


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

Overview: This guide offers general information about the 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 the Development Approvals Department 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](#) 
- [Mid-Rise Wood Buildings](#) 

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 development permit (DP) applied for through the Current Planning Section of the Development Approvals Department should be at Third Reading with City Council before applying for a building permit (BP).
- Off-Site Design Stage Works & Service Approval from the Development Engineering Section, if applicable, should be in process before applying for a building permit.
- 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 for review varies depending on the volume of permits Building Inspections has received. [Processing Times](#)  can be viewed on the City 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 Inspector, and notwithstanding requirements a) and b).
- 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 e-mail to building.inspections@nanaimo.ca or submitted to the Building Inspector at the time of the inspection.
- For occupancy approval, see our checklist guide [Occupancy Approval Requirements for Commercial Buildings](#) .


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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 at 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 nonrefundable 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 online as part of the building permit application process.

Architects and 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) Letters of Assurance (Schedule A) are required from an Architect for all projects falling within Part 3 of the BC Building Code, and for projects involving more than two registered professionals. Projects involving industrial buildings may have a registered Engineer act as the Coordinating Registered Professional (CRP).

In accordance with the duties of a CRP, as per the BC Building Code Schedule A, 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 owner or his agent with copies to the CRP.

Architectural sealed drawings and Letters 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 4 residential units, or hotels (+ similar occupancies) with more than 10 guest rooms, contact AIBC to determine what requirements of the [Architects Act](#)  might apply to your particular project.

Parking layout, BC Building Code review and landscape working drawings with an estimate for security bonding should form part of a building permit submission.

Geotechnical sealed report and Letters 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, landslide 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.

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Architects and Engineers (Continued):

Structural sealed drawings and Letters 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 Letters 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 Letters 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. Also see our guide [Sprinkler Permit Application](#).

Mechanical sealed drawings and Letters 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 Letters of Assurance (Schedule B) are required for most projects falling within Part 3 of the BC Building Code. 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:

This analysis, completed by your designer / architect, provides BC Building Code information about the project. If the Building Code Analysis submitted does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the BC Building Code a code analysis by a Code Consultant will be required. A basic sample code review form is available; see [BC Building Code Analysis, Design Summary Form](#).

Bonding (Security):

Prior to building permit issuance, bonding and a Construction Agreement are typically required for Landscaping 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. Bonding and the Construction Agreement insures that in the event the contractor is unable to complete the work, the City has the money to complete any outstanding work. 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](#). Additional bonding may apply to some projects for Public Art and Tree Installation.

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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).

Coal Workings:

In many areas of Nanaimo, abandoned coal 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).

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 2018-APR-23](#), [City of Nanaimo DCC Bylaw 7252](#), and [Regional District of Nanaimo Bylaw 1547.01 \(effective 2017-JUN-27\)](#).

Development Permit (DP):

Required for all new construction and alterations and/or additions where the value of exterior construction done within a five-year period exceeds \$150,000.00, or the construction is in the specified downtown area or other areas identified in the Official Community Plan (OCP). Consult with City Current Planning staff to determine your DP requirements. DP's must be substantially complete prior to 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, 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 Energy Step Code – Step One apply to all new Part 9 residential buildings, detached homes, laneway homes, multiplexes, row housing, and low-rise apartments applied for after **April 20, 2020**. Step One requires builders to work with a qualified Energy Advisor to meet the performance base of the current BC Building Code, with the submission of Energy Compliance Reports and air tightness tests. Step two will come into effect **January 2, 2021**. Step Two will require the builder/Energy Advisor to achieve a 10% lower energy consumption than the current BCBC.

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 applied for after **April 20, 2020**. Step One of the Step Code requires builders to work with an Architect to ensure the building’s energy performance conforms to Part 8 of the NECB with the submission of an Energy Model Report, Energy Compliance Report (standardized Provincial form) and air tightness tests. The information required for the Reports is detailed under BCBC 2018 2.2.9.2. and on line at [Energy Compliance Report for Part 3 Building](#).



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Energy Step Code (Continued):


Step Two of the Step Code comes into effect **January 2, 2022**. Step Two will provide energy efficiency 20% to 40% greater than the current BCBC.

For more information, review the City's guide [Energy Step Code - An Introduction](#) .


Fire Safety Plan - Construction and Demolition:

A Construction Fire Safety Plan is required at building permit application. Your plan will be forwarded to the Fire Department for approval prior to issuance of the building permit. For more information about the plan requirements, see our guide [Fire Safety Planning](#) . For your convenience, a [Construction Fire Safety Plan Template](#)  can be found on the City 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 Fire Rescue Department's guide [Fire Safety Plan](#) .

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 survey is done and that WorkSafeBC is contacted with regard to any hazardous materials that are found on site.

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 building permit application. 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).

Lot Consolidation:

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

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.

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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 (see Coal Workings above).




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.

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](#) .


Tenant Improvement (Complete and 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 Forestry Coordinator at 250-755-4429.


Works & Services Submission – On-Site and Off-Site:

Detailed designs and associated information from your Civil Engineer is required for building permit application. The submission should include off-site and on-site sealed servicing drawings, site drainage drawings, location of accesses, fire flow calculations, the [Works and Service Initial Design Submission Checklist](#) , and an off-site servicing estimate for determination of the security bond. For projects with more than 4 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 Engineering Section. Inspections will be required by your Civil Engineer.



The City of Nanaimo [Manual of Engineering Standards and Specifications](#)  is available on the City website.

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Works and Services Assessment:

[Building Bylaw No. 7224](#)  requires construction of off-site works and services for projects. Works & Services are applicable to new construction projects, buildings with more than 4 residential units on a site, and additions exceeding 25% of existing floor area, or 600m², whichever is less. Requirements vary in industrial zones. For an assessment of the off-site works that will be required for your project, submit a key plan and written request for a summary to the Development Engineering Section prior to building permit application.

Charges for a Building Permit:

*Note, this is not a comprehensive listing of fees. See [Bylaw 7016, Schedule A](#) . For assistance in estimating the Building Permit fee, see our webpage [Building Permit Fee Calculator](#) .

- a. Minimum fee and first \$1000 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
- b. **Application Fee** is payable on all applications in excess of \$20,000. 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
- c. **Alternative Solutions** up to 4\$200.00
 over 4\$300.00
- d. **Plumbing** First 1-5 fixtures (minimum fee)\$ 40.00
 Each additional fixture.....\$ 8.00
- e. **Sprinklers** (minimum fee)\$ 40.00
 per square meter of building\$ 0.50
- f. **Service Pipes** Storm, Sanitary, Water, Fire Lines (first 15m)\$ 20.00
 per additional 15m or part\$ 7.00
 Foundation drain\$ 20.00
- g. **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, Inspection Chambers
- h. **Access Permit**\$ 25.00

* Service connection fees vary according to off-site design

* You must provide estimates and securities for the cost of any required off-site works and services and on-site landscaping. A construction agreement for the required work and securities will be required.

* Additional bonding may apply to some projects for Public Art and Tree Installation.

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.

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Contact with City Staff:

The normal hours of work for Development Services are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. 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 plans reviewer at our office at 250-755-4429. This guideline 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 guideline.

Forms and guides specific to Building Inspections can be printed from the City of Nanaimo website www.nanaimo.ca by typing your search word in the Search Bar or visiting the [Building Permits](#) pages under Property & Development, or can be picked up at our office at 411 Dunsmuir Street. Bylaws can be found on our website under [City Bylaws](#) on the main page.