



Town of Charlotte

ESTABLISHED 1762

FREQUENTLY ASKED ZONING QUESTIONS

Do I Need a Zoning Permit?

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

- New Buildings
- Building Additions
- Porches, decks, and similar structures
- Pools (in-ground, or above ground with foundation)
- Accessory Dwellings
- Signs
- Changes of Use (e.g. residence to a business use)
- Increase in total enclosed floor area of an existing building, including height
- 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 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.
- 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: does not apply to accessory structures in the Shoreland Seasonal Home Management District. These projects require an application for conditional use review and approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.]**
- 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.
- 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 accepted agricultural practices (AAPs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs), as defined by VT statute, and processing facilities for silviculture (forestry) (such as lumberyard sheds and sugar houses) following Accepted Management Practices (AMPs) as defined by VT statute. (However, you are required to file a sketch/plot plan showing size and location of any new structures, and meet dimensional requirements for that zoning district; see next page for description and an example.)
- Utility generation and transmission facilities requiring the issuance of a Certificate of Public Good by the Vermont Public Service Board, in accordance with the Act 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 rules that apply to the zoning district that you're in. The Charlotte Land Use Regulations 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.

To look up the regulations & find out what zoning district your parcel is in, visit the town website at: <https://is.gd/wqNytZ>

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

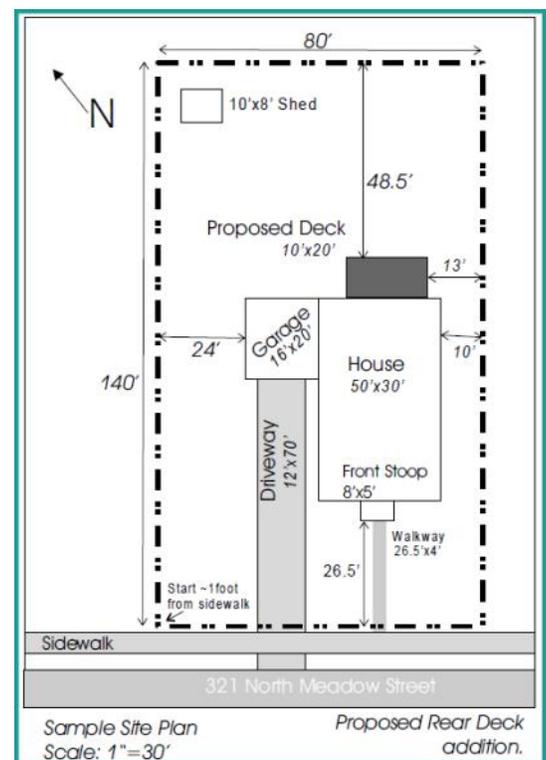
A Sketch/Plot Plan is a bird's eye view of a property, as if you were looking down at it from above. It should show everything currently on the property, including footprints of all buildings (house, garage, shed, decks, patios, etc.) and other improvements such as driveway, walkways, fences, pools, 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 25 feet on the ground.)

A Sketch/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. Smaller projects, such as adding a sunroom or construction of a shed or garage, do not require the same level of detail as a new house.

See example to right ➤

Your Sketch/Plot Plan should include:

- The dimensions of the lot, to existing property boundaries;
- 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 (drilled wells) & wastewater systems.



How Do I Determine My Property Boundaries?

It is the responsibility of the applicant to include accurate property boundary information on a sketch/plot plan for your permit application. It may be challenging to find the exact location of your property boundaries. Tax maps (available online at the Charlotte Map Viewer, at: <https://is.gd/FFIErU>) are sufficient. In other cases, more accurate property boundary locations is required. In these situations, survey-quality mapping of a property may be needed. These maps may be available from:

- ◆ The property owner's records (such as an appraisal) when the property was purchased;
- ◆ Land records at the Town Office, if a property survey was recorded;
- ◆ Subdivision files at the Planning & Zoning Office, if a final subdivision plat was recorded at approval;
- ◆ The zoning files at the Town Office, if a previous permit is on file that used a survey.

Occasionally, property boundaries can be determined in the field from existing survey pins or monuments. However, property owners should be cautious of using this method. Not all survey pins indicate a property boundary, and pins may have been moved. A survey completed by a registered surveyor is almost always the most reliable source of property boundary information.

What Is a Setback?

A “setback” (front, side and rear) is the horizontal distance from the property line to any structure. The front yard setback is typically measured from the edge of the road right-of-way. When the location 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. The Town’s Land Use Regulations also require setbacks from the Lake Champlain shoreline, streams and wetlands; see Sec. 3.15.

Do I Need Any State Permits?

Permit Specialists are available in the state Regional Office to answer your questions about the State permit process. The Permit Specialist will prepare a Project Review Sheet (PRS) upon request. The PRS is a preliminary determination of environmental and other reviews that may be required for your project. It provides key points of contact for state permit specialists. To contact the Permit Specialist serving the Town of Charlotte, please visit: <http://dec.vermont.gov/ps-essex> or call (802) 879-5656.



OK, So I Need a Town Zoning Permit. What’s Next?

1. Download & print a Zoning Permit Application from the town website (at: <https://is.gd/1fHlk0>), 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 a check payable to Town of Charlotte. (If you have questions about how to complete the permit application, what fees are required or the town’s regulations, please contact the Zoning Administrator for assistance.)
2. If your project includes a new driveway accessing a town road, you will also need to apply to the Charlotte Select-board for a Highway Access Permit. If your building project requires a new, expanded or replacement septic system, that also requires a separate wastewater permit & fees. These applications can be found here: <https://is.gd/1fHlk0>
3. Once received, and if deemed complete, your zoning permit application will be reviewed by staff. Simple projects can be acted upon by staff, and can usually be issued within 2 weeks, depending on workload. More complex projects may need review and approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment, or Planning Commission. This can add several weeks (or longer) to the process & requires additional fees. If additional info is needed, or additional steps are required, staff will contact you.
4. Once issued, staff will notify you to come to the Town Office to **pick up your Zoning Permit**. Your permit must be displayed outdoors on your property in a location clearly visible from the road. **Please note:** there is a 15-day appeal period following issuance of zoning permits. Wait until that appeal period expires to begin construction; starting before then is at your own risk, as your permit could be appealed, delaying your project until that’s resolved.
5. With your Zoning Permit in hand, you can finally **get to work!**
6. During construction, please contact the Zoning Administrator (802-425-3533 ext. 207) when your foundation is complete, and again once the project is almost finished, to arrange a quick on-site inspection, so that staff may verify your compliance with permit requirements.
7. Once the work 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 fees. A final site inspection from the Zoning Administrator may be required. Once granted, the CO closes out your zoning permit, which is important if/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? Please contact the Zoning Administrator at the Town Office, call us at 802-425-3533 x 207, or email us at zoningadmin@townofcharlotte.com. We’re here to help!

