

## About Zoning

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Every property in the Municipality of North Cowichan falls under a zoning designation. Each zoning designation specifies the activities that can place on the properties within it. Zoning designations also specify regulations such as maximum floor area and height of buildings, minimum distances between buildings and property lines, and the amount of off-street parking required.

## How Zoning Works

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Zoning ensures that land use classes (e.g. industrial, commercial, residential) occur in appropriate areas, and that the type of building on any property does not conflict with land uses on surrounding properties.

Zoning maps identify the zoning designation for every property in North Cowichan as well as development regulations for each zoning designation.

## How Zoning Can Be Changed

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Before any property can be developed (e.g. by constructing a new building, or by changing the land use) the owner should first check the current zoning regulations for that property. If the proposed development is not permitted under existing zoning, the property owner - or an agent of the property owner can apply for a zoning amendment. A zoning amendment can legally change either the zoning designation of a property or zoning regulations within the bylaw.

## Applying for a Zoning Amendment

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### 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](http://www.northcowichan.ca). Please submit your complete application by one of the following methods:

## **Digital Application Submission**

- Please email us at [planning@northcowichan.ca](mailto: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: Council – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of Bylaw**

Planning Staff will prepare a Report with a recommendation to Council. The Report and Bylaw will be considered by Council during a regular Council Meeting. If Council supports the application proceeding to the next step, the Bylaw will receive 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, and Council will authorize notification to proceed to Public Hearing. Alternatively, the application could be denied by Council at this stage.

## **Step 5: Neighbourhood Information Meeting**

Applicants are encouraged to hold a Neighbourhood Information Meeting before the Public Hearing. This meeting gives you a chance to explain your proposal informally, and to allow neighbours to ask questions, voice comments, and air concerns. This can help you prepare for the Public Hearing.

## **Step 6: Public Hearing**

All Zoning Amendment applications must undergo a Public Hearing held before Council. The owners and occupants of all properties located within 60 metres (200 feet) of the property are notified directly of this hearing. The Municipality places advertisements in local newspapers, and posts a Development Proposal sign on the property before the Public Hearing date. Anybody who believes that his or her interests may be affected by the proposed amendment is given an

opportunity to speak, or to present a written submission for Council consideration. You or your representative should attend the Public Hearing prepared to respond to questions. After the Public hearing, legal considerations prevent Council from receiving any further representations regarding the application.

## **Step 7: Council – 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading of Bylaw**

After the Public Hearing, Council reviews all submissions received at the Hearing, clarifies any outstanding issues with staff, then considers third reading of the Bylaw. By giving a Zoning Amendment bylaw third reading, Council indicates its intention to adopt the Bylaw.

## **Step 8: Council – 4<sup>th</sup> Reading & Bylaw Adoption**

At its fourth reading, Council grants final approval of the application and adopts the bylaw. This last step receives consideration after any outstanding legal requirements or conditions imposed by Council have been met. You will be notified by letter after fourth reading and approval.

## **Application Process Time**

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The application processing time for a Zoning Amendment is 6 to 12 months. This timeline can vary depending on the completeness and complexity of the application.

## **Tips ...**

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Plan your Zoning Amendment application 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 a 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](http://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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