



Do I need a zoning permit?

The Town of Stowe requires various permits and approvals for development activities. A zoning permit is required for any development project that involves:

- New buildings
- Building additions
- Porches, decks and similar structures
- Ponds
- Pools
- Accessory apartments
- Projects that increase sewage flow
- Projects that increase the gross floor area
- Changes in driveway locations
- Major grading
- Change of use
- Façade alterations if in the Stowe Historic Overlay District

A zoning permit is not required for:

- Fences and wall under 8 feet high and which do not interfere with corner visibility and not within the Stowe Historic Overlay District
- Freestanding residential accessory structure, such as a shed, tree house, swimming pool, hot tub, doghouse, child's play house or similar structure with a floor area not more than 100 sq. ft., a height of not more than 10 feet, located at least than 5 feet from any property lines, not located within the front yard and not in the Stowe Historic Overlay District. No more than two such exempted structures per side or rear yard are permitted.
- Interior renovations that do not increase the gross floor area or result in additional bedrooms
- Patios at grade level
- General maintenance such as painting and roofing

When in doubt, the applicant should always check with the zoning office.

What can result from not obtaining a permit?

If a project is done without obtaining the proper permits, the property owner and/or applicant may:

- Be required to do costly repairs to gain compliance
- Need to remove work done that was not in compliance
- Pay increased permit application fees
- Be involved in legal action to gain compliance

- Have difficulties with obtaining a clear title when selling a property

Is a site plan required?

A site plan is required for any development involving new buildings, building additions, driveway changes, parking lot changes, construction or enlargement of steps, decks, patios, porches, or pools. The level of detailed required for a site plan relates to the type of project proposed. Smaller projects, such as a house addition or construction of a deck or shed, do not necessarily need all of the items below depending upon the individual project or site. A more involved project requires a site plan that includes:

- Name of the project, current owners name and address, and tax parcel number for the property
- Name of firm or individual preparing plan, scale, north point and date of preparation
- Existing and proposed features in sufficient detail to allow the Zoning Administrator to determine compliance with these regulations
- Zoning setback lines
- All distinct and/or prominent physical features, (existing or proposed), such as tree lines, stone walls, ledge outcroppings, watercourses, water supplies, wastewater areas or sewer lines areas, or items of historical or cultural significance or the like
- Elevations to show compliance with height restrictions
- Floor plans for additions and new construction

How do I determine my property boundaries?

One of the problems that can arise is determining the exact location of property boundaries. With many projects the tax map boundaries are accurate enough to obtain the required permits. In other cases, more accurate property locations are needed such as construction where the minimum setbacks are being proposed.

In these cases, survey-quality mapping of a property may be needed to get approvals for a project or for the actual development of the project. Sources of survey-quality mapping may be available from:

- The property owners records when the property was bought
- The clerks office if a survey was recorded
- The clerks office if a subdivision was recorded that showed the location of buildings existing at the time of the subdivision
- The Zoning Office if a previous permit was on file that used a survey

Occasionally, property boundaries can be determined in the field from existing survey pins or monuments. Property owners should be cautious of using pins or monuments to determine boundaries unless they know for certain that they indicate boundaries. Not all survey pins indicate a property boundary and pins may have been moved.

Unfortunately, an applicant may sometimes need to obtain a survey in order to proceed with a project. A survey completed by a registered surveyor is almost always the best source of property boundary information.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain accurate enough property boundary information to complete a project.

Can I build as soon as I obtain a permit?

State law requires a 15-day appeal period after the permit is approved before construction can commence. In addition, you need to make sure that any other required permits from the Public Works Department and/or from the State are obtained.

What if I have on-site wastewater (septic) disposal?

All construction must have adequate wastewater disposal before a zoning permit can be issued. Any construction involving additional bedrooms requires documentation to show that adequate on-site disposal has been previously approved or is approved to be constructed. Local health permits, generally on file in the zoning office, can help determine previously approved sewage capacity. A zoning permit can only be issued if adequate sewage capacity exists.

Properties in the village area are also within the Stowe Historic District overlay zone. Most alteration and construction, except general maintenance, with the SHOD require a review of the architectural aspects of the development to make sure it preserves the existing historic and architectural integrity of the area. SHOD review is also required for historic properties outside of the SHOD. Beside the normal review and approval by the Zoning Administrator, the applicant is required to first meet with the Stowe Historic Preservation Committee (SHPC). They will review the project, make suggestions regarding any possible changes, and then make a formal recommendation to the Development Review Board (DRB) or the Zoning Administrator, depending upon the scale of the project. The DRB or Zoning Administrator will then review the SHC recommendation and make a final decision. The Zoning Administrator can advise the applicant on how to best prepare for this review.

Ridgeline and Hillside Overlay District (RHOD) Review

The Ridgeline and Hillside Overlay District (RHOD) includes properties located at higher elevations, steep slopes, and visually sensitive areas. Beside the normal review and approval by the Zoning Administrator, the applicant is often required to obtain Development Review Board (DRB) RHOD approval. Smaller projects in the RHOD can sometimes be approved administratively by the Zoning Administrator. The Zoning Administrator can advise the applicant on how to best prepare for this review.

Do I need any other permits?

The State of Vermont requires a building permit for all construction involving public buildings (which includes residential rentals). Other state permits may be required for certain projects including driveway curb cuts for highways, wastewater permits, and general construction permits (if over one acre is disturbed). Information on state permits can be obtained at www.state.us/labind or by calling 802-479-4434.

Need help?

The Stowe Zoning Department is available to assist you with your development approvals. Assistance includes review of existing property zoning records, review of applicable regulations, and guidance regarding other approvals that may need to be obtained. A preliminary project review is available and can save time and costs before proceeding with final design work.