolve any violations prior to permit issuance.

How long will the violation remain?

The violation will remain unresolved until the corrective actions listed in the notice are completed to the satisfaction of Pierce County.

How does the innocent purchaser determination process work?

If a violation exists on the property and you think you may be an innocent purchaser, complete an Innocent Purchaser Determination Request Form and submit it, along with supporting documentation, to the Pierce County Planning and Land Services Development Center at 2401 S. 35th Street, Tacoma, WA 98409.* Supporting documentation includes a copy of the deed and the seller's disclosure form. Staff will review your request along with your supporting documentation and will make a determination based upon the facts and circumstances that apply to your case. A written decision will be mailed to you.

Visit <http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/xml/services/home/property/pals/pdf/ipaappl.pdf> to download a copy of the request form.

*If you are a purchaser of land that has been unlawfully divided, you must submit a formal application and pay the required fee. For further information contact the Technical Support Planner at 798-2636.