

Commercial/Multi-Residential/Industrial - Detailed Guide to Building Permit Applications

OVERVIEW

This guide offers general information about Building Inspections' requirements for new developments. The information in this guide may not pertain to every project depending on the size and complexity of your building. The detailed requirements of the Engineering and Current Planning Sections of Planning and Development are not covered in this guide.

BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION CHECKLISTS

To assist you in providing a complete application for a commercial building permit, we have the following building permit application checklists for specific types of projects:

[Commercial/Multi-Family/Industrial - Part 3 Buildings](#)

[Pre-Engineered Steel Buildings](#)

[Commercial/Multi-Family/Industrial - Part 9 Buildings](#)

[Fabric Structures for Commercial Applications](#)

Additional checklists and guides that may pertain to your project, such as Tenant Improvement Permits; Daycares; Building Envelope Repairs; Trailers – Temporary, Permanent Placement for Commercial Use and Restaurant/Take-out Application; etc., are available at the City of Nanaimo [Building Inspection Forms and Guides](#) webpage.

BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

- A rezoning application applied for through the Current Planning section of the Development Approvals department is required if a property owner wants to change the permitted uses or density of their property. A bylaw amendment to the Zoning Bylaw must be adopted by City Council and a covenant is typically registered on title with the conditions of the rezoning. A building permit cannot be applied for before this process is complete and a development permit is substantially complete.
- A development permit (DP) applied for through Current Planning is required as identified in the Zoning Bylaw 4500 and the Nanaimo City Plan. See the development permit section below for more information.
- A building permit (BP) can be applied for once the DP application is at the stage where a comprehensive letter has been sent to the applicant and no major variances or significant unresolved issues remain. A BP submission that is inconsistent with the plans approved in the DP will not be accepted.
- Off-site design stage works & service approval from the Development Engineering section, if applicable, will be required before a BP can be issued, and must be applied for as part of the BP application.
- A building permit application must be complete to be accepted. The checklist appropriate for your project should assist in providing a complete application (see checklists above).
- For building permit issuance, final approval from the Current Planning and Development Engineering sections must be completed.
- For building permit issuance, any required covenants, bonding, easements, lot consolidation, or other legal issues must be completed.
- The time required for building permit review varies depending on the volume of permits Building Inspections has received. [Processing Times](#) can be viewed on the City of Nanaimo's website.
- A building permit application is valid for 12 months. An issued building permit is valid for 2 years, with a) work done to require an inspection within 6 months of issuance, and b) without work being suspended for a year or more. Permits can be renewed prior to expiration on a one-time basis subject to the approval of the Building Official, and notwithstanding requirements a) and b).

BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS cont'd

- After building permit issuance, inspections must be requested at regular intervals as per the stamp on the approved plans. Reports, field reviews, and approvals from the registered professionals must be submitted prior to inspection; the preferred method is by email to building.inspections@nanaimo.ca or submission to the Building Official at the time of the inspection.
- For occupancy approval, see our checklist guide [Occupancy Approval Requirements for Commercial Buildings](#).

The following information is provided to assist in understanding various components that may form part of your property development and building permit process:

APPLICATION FORM

All applications are now accepted online on our webpage [Building Permit Application](#). Plans and documents required to be signed and sealed should have electronic digital seals. For documents larger than 25MB each, Building Inspections will contact the applicant to make arrangements for document delivery on a secure cloud solution to be set up for each permit as required.

APPLICATION FEE

A fee of 10% of the calculated building permit value is to be paid at application. The application fee will be requested after your online building permit application has been initially reviewed and then accepted. The fee is non-refundable and deducted from the final building permit fee. For assistance in estimating the application fee, see our webpage [Building Permit Fee Calculator](#).

APPOINTMENT OF AGENT

If someone other than the registered owner is to apply for, revise, or be issued the permit, an Appointment of Agent form, completed and signed by the owner, is required. The [Appointment of Agent](#) form is to be completed and submitted online as part of the building permit application process.

ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS

Your project will involve design professionals. Each discipline retained by the owner is to:

1. Supply sealed, professional drawings;
2. Supply the appropriate sealed Letters of Assurance, as outlined by the current Building Code;
3. Be registered within the Province of British Columbia.

Coordinating Registered Professional (CRP) A Letter of Assurance (Schedule A) is required for projects involving more than two registered professionals. In accordance with the duties of a CRP, as per the BC Building Code, it is the responsibility of the CRP to collect and submit all Schedules A and B with the building permit application, and Schedule C at project completion. All correspondence will be directed to the CRP or agent with copies to the owner.

Architectural sealed drawings and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for all projects falling within Part 3 of the BC Building Code. Some exceptions may apply, such as simple industrial buildings, which can be sealed by an Engineer, dependent on consent by the Architectural Institute of BC (AIBC). Drawings by a designer are acceptable for wood-framed buildings without complex design that fall under Part 9 of the BC Building Code, with the following consideration:

For Part 9 buildings with over 470m² gross floor area (the aggregate area of all floors), or more than four residential units, or hotels (+ similar occupancies) with more than 10 guest rooms, contact AIBC to determine what requirements of the Architects' Regulation might apply to your particular project.

Parking layout, [Building Code Analysis](#), [Development Permit Compliance Checklist](#) and landscape working drawings with an estimate for security bonding must form part of a building permit submission.

Geotechnical sealed report and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for all projects falling within Part 3 of the BC Building Code and for Part 9 buildings where the Building Official identifies specific geotechnical concerns. Registration of a covenant on title may be required for subsidence, flood, landslip or erosion, depending on the contents of the report. See our [Guidelines for the Preparation of Geotechnical Reports](#) for more details. Existing reports may be on title or have been required at the subdivision or development permit phase.

Structural sealed drawings and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for all projects falling within Part 3 of the BC Building Code and where construction is beyond the requirements of Part 9 of the BC Building Code.

Civil sealed drawings and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for all projects requiring works and services, where new servicing is being installed or for site drainage where greater than four (4) parking stalls are required. See Works & Services Submission - On-Site and Off-Site (below) for more information.

Fire Suppression System (Sprinkler) sealed drawings and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for most commercial /multi-family/industrial buildings. City of Nanaimo [Building Bylaw 7224](#) requires that most new buildings with a total gross floor area over 100m² require a fire suppression system. See Building Bylaw No. 7224 under Section 28.4 for exemptions. The City of Nanaimo does not accept performance specs, only sealed design drawings with Schedule B.

Mechanical sealed drawings and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for all projects falling within Part 3 of the BC Building Code and projects with ventilation/heating systems serving more than one floor or suite.

Electrical/Fire Alarm sealed drawings and Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for most projects falling within Part 3 of the BCBC. Electrical drawings including the emergency lighting, exit signage, and fire alarm system will be reviewed by the Fire Department as part of the plan review process.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION REPORT

If an Alternative Solution is proposed for compliance with the requirements of the BC Building Code (BCBC), a sealed report is required demonstrating the proposed method will achieve the level of performance required by Division B of the BCBC. Section 2.3. of Division C of BCBC outlines the documentation required to demonstrate this level of performance. This report is typically developed by a Fire Protection Engineer specializing in building code analysis.

BC HOUSING LICENSING & CONSUMER SERVICES BRANCH (BCH)

Prior to issuance of a building permit for residential use, the builder must provide proof they are licensed by the BC Housing Licensing & Consumer Services Branch and the proposed project is covered by a third-party home warranty insurance provider authorized by the BC Financial Services Authority (BCFSA). Detailed information can be found on the [BCH](#) website.

BUILDING CODE ANALYSIS

The [Building Code Analysis](#), completed by your designer/architect, provides detailed Building Code information about the project. The checklist must be completed for all commercial/multi-residential/industrial building projects and includes the requirement for additional occupancy, code and safety drawings which are detailed in the [Building Code Analysis - Guide](#) and the [Occupancy, Code & Safety Drawing](#) examples. These guides are on our website and linked here.

BONDING (SECURITY)

Prior to building permit issuance, bonding and a construction agreement are typically required for landscaping (labour & materials) and works & services. Bonding amounts are based on the estimates provided by your professionals for the cost of any required works & services and landscaping, as determined with the Development Engineering and Planning sections. The bonding will be released or reduced when the works & services and landscaping are completed to the satisfaction of the City of Nanaimo. See Section 27 of the [Building Bylaw](#) and 17.10. of the [Zoning Bylaw](#). Additional bonding may apply to some projects for public art and tree installation.

CONSTRUCTION AGREEMENT

The construction agreement is a legal agreement between the City and the owner of the property for the required work and associated bonding (securities) of the works & services and landscaping to be completed under the building permit. This document will be created by the City of Nanaimo and forwarded to the owner of the property for signature (see “Letter of Credit” below).

COVENANTS ON TITLE

Covenants and encumbrances may exist on your title which could affect construction on your property. These may include rezoning requirements, right-of-ways, easements, lot consolidation, amenity payment, Housing Agreement, increased energy efficiency requirement, environmental restrictions, watercourse and riparian setbacks, geotechnical reports, etc. The plans submitted should include any information from covenants affecting the development of the property and demonstrate compliance.

The specified conditions of rezoning and other covenants registered on title must be met prior to BP issuance or building occupancy in accordance with the covenants.

DEVELOPMENT COST CHARGES (DCCs)

DCCs are charges that assist the City with capital cost projects. DCCs are applicable to most projects where the value of construction exceeds \$50,000.00. DCCs are calculated on the gross floor area (GFA) and vary according to use (i.e. residential, commercial, industrial, etc.). Total DCCs may be paid at building permit issuance or paid 1/3 at permit issuance and 2/3 deferred by Letter of Credit. The second 1/3 is drawn at 12 months and the remaining 1/3 at 24 months from permit issuance date. For further information, see [Development Cost Charges Effective 2022-DEC-07](#), [City of Nanaimo DCC Bylaw 7252](#), and [Regional District of Nanaimo Bylaw 1547 \(effective 2022-DEC-07\)](#).

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT (DP)

DPs for form and character are required for all new commercial, industrial and residential (greater than 4 units or 3 units if a variance is required), and additions greater than 25% of the gross floor area or 100m², taken together with all additions to the building made within the previous five years. As well, construction in the Old City Neighbourhood (City Plan Schedule 13) requires a DP for greater than 1 residential unit. Other DP areas identified in the Zoning Bylaw may affect your project. Consult with Current Planning staff to determine your DP requirements.

Where major variances are requested, a report formalizing City staff's recommendations goes to Council for approval. Where no variance or minor variance is requested, a report with City staff's recommendation is forwarded to the Director of Planning and Development for approval.

DPs must be substantially complete prior to the building permit application and must be approved prior to building permit issuance.

DRAWINGS

Electronic plan submissions, hand-drawn or computer generated, must be PDF format and must be a clean copy with no watermarks or other interfering mark-ups. Drawings are to be on minimum 11" x 17" plain white paper (no graph paper), drawn in dark blue or black ink, and scaled to generally accepted drafting protocol. Preferred size is 24" x 36". Photographs (including photographs converted to PDF) of plans or documents are not accepted.

ENERGY STEP CODE - PART 9 BUILDINGS

The requirements of the Energy Step Code apply to all new Part 9 residential buildings, detached homes, laneway homes, multiplexes, row housing, and low-rise apartments. To meet the Energy Step Code standards, builders must work closely with their qualified energy advisor or architect to determine the compliance path that is appropriate for their project. Submission of energy compliance checklists and air tightness tests are required to verify compliance.

Step Three, effective **2022-JAN-02**, is now the minimum requirement as adopted in version 5 of the 2018 BCBC, 2023-MAY-01.

ENERGY STEP CODE - PART 3 BUILDINGS

The requirements of the Energy Step Code apply to all new Part 3 residential buildings, mercantile buildings, public sector buildings, and buildings of business and personal services. Submission of Energy Model Reports, Energy Compliance Checklists for Part 3 Buildings (standardized Provincial Form) and air tightness testing (BCBC 10.2.3.5.) are required to verify compliance with the current standards. The information required for the reports and checklists is detailed under BCBC 2018 2.2.9.2., in the [Joint Professional Practice Guidelines Whole Building Energy Modelling Services](#) and online at [Energy Compliance Checklist for Part 3 Building](#). The information required now includes the Zero Carbon Step Code.

Step Two, effective **2022-JAN-02**, requires the design and construction meet a 20% to 40% higher level of energy performance as described in Table 10.2.3.3. A to J of the BCBC.

Step Three, effective **2026-JAN-01**, requires construction meet a 50% higher level of energy performance as described in Table 10.2.3.3. A to J of the BCBC.

For more information review our guide [Energy Step Code - An Introduction](#).

ZERO CARBON STEP CODE - GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The Zero Carbon Step Code was adopted into the Building Bylaw by City Council **2023-OCT-16**. The Bylaw changes require the immediate implementation of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Level EL-1. The first level (EL-1) of the Zero Carbon Step Code only requires measurement of a building's emissions. By **2024-JULY-01** all applicable buildings must meet the performance requirements specified in the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Level EL-4 of the BC Building Code. Compliance calculations are included in the [Energy Compliance Checklists for Part 3 Building](#) and the [Energy Efficiency Compliance Checklist for Part 9 Buildings](#).

FIRE SAFETY PLAN - CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION

A construction fire safety plan is required prior to commencing construction. Your plan will need to be forwarded to the Fire department for approval. For more information about the plan requirements, see our guide [Fire Safety Planning for Construction and Demolition](#). For your convenience, a [Construction Fire Safety Plan Template](#) can be found on the City of Nanaimo's website.

FIRE SAFETY PLAN

A fire safety plan is required prior to occupancy for buildings with a fire alarm system. The plan provides building operational information to fire departments and occupants regarding measures to control and prevent fires after the building is completed. For more information about these requirements, see the Nanaimo Fire Rescue's guide [Fire Safety Plan](#).

FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM (SPRINKLERS)

City of Nanaimo [Building Bylaw 7224](#) requires that most new buildings with a total gross floor area over 100m² require a fire suppression system. Exemption for renovations and additions apply to existing buildings. A fire suppression system will not be required when alterations are ≤50% of the value of the building; or an addition is ≤25% of the existing floor area or maximum 200m², whichever is lesser; or where construction is non-combustible and ≤25% of existing floor area or maximum 600 m², whichever is lesser. Construction done under a building permit issued within the 24 months preceding shall be included in the value and floor area when determining if an exemption applies. See Building Bylaw No. 7224 under Section 28.4 for additional exemptions. Also see our guide [Sprinkler Permit Application](#) for information required on the drawings. The City of Nanaimo does not accept performance specs, only sealed design drawings with Schedule B.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS FORM

This City of Nanaimo form is required for building permits for demolitions, renovations, and alterations to an existing building. If the [Hazardous Materials Form](#) indicates hazardous materials may exist and be disturbed by the construction proposed, a hazardous material assessment report will be required prior to issuance of a building permit. It is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure the hazardous material assessment is done and that WorkSafe BC is contacted with regard to any hazardous materials that are found onsite.

LOT CONSOLIDATION

Construction over property lines is not permitted. Any required lot consolidation must be completed prior to building permit issuance.

LANDSCAPE DRAWINGS

Working drawings of the landscape design and an estimate detailing the plant sizes and names, as well as other landscape features, is required for a building permit application. Working drawings are the finished, professional quality drawings with all final details provided. Landscaping cost estimate is to be provided in accordance with Part 17 of the Zoning Bylaw 4500 (including landscape construction, hard & soft landscape materials, protective curbing, irrigation & labour). The estimate will be used to establish the landscape bond and will be included in the construction agreement.

LETTERS OF CREDIT

Any letter of credit that is posted as security for construction agreements must be approved by the City's Finance department. Letters of credit from the major five banks and members of the Credit Unions of BC, presented in the City's format, are usually acceptable (sample provided by request).

MINE WORKINGS

In many areas of Nanaimo, abandoned mine workings present unique concerns for buildings. The City may require a report by a geotechnical engineer stating the land is, or can be, made safe for the intended use. Recommendations in this report must be followed (see "Restrictive Covenants" below).

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Restaurants, food and beverage operations, facilities impacting personal hygiene, and daycares require approval from the Ministry of Health. Your architectural drawings must be approved by Island Health prior to application for building permit. Island Health can be contacted at **250-739-5800**.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

Any driveway access or drainage onto or adjacent the Island Highway or the Nanaimo Parkway requires approval by the Ministry of Transportation. Contact the Ministry of Transportation at **250-755-3246**.

RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

If your property is determined to be subject to geotechnical concerns (i.e. subsidence, flood, landslip, erosion, slope stability), the City will require a restrictive covenant to be registered on the land title. Any required geotechnical reports addressing these concerns will form a schedule to the covenant. The covenant will be prepared by the City, signed by the owner of the property, and registered at the Land Title Office by the City at the owners' expense.

REVISIONS TO PLANS

Revisions to plans after building permit issuance are now accepted online at our webpage [Building Permit Revisions](#). Revised plans and documents required to be signed and sealed should have electronic digital seals. For documents larger than 25MB each, Building Inspections will contact the applicant to make arrangements for document delivery on a secure cloud solution to be set up for each permit as required. A re-stamping fee of \$50.00 plus tax will apply to each application for revision. Additional fees such as plumbing fees, alternative solution fees, etc., may apply, dependent on the revisions made. Building Inspections has developed the following policy, [Building Permit Update Policy](#), to provide guidance on City of Nanaimo requirements for design changes after the issuance of a building permit.

SALES OFFICE - TRAILER

A separate permit is required for installation of a temporary or permanent sales office. The zoning and building code requirements are detailed in the guide [Trailers - Temporary and Permanent Placement for Commercial Use](#).

SITE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - CONTAMINATED SITES REGULATION

Where activity is likely to disturb the property's soil and a [Site Disclosure Statement](#) form has not been submitted as part of the subdivision, rezoning or development permit process, the form must be submitted as part of the building permit process. Exemptions can be found under the regulations [CSR Div.3](#). If the property is identified on the form as having one or more industrial or commercial uses specified in [Schedule 2](#) of the Contaminated Sites Regulation, a building permit cannot be issued without approval by a director under the Act.

SCHOOL SITE ACQUISITION CHARGE BYLAW (SSAC)

School site acquisition charges are charges collected by local governments and transferred to school boards to help them purchase land for new or expanded school sites. The school site acquisition charge will be collected by the City of Nanaimo at subdivision approval for single residential developments or at building permit issuance for multi-family residential developments of two units or more. Once collected, funds will then be transferred to the Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools. The school site acquisition charge will be reduced or waived for eligible developments such as not-for-profit rental housing. For details see the [School Site Acquisition Charges Bylaw 2021 No. 7338](#).

TENANT IMPROVEMENT (COMPLETE & OCCUPY)

A separate building permit is required to complete a new or existing commercial space for tenant occupancy. The following guides will assist you in determining the requirements for your application: [Tenant Improvement Checklist](#), [Daycares - Conversion to Assembly Occupancy](#), [Restaurants & Take-Outs - Tenant Improvement](#).

TREE BYLAW

The City's Management and Protection of Trees Bylaw No. 7126 regulates the removal of trees as part of a development. Guides and tree removal permit applications are available at the City webpage [Urban Forestry](#). For more information, contact the Urban Forester at **250-755-4429**.

WORKS & SERVICES ASSESSMENT

[Building Bylaw No. 7224](#) requires construction of off-site works & services for projects. Works & services are applicable to new construction projects, buildings with more than four residential units on a site, and additions exceeding 25% of existing floor area, or 600m², whichever is less. Requirements vary in industrial zones. If a Development Permit (DP) is required, Current Planning will provide feedback on your application from other City departments and external agencies via a Comprehensive Letter; this will provide a guide to the required off-site works. Where no DP is required, request a pre-application meeting to discuss off-site works & services directly with Development Engineering prior to a building permit application.

WORKS & SERVICES SUBMISSION - ON-SITE & OFF-SITE

Detailed designs and associated information from your civil engineer is required for building permit applications. The submission should include off-site and on-site sealed servicing drawings, site drainage drawings, location of accesses, fire flow calculations, the [Works & Service Initial Design Submission Checklist](#), and an off-site servicing estimate for determination of the security bond. For projects with more than four parking stalls where hard surface is provided, an engineer-designed oil/water separator and on-site storm drainage system is required. Design specifications are reviewed and approved by the Development Engineering section. Inspections will be required by your civil engineer. The City of Nanaimo's [Manual of Engineering Standards and Specifications](#) is available on the City of Nanaimo's website.

CHARGES FOR A BUILDING PERMIT

**Note, this is not a comprehensive listing of fees. See [Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 7336](#). For assistance in estimating the building permit fee, see our webpage [Building Permit Fee Calculator](#).*

Minimum fee and first \$1,000 of construction value (CV)	\$105
Additional fee for CV from \$1,000.01 - \$100,000	\$10/\$1,000
Additional fee for CV from \$100,000.01 – greater.....	\$7/\$1,000

Application Fee is payable on all applications. Fee is 10% of estimated cost of building permit with a minimum application fee of \$175.00. All application fees are non-refundable and will be credited to the cost of the permit.

CHARGES FOR A BUILDING PERMIT cont'd

Alternative Solutions	Up to 4	\$200.00
	Over 4	\$300.00
Plumbing	First 1-5 fixtures (minimum fee).....	\$40.00
	Each additional fixture.....	\$8.00
Sprinklers	(minimum fee).....	\$40.00
	Per square meter of building.....	\$0.50
Service Pipes	Storm, Sanitary, Water, Fire Lines (first 15m).....	\$20.00
	Per additional 15m or part	\$7.00
	Foundation drain	\$20.00
All Other Service Fixtures	\$15.00

Sumps, catch basins, manholes, rain water leaders (per roof drains), fire hydrants, wet and dry outlets, fire hose cabinet, hose outlet & standpipe (each) manholes, and inspection chambers.

Service Connection

Fees vary according to the off-site design. You must provide estimates and securities for the cost of any required off-site works & services and on-site landscaping. A construction agreement for the required work and securities will be required.

Construction Agreement

Additional bonding may apply to some projects, i.e. public art, tree installation, etc.

Land Title Office Fees

Fees charged through engaging the services of the Land Title Office (title searches, document searches, etc.) are recovered through charges back to the applicant. The fees are based on the *Land Title Act* statutory services.

CONTACT CITY STAFF

The normal hours of work for Development Services are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The following can be reached by calling **250-755-4429**:

Commercial Building Official, Building Inspections
Development Engineering Technologist, Engineering
Planning Assistant, Current Planning

If you have any questions or require clarification, please contact a Commercial Building Official at our office at 250-755-4429. This guide should not be used as a substitute for existing building codes and other regulations. The building owner is responsible for compliance with all codes, bylaws, and other regulations whether or not described in this guide.

Forms and guides specific to Building Inspections can be found on the City of Nanaimo's website www.nanaimo.ca. Type your search word in the search bar or visit the [Building Permits](#) pages under Property & Development. Bylaws can be found on our website under [City Bylaws](#) on the main page.