

About Development Permits

Certain parts of the Municipality are designated as Development Permit Areas (DPA's) within the Official Community Plan. Development Permits allow the Municipality to manage the types of development that occur in these specified areas and to apply guidelines for how development should occur. These guidelines reflect certain objectives including:

- *To regulate the form and character of commercial, industrial, and multi-family developments.*
- *To protect natural environment.*
- *To prevent hazardous conditions.*
- *To revitalize specific commercial areas.*
- *To promote energy conservation, water conservation and greenhouse gas reductions.*
- *Protection of farming.*

The Municipality has 6 designated Development Permit Areas (DPAs):

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA 1 – Multi-Unit and Intensive Residential Development (DPA-1)

Applies to new multi-family development.

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA 2 – Commercial and Industrial Development (DPA-2)

Applies to new commercial or industrial developments.

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA 3 - Natural Environment (DPA-3)

Applies to development within an environmentally sensitive area.

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA 4 – Hazard Lands (DPA-4)

Applies to development on lands with steep slopes over 20%, lands vulnerable to interface wildfire, lands on floodplains and coastal lands.

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA 5 - Farm Land Protection (DPA-5)

Applies to development proposed within 30m of any property situated within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA 6 – GHG Reduction, Energy and Water Conservation (DPA-6)

Applies to new development that reduce GHG emissions and energy consumption.

You may commence development in a Development Permit Area only after obtaining a Development Permit unless it is explicitly exempted. The Director of Planning or an approved Designated Municipal Officer will issue a Development Permit for a proposed project when satisfied it meets all guidelines and conditions. These guidelines and conditions appear in the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw.

When to Apply for a Development Permit

If your property is located within one or more of the designated Development Areas, you may be required to have a Development Permit. Development Permits are required for the following:

- A) Alteration of land, disturbance of soils, including grubbing, scraping and removal of top soils;
- B) Construction of, addition to or alteration of a building or structure, land or parking area.
- C) Creation of non-structural impervious or semi-pervious surfaces; and or
- D) Subdivision of land.

As there are some exceptions, Planning Staff can help you determine if you require a Development Permit.

Applying for a Development Permit

Step 1: Pre-Application Meeting

As every property and development proposal is unique, and application requirements can vary, we encourage Applicants to contact Planning Staff to discuss their project at an early stage. Planning Staff will then be able to advise if a Pre-Application Meeting is required prior to application submission.

The meeting will help to determine what supporting documents, reports, etc. will be needed. Planning staff will provide you with a checklist of items that will be necessary to make a complete application and provide you with the correct fee amount that accompanies your proposal.

Step 2: Submitting an Application

Submit your complete application, including the application fee. Application forms are available from the Planning Department or through the municipality's website www.northcowichan.ca. Please submit your complete application by one of the following methods:

Digital Application Submission

- Please email us at planning@northcowichan.ca to arrange an Access Link to direct drop your application documents in our file-sharing site. A hardcopy submission is not required if submitting an application online.

Although the Digital Application Submission is preferred, hard copies of application documents can also be submitted by:

Hard Copy Application Submission

- Mailing or dropping off at the Municipal Hall. Envelopes can be deposited in the Drop Box located at the Main Entrance of the Municipal Hall. If providing PDF documents please submit via a virus free memory storage device only.

Application Fee Payments

- Application fee payments can be made by Debit or Cheque payable to the Municipality of North Cowichan. If you have selected to submit your application online, please mail or drop off your application fee payment as we are currently not set up to accept online payments or by Credit Card. If you have selected to submit your application by hardcopy, please include the payment with your complete application.

Step 3: Application Review

Once the Planning Department receives your complete application, an initial review of your application will be done. Following this initial review, Planning Staff will then refer your application to other departments and external agencies.

This is to ensure we do a comprehensive review of your application. During the referral process, these departments and agencies will review your application and provide Planning Staff with feedback. They will also recommend if additional information is necessary to move forward with your proposal. If further information, clarification and/or revised plans are required, a Detailed Summary Review letter will be prepared outlining these additional application requirements. If no further information is required, your application can then proceed to the next step.

Step 4: Decision

There are two approval streams in the Development Permit process. If your Development Permit requires variances then only Council has the authority to determine your application. If there are no variances required then the authority to determine your application is delegated to the Director of Planning or a designated Approving Officer.

Permit Issuance

If your application is approved, your Development Permit will then be prepared, signed and issued. The Planning Department will file a Notice of Permit with the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC for registration on Title. The Title of the property will then carry a notice stating that a Development Permit applies to your property. The Permit will refer to all the plans associated with your project. Plans are filed in the Municipal Office and referred to when you apply for your Building Permit. All development on-site is required to comply with the issued Development Permit.

Period of Validity

Once approved, a Development Permit is valid for two years. Substantial construction must commence within two years of the date of issue for the Development Permit to be in effect until the project is complete. If substantial construction has not commenced within the two years from the date of issue, the Development Permit lapses. If your Permit lapses, you must submit a new Development Permit application, and repeat the process.

Requests for minor changes to a valid Development Permit can be made by submitting a Development Permit Amendment application.

Application Process Time

The application processing time for a Development Permit is two to four months. This timeline can vary depending on the completeness and complexity of the application.

Tips ...

Plan your development proposal thoroughly and carefully. In preparing your proposal, you should be aware of the Municipality's plans, policies and regulations that may affect your property, including:

Official Community Plan

North Cowichan's Official Community Plan (OCP) divides the municipality into designated land use areas. Check the OCP for your property's designation. If the activity you propose is not permitted by the OCP, then you must apply for an OCP Amendment and receive approval before your zoning amendment application can be considered.

Development Permit Area Guidelines

The Official Community Plan (OCP) contains policies and design guidelines that may affect your application. You may review OCP and Zoning Bylaw maps and guidelines through the municipality's website www.northcowichan.ca or visit the Planning Department.

Works and Services

All developments must include utilities (e.g. sewer and water) at the developer's expense. Check with the Planning and Engineering Departments on the availability of the required services, and whether additional servicing is necessary.

Zoning Bylaw

Zoning regulations apply to every property in the municipality. In each zone, specific uses and activities are permitted. Check the Zoning Bylaw to determine the zoning regulations that apply to your application.

Contact Us:

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