

## Frequently Asked Questions

### I want to build a house. Where do I start?

- Contact the Planning and Community Development Department to request a “Parcel Information Report” which will inform you of any potential critical areas located on or within the vicinity of your parcel. If there are critical areas we will be able to tell you, based on the information provided for your proposal, if you will be required to apply for any land use permits prior to being able to submit for your building permit application.
- Work with a septic designer to obtain a septic permit approved by the Health Dept. or provide a copy of your as-built if one is already on file with the Health Dept.
- Obtain an approved Water Availability Verification Form (WAV) signed off by Island County Health Dept. *NOTE: owners of lots served by a community well may have been told water is available however this is not “water availability”. The WAV is to be taken to the “water purveyor” for signature, and then submitted to the Health Department for their approval.*
- Obtain or provide an approved access permit for lots directly accessing onto a County Road and/or for private roads accessing onto a County road.

### Building Permit Documents required for submittal

- Master Building Permit Application - filled out in INK
- One and Two Family Dwelling & Attached Accessory Structures Permit
- Two (2) sets of structural plans (see checklist), wet stamped if applicable
- Two (2) sets of engineering with original wet stamp
- Plot Plan drawn to engineering scale. At least 1 copy should be no larger than 11 x 17. Plot plan samples are available.
- Copy of approved septic permit or as-built
- Copy of approved Water Availability Verification Form.
- Copy of approved Access permit.

*A plan check fee will be required to submit the building permit. There will be a balance of fees due at time of permit issuance.*

### I want to build a detached garage/shop (stick or pole construction). Where do I start?

- Contact the Planning and Community Development Department to request a “Parcel Information Report” which will inform you of any potential critical areas located on or within the vicinity of your parcel. If there are critical areas we will be able to tell you, based on the information provided for your proposal, if you will be required to apply for any land use permits prior to being able to submit your building permit application
- If your project will have a bathroom or any other plumbing you may need to have Health Department approval.

### Building Permit Documents required for submittal

- Master Building Permit Application - filled out in INK
- Detached Structures less than 3000 sq ft Accessory to Residential Application.
- Two (2) sets of structural plans (see checklist) wet stamped if applicable

- Two (2) sets of engineering with original wet stamp
- Plot Plan drawn to engineering scale. At least 1 copy should be no larger than 11 x 17. Plot plan samples are available.
- Copy of approved septic permit or as-built
- Copy of approved Water Availability Verification if the building includes plumbing and/or living space.
- Copy of approved Access permit.

*A plan check fee will be required to submit the building permit. There will be a balance of fees due at time of permit issuance.*

#### [I want to build a guest cottage. What are the requirements?](#)

- Essentially the same as a single family residence. Septic & water must be approved for a 2<sup>nd</sup> residence. The guest cottage must share the same access as the primary residence. Separate addresses are not issued for guest cottages.
- For proposals in the Rural Residential Zone (RR) the parcel must be at least 1 acre. The proposal must meet all setbacks and all Health Dept. requirements.
- The structure must not exceed 1000 sq ft. of living area. Island County only issues a specific amount of Guest Cottage Certificates per calendar year. Please have all requirements prior to applying.

#### [How do I submit for a permit?](#)

- Permits must be applied for in person. Please allow for at least one hour for the submittal process. Completed applications are accepted Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at the Coupeville Office or from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Camano Annex.
- For submittals on Whidbey Island apply at 1 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Coupeville (1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Annex building).
- For submittals on Camano Island apply at 121 N. East Camano Dr., Camano Island (Located in the Camano Annex).
- *If your property is within Oak Harbor City Limits, Town of Coupeville, or City of Langley, please contact those jurisdictions directly.*

#### [What Building Code does Island County use and where do I find it?](#)

- Island County has adopted the 2012 Editions of the International model codes as adopted by the state. Go to the Washington State Building Code Council at [www.sbcc.wa.gov](http://www.sbcc.wa.gov) to view amendments and to order copies of the codes. Island County does not have copies to purchase or lend. Check with your local library in the reference section.

#### [Where do I get a permit and which one do I use?](#)

- Building permit applications are available online at <http://www.islandcounty.net/planning/building.htm>
- All building permits require a **MASTER BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION** (Exception: Mechanical/Plumbing only) and one or more of the following:
- One and Two Family Dwelling

- Single Family or Two Family Residence
- Spec Home
- Attached Accessory (deck, garage, sunroom etc)
- Guest House
- Modular
- Moved House
- Addition to SFR
- Interior Remodel
- Detached Residential Accessory Structures Less Than 3000 sq ft
- Detached Accessory (garage, retaining wall, fence etc)
- Non Residential and Multiple Family Residential Units
  - E.g. New Commercial, Apartments, Condos, Antennas
- Tenant Improvement or Change of Use
- Existing Commercial Structure
- Sign
  - Commercial sign attached to structure or freestanding
- Demolition of a structure over 120 sq ft
- Manufactured Home/ Placement of a Manufactured Home
- Application for Development in a Floodplain (If designated on Parcel Data Sheet)
- New Residential/Non Residential Structure
- Improvement/Repair to existing building
  - Shoreline Bulkhead, Docks and Beach Access Stairs
- New/Repair/Replace of Dock, Bulkhead, Stairs, Tram
- Fire Operational Permit
- Amusement Buildings/ Carnivals/Fairs
- Cutting/ Welding/ Hot Work
- Plumbing and Mechanical Only (Short Form – Master Building Permit Application Not Required)
- New/Replacement or change of location of Propane Tanks, Woodstove, Hot Water, Heater, Insert Generator etc.

[What is the permit process? Do I have to have an appointment?](#)

- Obtain and complete the Master Building Permit Application along with the supplemental application that pertains to your project.
- Submit in person; see the cover sheet for times permits are accepted. For Building permits you or your agent may apply. Please note that any documents required to be recorded cannot be signed by your agent.
- When you come in your permit will be reviewed by:

- a. A Planning Technician for permit completeness and also for any requirements specific to your parcel (Septic Permit or As-Built, Water Availability, Access, Plot plan drawn to scale, etc).
  - b. A Plans Examiner will scan your structural plans for the minimum required information (Foundation, floors, walls, roofs, egress, stairs, winders, heat, flood elevation on plans, slopes, and noise zone (if required)).
  - c. Other Departments may be consulted as needed.
- If at this time, any information/requirements are missing your permit will not be accepted and processed.
  - At the time of submission you will be expected to pay the Plan Check Fee. Your receipt will include a "Tracking Number" which will become the permit number upon issuance of the permit.
  - Your application will be entered into the database and begin the review process. Permits are reviewed by different departments at the same time.
  - While the project is in plan review it may also be routed to the Health Department if there are septic concerns, a Development Coordinator if there are drainage concerns, a Planner for setback or critical area issues, etc.
  - After review of your entire permit application the Planning Technician will then finish processing your permit. All requirements/restrictions will be annotated on the permit and entered into the database and the remaining fees will be calculated. At this time the Planning Technician will call you or your agent and notify you the permit is ready to be picked up and the balance due.
  - Upon payment of the permit fee and any remaining fees due from plan check, the permit will be issued. You/your agent will be given the permit card, a copy of your permit/information conditions of approval sheet, copy of approved site plan, and 1 set of structural plans (site plan, permit card and plans must be on site for inspections).

#### [How do I get an electrical permit and inspections?](#)

- Temporary and permanent Electrical power is permitted and inspected by Washington State Department of Labor and Industries. Island County does not inspect or permit electrical. Department of Labor and Industries can be reached by the internet at [www.lni.wa.gov](http://www.lni.wa.gov) or for the Mt Vernon Office (360)416-3000 and for the Everett office (425)290-1300.

#### [How much is a building permit?](#)

- For fees and how to calculate fees see BUILDING PERMIT VALUATION
  - [Building Permit Fee Exhibit A-Valuation Chart](#) and
  - [How to Determine Building Fees](#)

#### [How long does it take to get a permit?](#)

- Processing time depends on the volume of permits already submitted and the number of available staff to work on the permit. Please ask at the time of submittal for a realistic time frame. A complete permit package moves through the process more efficiently than one that is lacking information. There may be added wait time if the project was routed for additional review by other departments.

#### [How long is the permit valid?](#)

- A permit is valid for 2 years after the date of issuance. However, if work has not begun within 180 days (6 months), the permit is considered abandoned.

### What if I need more time for my project?

- Permits may be renewed once for a period of one (1) year at the cost of half of the building permit fee, not to include plan check fee, plumbing or mechanical. If the project is still not complete at that time a “completion permit” is required.

### How do I get an inspection?

- The Building Inspection Request Line is (360)679-7307(Whidbey Island) or (360)387-3443 extension 233(Camano Island). Leave the request on the answering machine before 3:00pm for next day inspections. You may also request an inspection online at <https://www.islandcounty.net/publicportal/main.aspx>.

### Do I have to be present for an inspection?

- No, most of the time you do not have to be present as long as the inspector has access to the structure he/she is inspecting. However, an inspector may prefer not to enter a structure that contains personal property. In that case you should have a representative on site for entry.

### What are the requirements for a final?

- General requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Final – for Manufactured Home:
  - Plumbing and ducts off ground and insulated.
  - House numbers: 5” on the house and 3” at the road, to be in contrasting colors.
  - Hot water tank pressure relief valve to the outside.
  - Dryer vent to the outside.
  - 6-mil vapor barrier installed.
  - Decks, stairs, landings, handrails and guards with approved plans onsite and complete.
- Final – for Residential: PRIOR to Final inspection: *Septic, Drainage (if required), Bedroom Affidavit (if required) and Flood Certificate (if required) must be complete and approved. Refer to Permit for any additional requirements for final.*
  - All previous corrections completed.
  - House numbers: 5” on the house and 3” at the road, to be in contrasting colors.
  - Landings, decks, stairs, handrails and guards to be complete per code and engineering.
  - Safety glass, smoke detectors, egress windows.
  - Garage/SFR separation with sealed penetrations.
  - Hot Water Tank, Forced Air Unit, Pressure Relief Valve, dryer vent, whole house ventilation.
  - Accesses weather stripped.
  - Exterior grade, 6” downward slope in 10’ away from house or approved drainage or approved drainage.
  - Siding to soil minimum 6” clearance.
  - Crawl access covered and removable without tools.

### When will I receive my Certificate of Occupancy?

- Certificate of Occupancies are issued at the time that final inspection can be conducted and the building permit can be closed. This means that all conditions and structural requirements have been completed to the approved permit and plans. It is the property owner’s responsibility to retain the certificate for the life of the structure and supply copies as required to requesting entities.

### [What is the largest structure I can build without a permit?](#)

- You may build up to a 200 square foot, single story, detached accessory building for use as unheated storage, greenhouse, playhouse or similar use. A building that is exempt from a building permit is NOT exempt from any other codes or requirements including setbacks from roads, property lines, easements, drainfield or other features. It may also require review for critical areas including wetlands, geologically hazardous areas, shorelines, historical preservation areas, etc.

### [I'm replacing/building ..... do I need a permit?](#)

See [“When Do I Need a Permit”](#) located on our web site for more information.

### [I want to put up a fence, what are the requirements?](#)

- Fences less than 7ft. tall (1829mm) do not require a building permit (Measured from the footing to the top of the fence).
- Fences over 7ft tall require a permit and may require engineering. See, Section 17.03.180.S.6e of the Island County Code (Zoning) for more information.

### [Property lines and disputes](#)

- If survey pins or markers are unable to be located or if the project is close to property lines/setbacks, the owner of the property may be required to hire a Surveyor to stake and string line the site. If there is a dispute as to where the property line rests between property owners, this is a “civil matter”. It is recommended you seek counsel from an attorney. Island County cannot provide legal advice or get involved in civil issues.

### [Is there a height restriction in Island County?](#)

- The height restriction in Island County is 35 ft. in most cases. For exceptions contact our office. Some developments have more limited height restrictions defined in their covenants. Island County does not enforce covenants so you should be aware of any other restrictions that may impact you.

### [How do I find out what the setback requirements are for my property?](#)

- Contact Planning & Community Development for setbacks from property lines, roads, easements, and other structures, shorelines, wetlands, streams, buffers, geologically hazardous areas and other critical areas
- Contact Island County Health Department for setbacks from septic tanks, drainfields, reserve drainfields and wells.