



FREQUENTLY ASKED ZONING QUESTIONS

Do I Need a Zoning Permit?

The Charlotte Land Use Regulations requires town permits and approvals for most new buildings and other development. A Zoning Permit is required for any building project or development that involves:

- New Buildings
- Building Additions
- Porches, decks, and similar accessory structures
- Pools (in-ground, or above ground with foundation)
- Increase in total enclosed floor area of an existing building, including height
- Accessory Dwellings
- Changes of Use (e.g., residence to a business use)
- Projects that increase need for septic treatment
- Driveways
- Major grading, excavation & fill

A Zoning Permit is NOT required for the following projects:

- Maintenance and repair of existing structures, utilities and infrastructure (such as drainage pipes or swales) which does not result in any change to the footprint or height of a building, or the historic character of a designated historic structure.
- Interior construction or remodeling which does not affect the exterior appearance of a structure, or affect the water or septic requirements for the structure; or adding, eliminating, replacing, enlarging or reducing the size of windows and doors, or replacing exterior siding or roofing materials, or painting and staining decks and siding.
- ADA standard (handicap) ramps and walkways that do not obstruct public rights-of-way or pedestrian traffic.
- Fences and walls less than six (6) feet in height which do not obstruct public rights-of-way, or interfere with corner visibility or sight distances for vehicular traffic.
- Minor grading and excavation associated with normal road, driveway, and parking area maintenance (including ditching, culvert replacement and resurfacing). (Does not include site grading or excavation in preparation for the construction of a road, major infrastructure, or a structure, all of which require a zoning permit).
- Landscaping, for example: installation of plants, soils, arbors, terraces, and patios.
- Outdoor recreational facilities associated with a residential use, and which do not involve the development or use of structures or parking areas (e.g., unpaved walking, hiking, cross-country skiing and/or snowmobile trails).
- Up to two (2) detached accessory structures per lot, provided that the combined area of both structures does not exceed 250 square feet in floor area, and neither structure is taller than twelve feet. Structures must be at least 10 feet from property lines. (**Note:** accessory structures in the Shoreland Seasonal Home Management District have different rules. These require an application for conditional use review and approval by the Development Review Board.)
- School bus shelters which do not exceed 36 square feet in area, 8 feet height, are not located within the road right-of-way, not within 25 feet from an adjoining property line, and do not obstruct visibility or sight lines for oncoming vehicular traffic.
- Temporary contractor offices and Portable Storage Units associated with construction projects having a valid state and/or local zoning permit for the project.
- Garage sales, yard sales, auctions or related activities not exceeding three (3) consecutive days, nor more than twelve (12) days in any calendar year.
- Farm structures, such as barns for livestock and processing, for active farms following Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) as defined by VT statute, and processing facilities for silviculture (forestry) (such as lumberyard sheds and sugar houses) following Best Management Practices (BMPs). (However, you must file a sketch/plot plan showing size and location of any new farm structures, register with the VT Agency of Agriculture, Farms and Markets, and your proposed project must meet all dimensional requirements for that zoning district; see next page for description and an example.)
- Utility generation and transmission facilities that require a Certificate of Public Good by the Vermont Public Utility Commission, in accordance with the Act [24 VSA § 4413(b)]

What and Where can I Build on my Property?

The first step in understanding what & where you can build is to look up the specific [rules](#) that apply to the zoning district that you're in. The Charlotte Land Use Regulations (LURs) provide tables of allowed and conditional uses for each zoning district, with required property line setbacks, minimum lot size, frontage and lot coverage rules on pages 6-21 of the LURs.

To look up the regulations & find out which zoning district your parcel is in, visit the town website [here](#).

What is a Site/Plot Plan? Is it required?

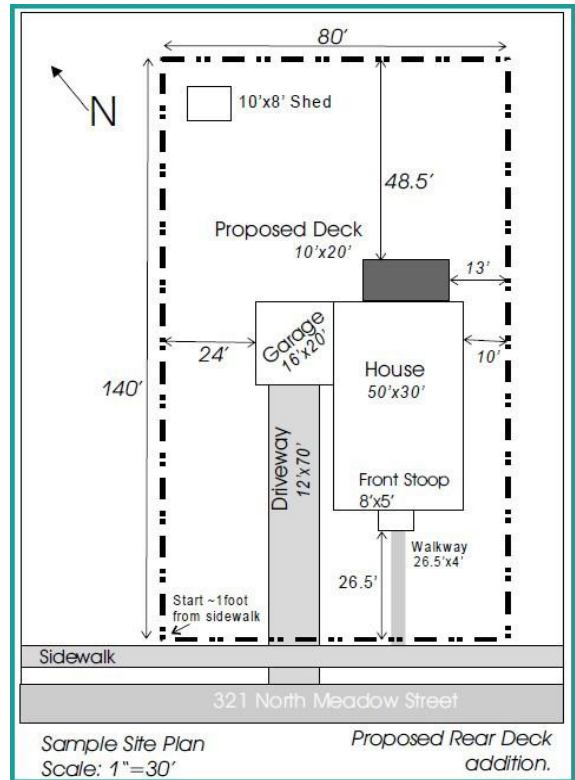
A Site/Plot Plan is a bird's eye view of a property. It should show everything currently on the property, including footprints of all buildings (house, garage, shed, decks, patios, etc.) and other improvements such as the driveway, walkways, fences, pools, etc. It should also show any proposed buildings or improvements. Dimensions should be included, and drawn to scale (e.g., one inch on the site plan is equal to a standard measure, e.g. 12 or 25 feet on the ground.)

A Site/Plot Plan is required for any development involving new buildings, additions, driveway or parking changes, construction or enlargement of barns, decks, porches, etc. The level of detail required for a Sketch/Plot Plan depends on the type of project proposed. Hand-drawn or computer-generated plans are OK.

See example at right →

Your Site/Plot Plan must include:

- Distances to all property boundaries (note: for large lots, you need only illustrate the area around the main structures)
- The location, footprint, & height of all existing and new/proposed structures & additions
- The location and dimensions of existing & proposed road accesses (curb cuts), driveways, and parking areas
- The location of existing and proposed easements, rights-of-way, and utilities
- Setbacks from property boundaries, road rights-of-way, surface waters, & wetlands
- The location of existing and proposed water supplies (drilled wells) & wastewater systems



How do I Determine my Property Boundaries?

It is the responsibility of the applicant to show accurate property boundaries on your site/plot plan. This can be challenging. Property boundaries shown online via the [Charlotte Map Viewer](#) may be sufficient. Sometimes, more precise property boundaries may be needed. In these situations, survey-quality maps of a property are more helpful. These may be available from:

- ◆ Land records at the Town Office, if a property survey was recorded (on an indexed map slide);
- ◆ Subdivision files at the Planning & Zoning Office, if the property was part of an approved subdivision;
- ◆ The zoning files at the Planning & Zoning Office, if a previous permit is on file for that property.

Occasionally, property boundaries are estimated from existing survey pins or monuments. However, be cautious about using this method. Not all survey pins indicate a property boundary, and pins may have been moved. If none of the above are available, a survey completed by a registered surveyor is the most reliable source of accurate property boundary information.

What Is a Setback?

A "setback" (front, sides and rear) is the horizontal distance from the property line to any structure. The front yard setback is typically measured from the visible edge of the road right-of-way. When the edge of the road right-of-way is unknown, the front yard property line can be measured 25 feet out from the centerline of the road (except for state highways). The Town's LURs also require specific setbacks from the Lake Champlain shoreline, streams and wetlands; see [Sec. 3.15](#) of the LURs.

Do I Need Any State Permits?

Some projects may require both local and state of VT permits. Obtaining state permits that may be needed (such as for residential rental property, shoreline development, onsite wastewater systems and drilled wells, and stormwater and wetland permits) is the sole responsibility of the property owner. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has developed an online tool called the [Permit Navigator](#) to help you determine state permits you may need for your project. Once completed, it generates a downloadable, printable guide to identify which state permits and applications will be required, based on your situation.



OK, So I Need a Town Zoning Permit. What's Next? (a step-by-step guide)

1. Download & print a [Zoning Permit Application](#) from the town website, or request hard copy from Planning & Zoning staff (425-3533 ext. 207). Look up required fees from the attached Fee Schedule (*next page*) & submit your completed application with your site plan, and check payable to Town of Charlotte. (If you're unsure which application is needed, correct application fees or how to apply the rules, contact the Planning & Zoning staff.)
2. **Other permits may be needed:** If your project requires a new driveway accessing a public road, you will need to apply to the Charlotte Selectboard for a **Highway Access Permit**. If your building project requires a new, expanded or replacement septic system, that will require a separate **Wastewater Permit**, now issued through the state of Vermont DEC. An introduction, resources and applications can be found [here](#).
3. **Review:** Once received, your zoning permit application will be reviewed by Planning & Zoning staff to determine if complete, and compliant with the town's Land Use Regulations. (If incomplete, staff will contact you to note what's missing, then return your paperwork pending receipt of those materials.) Simple projects that are fully compliant with the town's zoning rules will result in your zoning permit being issued by the Zoning Administrator, typically within a week. More complex projects (such as proposed subdivisions, commercial buildings, mixed use projects, and establishing a new use) may require review and approval by the town's Development Review Board (DRB). This will add several weeks (or more) to the process, and requires additional fees. In that situation, staff will contact you to set up a **pre-application meeting** to discuss your plans, review your materials, identify any missing or incomplete elements, and (if complete) schedule a review date on an upcoming DRB agenda.
4. Upon approval, staff will mail your **Zoning Permit**, or you may pick it up at town hall. Your permit must be displayed outdoors on your property in a location clearly visible from the road (such as mounted to a picket, your mailbox or a tree). **Note:** there is a 15-day appeal period following issuance of zoning permits. If you start construction before that date, it's at your own risk (as your permit could be appealed, which would delay your project until that's resolved).
5. With your Zoning Permit in hand, you can finally **get to work!** *Please Note:* construction of new heated space requires following the state's Energy Codes. See [this link](#). Relevant forms and information are provided by staff upon issuance of your zoning permit. Proof of compliance will be required to obtain your Certificate of Occupancy.
6. **Inspection:** contact the Zoning Administrator (802-425-3533 ext. 207) when your new building footprints are staked, and again once the project is almost finished, to arrange a quick on-site inspection, so that staff may verify your compliance with the town's permit. Inspections are performed during working hours, by appointment.
7. Once your project is complete, apply for your **Certificate of Occupancy (CO)** (also on the [town website](#), or request hard copy from the P&Z office) and pay the applicable fee. A final site inspection from the Zoning Administrator may be required. Once granted, the CO closes out your zoning permit (this is important for when you sell your property). CO in hand, you can move in & start using your new space.



Have questions about what you can build, or how to complete the zoning permit application or other land use applications? Contact the Planning & Zoning staff at the Town Office, call us at 802-425-3533 x 207, or email us at zoningadmin@townofcharlotte.com. We're here to help!

TOWN OF CHARLOTTE - PLANNING AND ZONING

Fee Schedule

The following fee schedule was adopted by vote of the Charlotte Selectboard at a public meeting on 3.11.24:

BUILDING / LAND USE PERMITS

New residence: Up to 4 bedrooms \$1,200.00; 5 or more bedrooms \$1,600.00
 Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) \$600.00
 Mobile Home..... \$500.00

Major Other \$350.00 (Addition ≥ 250 sq. ft., in-ground pool, garage, outbuilding ≥ 250 sq. ft., finished space ≥ 250 sq. ft.)

Minor Other \$150.00 (Addition ≤ 250 sq. ft., above-ground pool, finished space ≤ 250 sq. ft, fence, dock, etc.)*

** Note: Structures ≤ 250 sq. ft. not attached to an existing structure or permanently affixed to the ground by foundation or footings are exempt from permit fees (i.e., small sheds, doghouses, firewood canopies, bus shelters, etc.).*

Renewal of a building permit..... \$50.00
 Mixed-Use Facility.....\$1,500.00
 Adaptive Re-Use..... \$800.00
 Commercial (up to 4,000 sq. ft.)..... \$1,500.00
 Commercial (4,000 sq. ft. and over).....\$2,000.00

Land Use Change with no construction..... \$100.00
 Certificate of Occupancy: req. for all heated structures..... \$150.00
 Certificate of Occupancy: req. for unheated structures.....\$50.00
 Certificate of Compliance: review of zoning records \$75.00

PENALTY FEES (for construction without a permit)

After-the-Fact Supplemental Fee - prior to issuance of Notice of Violation: (1.5 times standard fee)

After-the-Fact Supplemental Fee - after issuance of Notice of Violation: (2 times standard fee)

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

Sketch Plan Review..... \$150.00
 Conditional Use Review..... \$800.00
 Site Plan Review \$800.00
 Variance Review \$500.00
 Appeal of Zoning Administrator's Action \$250.00

SUBDIVISION PERMITS

Boundary Adjustment:..... \$300.00
 Minor Subdivision.....\$600.00 + \$300 per lot/unit (whichever is greater)
 Major Subdivision.....\$1,000.00 + \$500.00 per lot/unit (whichever is greater)
 Minor Subdivision Amendment..... \$300.00 + \$150.00 per affected lot
 Major Subdivision Amendment \$500.00 + \$150.00 per affected lot

HIGHWAY ACCESS PERMIT..... \$100.00

PUBLICATIONS AND COPIES:

Land Use Regulations..... \$15.00
 Town Plan.....\$16.00
 Copies.....\$0.10/page
 Fax..... \$2.00/page
 Recording fee..... \$15.00/page; \$25.00/mylar

TAX AND GIS MAPS:

Tax Map..... \$0.10/page
 Ortho Maps: 8x11..... \$1.00/page
 8X14..... \$1.50/page
 11X17 \$2.00/page

▶ Fees may only be waived or reduced by petition to the Charlotte Selectboard ◀