

COLUMBIA COUNTY WASHINGTON

PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT

114 S. SECOND ST., DAYTON, WA 99328
PHONE 509-382-4676 FAX 509-382-3125

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT PROCESS

GENERAL:

Construction projects are subject to building codes and zoning ordinances. The purpose of regulating building codes is to provide minimum standards to safeguard life and limb, health, property, and public welfare by regulating and controlling and the quality of materials. The Columbia County Code (CCC), including Zoning, Subdivision, Building and Environmental titles, may be found through the county Web site.

This guide is not all inclusive and each property has different requirements due to location and natural setting or condition applied to past approvals.

A property owner or developer should check their title and/or deeds and past required surveys for restrictions on development of a particular property such as easements and CC&Rs.

We encourage early consultation with department staff to review the property development potential and applicable regulations. The more property information you can provide and the more specific your plans the more we can help.

LAND USE PERMITS:

Building permits may not be issued for property that does not comply with other development regulations. Although building permits are not required for some projects, planning review or

permits may be still be necessary. Please contact the planning staff at 509-382-4676 for the specific provisions applicable to your project. Pre-application meetings are available prior to formal submittal.

Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations:

Columbia County planning is consistent with the Washington Growth Management Act. The Comprehensive Plan contains various elements, such as Land Use, Transportation and Capital Facilities, that lay out the policies and objectives for future land use and development in the county. It is periodically updated to reflect a 20 year time horizon. All development standards and criteria must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Development codes to implement the comprehensive Plan policies, such as subdivision, zoning and environmental protection ordinances, are intended to promote public health, safety, and general welfare by listing allowed land use in the various zones, how individual properties may be created and the development standards to be applied to each parcel of land.

Zoning:

The Zoning Ordinance of Columbia County is the source for zoning regulations. The ordinance regulates residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural development within Columbia

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County. In an attempt to maintain the design and character of your neighborhood, the codes impose certain regulations about where you can build on your property and how big your house may be. The codes contain provisions and limitations on proposed development, such as:

- Allowed, conditional use and accessory land uses
- Allowed density of areas and development intensity of properties.
- Minimum (or maximum) lot sizes and lot dimensions
- Building setbacks from easements and property lines
- Maximum lot coverage or floor area ratio requirements
- Height limitations of structures

Subdivision:

Since 1972 state law requires that properties may not be created by deed but rather must comply with state and local subdivision regulations. Lots are created through either minor (Short Plats) or major (Long) Subdivisions. The subdivision title of the CCC lays out the process for each type of subdivision as well as certain development criteria related to the lot configuration. In either case a final legal survey prepared by a licensed land surveyor must be recorded to legally create a lot.

Lot Lines may be adjusted or lots merged through a qualified exemption process. Building setbacks, either zoning or fire codes are measured from legal lot lines even if you own the lots on either side of a lot line.

Environmental Permits:

The most complicated and potentially the most onerous and costly regulations to comply with

are the variety of federal, state and local environmental codes and required permits. There are various types of local, state or federal environmental reviews and/or permits required for land use and development depending on the location and nature of a particular property or the type of land us proposed. These include Federal project review (NEPA) or state review (SEPA), compliance with certain federal and state permits related to endangered species or habitat such as wetlands and local permits.

The Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance Central Region (509-575-2384) is a good place to enquire about federal and state regulations and required permits.

The county is required by the state to enact and enforce local ordinances to implement state laws for the protection of the environment. These include State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA), Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Critical Areas Ordinance and Shoreline Master Plan. Many of the local permits require notification of federal and state agencies prior to issuance of a local permit.

BUILDING PERMITS:

What work requires a permit?

The International Building Codes adopted by the state require that prior to construction, a permit be obtained for all building, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical work, including alterations, conversions, interior remodeling work, or demolitions.

Electrical permits are issued through the state Department of Labor & Industries at 1-800-547-9411. Permits related to work on

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manufactured homes are also under the authority of L&I.

No building or structure shall be erected, constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, moved, converted or demolished unless a construction permit has first been obtained from the Columbia County Planning and Building Department.

Large projects involving land clearance of more than one acre require permits from the Department of Ecology related to storm water management (Eastern Washington Storm water Managements guidelines) and dust control for air quality .

Why get a permit?

There are several advantages to doing home improvement projects with a building permit. The primary one is that getting a permit brings you the services of the building inspector. The inspector approves each phase of the construction process, checking to see that work is done safely and properly. Inspectors also can advise you on how to proceed if you get stuck. Secondly, there are legal and financial liabilities that you face when you do not get a permit. Work without a permit is illegal and could pose serious complications for you when you try to sell your house. If there is a fire in your house, your insurance company may use the illegal work as an excuse not to pay on your claim.

Building without a permit may result in added cost, and even an order to stop construction until the proper permits have been obtained.

Work Exempt from Permit

A building permit shall *not* be required for the following:

- One-story detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet.
- Fences not over 6 feet high.
- Retaining walls that are not over four feet high (48") measured from the bottom of footing to top of wall.
- Sidewalks and driveway paving.
- Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and similar finish work.
- Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches deep
- Swings and other playground equipment
- Window awnings supported by an exterior wall which do not protect more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.

Application and Fees

A building permit application must accompany your project plans. The permit application form requires property information including the address and assessor's parcel number, applicant, property owner and contractor information. Contractors must have a current state license. A home owner may act as their own general contractor but all sub-contractors must be licensed.

Building permit fees are payable when the permit is ready to issue. A plan check fee may be required for larger projects. The fees are based on the valuation of the work proposed, computed on the cost per square foot for the type of construction intended.

COLUMBIA COUNTY WASHINGTON

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Plan Preparation

Proper preparation of plans is the key to a successful project. It is also the key to obtaining a permit without unnecessary delays. Make certain that your plans clearly indicate **what** you are going to do, **where** you are going to do it, and **how** you propose to do it.

If you are doing a simple project, you may be able to do all the drawings yourself. A project that involves no new construction may need only one or two drawings, called floor plans, showing the house as it is now and what it will look like when you are all through. For construction outside the existing walls of your home (a room addition), you will need several drawings (foundation plan, structural sections, exterior elevation) in addition to the floor plans and site plans.

Submittal Requirements

A completed building permit application, with site plan and two complete sets of construction plans/working drawings must include the following:

- ✓ A site plan that accurately describes the dimensions of the property, location of all existing and proposed buildings and their setbacks, adjoining roads and easements, access to the property, proposed and existing easements, location of septic tanks, drain fields, wells, power lines, etc. and unique topographical features or conditions such as flood zone and shoreline boundaries and critical areas and other information that will illustrate your proposal. The site plan can be 11" x 17" or smaller and be reproducible on a

photocopy machine. Site plans must be drawn to engineer's scale, e.g. 1" = 30ft.

- ✓ Two sets of scale drawings to illustrate proposed construction shall include:
 - Floor plan
 - Foundation plan
 - Framing plan (all floors)
 - Roof framing plan / truss specs.
 - Exterior elevations
 - Typical wall sections
 - Structural engineering calculations, when required by the building official

Some projects require approval from other agencies prior to permit issuance, e.g. the Health Department for septic systems and Public Works, for road access permits and addressing. The approval of plans and issuance of permits is not to be construed as permission to build contrary to the state building codes or county codes and ordinances, even though a violation may have been overlooked when the plans were checked. Over-the-counter issuance may be performed on minor projects such as re-roofs, siding, mechanical and plumbing permits.

Changes to plans

Changes in plans arising after plans have been checked and approved require approval by the building inspector. This may be done over-the-counter or may require re-submission of revised plans, depending on the complexity of the changes. Additional fees may be assessed for changes that result in increases in square footage or additional or additional plan review. Minor changes or additions may be approved without plan revision at the discretion of the building inspector.

COLUMBIA COUNTY WASHINGTON

PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT

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Permit issuance

Building permit fees are paid at the time of permit issuance. When your building permit is issued, you will receive a copy of your approved plans and an inspection record card. The plans and inspection record card must be available for the inspector's use when he performs an inspection.

Building Permits are valid for 180 days and may be extended for another 180 days by the Building Official. If work does not commence prior to expiration and new permit must be issued. For a permit to remain valid after the expiration date work must continue on the project with regular inspections.

Inspection stages

County building regulations require that certain inspections be made before concealment. As you complete particular sections of your construction, e.g. the plumbing, you must call and request an inspection before proceeding to the next phase of building.

Typical inspections stages are as follows:

1. **Footing / Foundation** – when forms are in place and prior to placement of concrete for footings. (Blocking for a manufactured home is required to be inspected prior to the installation of skirting.)
2. **Plumbing** – after rough-in, before covering, and final.
3. **Mechanical** – rough-in of piping, before covering, metal chimneys before concealment and final.
4. **Under Floor / Under Slab** – after all in slab or under floor accessories or equipment is in place, and before concrete of floor sheathing is in place.
5. **Framing** – after all framing, bracing and blocking are in place, prior to concealing, and after all plumbing, mechanical, etc., are installed.
6. **Insulation** – when insulating is in place with vapor barrier installed.

7. **Sheetrock** – after all lathing and gypsum board is in place, but before plastering or joint taping.
8. **Final** – when complete and prior to occupancy and / or use.

The inspections process

When an inspection is requested, the following information must be provided:

- The owner's name
The permit number (shown on your inspection record card)
- The site address The type of inspection
- A telephone number and contact person

Inspections may be requested in-person or by telephone by calling the Planning Department @ 509-382-4676. Inspections must be requested 24 hours in advance.

Upon inspection, the plans must be available for the inspector to make comparisons with the work performed and the approved plans. The inspection record card must also be accessible for his signature.

If there are corrections to be made before approval, the inspector will leave an "inspection notice" outlining briefly the items to be completed before approval. When corrections have been accomplished, a re-inspection should be scheduled.

When the inspector comes out to look over what you have just completed, be prepared to ask questions about your next phase of construction. That way you can avoid any problems with your next inspection.

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Final approval

Once the building inspector makes his inspections and all requirements have been satisfied, your project will be approved and Certificate of Occupancy granted. Failure to request a final inspection may result in the lapse of a permit.

A final permit approval and issuance of a C of O may depend on completion of on-site and off-site requirements of a subdivision approval, land use permit or environmental mitigation measures.

Other Information and Telephone Numbers

Columbia County

509-382-2131	Assessor's Office (Tax parcel number information)
509-382-4541	Auditor's Office (Vault/Recorded Plats)
509-382-4676	Planning & Building Department (Zoning and land use; Building inspections)
509-382-2181	Health Department (On-site sewage (septic) system and water availability)
509-382-2534	Public Works (Roads, GIS Mapping, Address permits, Access permits)
508-382-4773	Conservation District

Washington State

509-329-3426	Department of Ecology (wetlands, flood, shorelines, construction permits)
509-329-2122	Department of Health (Water systems)
509-892-1001	Department of Fish and Wildlife (Hydraulic permits)
800-547-9411	Department of Labor and Industries (Electrical permits, Factory Assembled Housing/MH Alteration permits, Contractor registration)
509-577-1633	Department of Transportation (Access of state highway)
509-575-2384	Office of Regulatory Assistance (Questions on required permits)

Other

800-424-5555	Call Before You Dig
509-893-8029	US Fish and Wildlife (endangered species)