

LAND USE FAQS

- I. [General](#) page 1
- II. [Zoning](#) page 2
- III. [Building](#) page 5

I. GENERAL

❖ Why do I need to obtain a permit or approval for the work I want to do?

Generally, any standard building improvement that does not require specialized skills or knowledge (examples: painting, carpeting, lamp replacements, hanging shutters) is exempt from zoning or building permits and approvals.

Work that constructs a new building, demolishes a portion of or entire building, includes structural changes to a building (examples: adding/removing walls, expanding the square footage, finishing a basement or attic), or involves specialized skills or knowledge (examples: electrical, plumbing, HVAC, sign installation) is required to obtain an approval and/or permit.

Additional permits or approvals may also be required from the Fire Marshal, Public Facilities, Engineering, WPCA, Health, Parks, Police or Fire Departments.

Connecticut General Statutes Sections 29-253 through 29-282, and Chapter 134 dictate the purview of the Building and Zoning Departments, respectively. Contact the Zoning Department (203-576-7217 or Zoning@BridgeportCT.gov) or Building Department (203-576-7226 or Building@BridgeportCT.gov) if you have any questions.

❖ How long does it take to go through the entire process to obtain approvals?

The duration of time to obtain approvals and permits for a project is dependent upon the work being proposed and the types of approvals and permits that are required.

A project that requires a land use Commission hearing and approval prior to obtaining building permits for construction could take a minimum of two (2)

months to obtain Commission approval. Permits could take up to 30 days for review and approval, subsequent the land use Commission approval.

Additional time will be needed if departments other than Building or Zoning also require a permit.

❖ **What is the cost to obtain a permit or approval?**

Fees differ for each permit or approval and can be estimated by reviewing the Fee Schedule on the department webpage.

❖ **Do approvals and permits expire?**

Each approval and permit has different conditions and expiration dates. Refer to cited regulatory reference for details.

Zoning ([Zoning Regulations](#)):

- Coastal Area Management – 12 months (Section 14-3-4e)
- Certificate of Zoning Compliance – 12 months (Section 14-1-7c)
- Site Plan – 5 years (Section 14-2-8)
- Special Permit – 12 months (Section 14-4-5)
- Subdivision Site Plan Review – 5 years (Section 14-11-2e)
- Variance – until use is abandoned, or 6 months (Section 14-7-5)

Building ([State Building Code](#)):

- All permits – 180 days unless work has begun (Section 105.5)

II. ZONING

❖ **How do I know what land uses are allowed on my property?**

Every property is assigned a specific zone, as shown on the [Zoning Map](#). The Zoning Regulations outline what land uses can occur in each zone. Refer to [Tables 1, 2.A and 2.B](#).

❖ **What is CAM?**

Properties that are within the Coastal Boundary, noted by a broken line inland of the shoreline on the Zoning Map, are subject to Coastal Area Management (CAM) regulations.

These regulations comply with CT General Statutes [Sections 22a-105 through 22a-109](#), to ensure that potential adverse impacts of proposed activities on both coastal resources and future water-dependent development activities are acceptable.

❖ **What is a hardship, and how do I know if this applies to me?**

A hardship is a situation unique to the property which prevents development from complying with the development standards. This hardship is not general to the neighborhood or zone.

An application for a variance must be presented to the Zoning Board of Appeals, who determine whether a hardship exists and may grant the waiver of specific development standards for the proposed work.

❖ **How do I find out where my property line is?**

[Bridgeport GIS](#) provides detailed property information for every parcel in the city. You can search by property address, owner name, or parcel ID number. Or you can find the parcel on the map and select it. Zooming in on the parcel will display the property dimensions. Please note that the lines depicted on GIS are generally accurate within 3 feet.

Certain applications require the submission of an A-2 Survey. This is a property survey performed by a licensed professional, who prepares an accurate map of the property lines and other defining features.

❖ **Will I need to notify nearby property owners?**

Certain applications require that a notice be sent to abutting property owners (properties that touch yours), or owners of properties within 100 feet of your property line. To obtain a list of those properties visit the [Bridgeport GIS](#) site and select the project site on the map. In the property box that appears, select 'Buffer Feature.' Fill in the preferred Distance and Units, then select Continue. The map will highlight all parcels within that buffer area, and a list of the addresses and property owners will appear.

❖ **Will my application get approved?**

The chances for approval are dependent upon what it is you are proposing to do, and whether or not it conforms to all of the development standards in the Zoning Regulations.

Certain work is required to have a public hearing before a land use Commission (Planning & Zoning Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals). After you or your representative(s) present the application to the appropriate Commission the public has an opportunity to speak, after which the Commission will render their decision.

Work that does not require a public hearing will be reviewed and approved by staff.

❖ **Who attends the public hearing?**

Someone representing your application must present the application to the appropriate Commission during the public hearing. All parties who can provide details and answer questions about the application are encouraged to attend. This may include the property owner, business owner, developer, engineer(s), architect, or attorney.

Meetings are open to the public, and any member of the public may speak in favor of or opposition to an application during the public hearing.

❖ **What happens if my zoning application is denied?**

If your application is denied you will not receive a refund of the fees paid.

A new application may be submitted at any time if substantial changes are made to the proposed work. Otherwise, the application cannot be resubmitted for six (6) months. Under either scenario, new fees will be applied to the application.

❖ **I received Zoning approval on my application, now what?**

An approval from a Zoning Commission means that the proposed work can move to the construction phase. Building permits are required before beginning construction and can be applied for by the property owner or an authorized agent.

Note: Obtaining a Building permit requires a Certificate of Zoning Compliance. The particular approval received from the Zoning Commission was a precursor to obtaining the Certificate of Zoning Compliance.

III. BUILDING

❖ Is there any work that does not require a building permit?

A detailed listing of Work Exempt From a Building Permit can be found in the 2018 [Connecticut State Building Code](#), Section 105.2. Work not listed in this citation requires a building permit.

Although a building permit may not be required, other permits or approvals may be required for the proposed work.

❖ What information is needed to apply for a building permit?

Every permit issued by the Building Department requires a completed application, several sets of plans and specifications, verification approvals from other departments, and the names of contractors with copies of their occupational licenses.

Certain permits require additional supporting documentation. Refer to the webpage for each permit to confirm the application requirements.

❖ Who applies for a building permit?

The property owner or an authorized agent may apply for a building permit. An authorized agent is often the contractor performing the work. It is the property owner's responsibility to ensure the authorized agent obtains permits. Refer to Connecticut General Statute [Section 29-263](#) for clarity.

❖ May I start work while the permit application is being reviewed?

No.

❖ Does all work require an inspection, and how is an inspection scheduled?

Yes, permitted work requires inspections, as detailed in the 2018 Connecticut [State Building Code](#) Section 110. Examples of work that requires an inspection include, but are not limited to, footings and foundations, framing, energy efficiency electrical, mechanical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning.

When the work is ready for inspection, the permit holder, or their authorized agent, can schedule inspections with the Building Department.

❖ **What State codes does the Building Department enforce?**

The City of Bridgeport Building Department enforces the 2018 Connecticut [State Building Code](#), and any amendments thereto.

The 2018 Connecticut State Building Code incorporates the following Codes:

- 2015 International Building Code (IBC)
- 2015 International Existing Building Code (IEBC)
- 2015 International Plumbing Code (IPC)
- 2015 International Mechanical Code (IMC)
- 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)
- 2017 NFPA 70, National Electric Code, of the National Fire Protection Association Inc. (NFPA 70)
- 2009 ICC/ANSI A117.1 Accessibility and Usable Buildings and Facilities
- 2015 International Residential Code (IRC)