



# Floodplain Development Permit Information

The Department of Local Services, Permitting Division (Permitting), along with the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP), Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) manages Floodplain Development Permits and Flood Hazard Certificates for unincorporated King County.

**Apply On-Line** at [MyBuildingPermit.com](https://mybuildingpermit.com)

**Select:** King County | Land Use | Any Project Type | New Development Activity | Floodplain Development

 **MyBuildingPermit**

This document explains when you must get a Floodplain Development Permit along with applicable permit submittal requirements. The regulations for floodplain management are outlined in King County Code (KCC) Chapter 21A and the King County Surface Water Design Manual (KCSWDM) section 4.4.2.

For more information or questions, email [PermitQuestions@kingcounty.gov](mailto:PermitQuestions@kingcounty.gov).

## Prerequisites Before Submittal

*Follow the questions and answers below to see if you need extra documents as outlined in Submittal Documents section below.*

<b>Complete Before Submittal</b>	
Obtain these applicable permits before submitting your building permit application.	
<b>Question:</b>	Is there a Mapped Floodplain located on the property?
No	Conduct an evaluation for any unmapped flood hazard areas, see Section 4.4.2 of the King County Surface Water Design Manual (KCSWDM).
Yes	Show the delineated floodplain on a site plan, also evaluate for any unmapped floodplain per Section 4.4.2 of the KCSWDM.
<b>Question:</b>	Is the project a remodel of an existing structure?
No	No additional submittal documents required

## Floodplain Development Permit Information, continued

Yes	Substantial Improvement evaluation is required. Provide a contractors estimate for the proposed work. The Tax assessed value will be used in determination of the substantial improvement.
Question:	Work within a delineated floodplain?
No	No additional submittal documents required
Yes	HEC-RAS model prepared by a Licensed Civil Engineer in the State of Washington
Question:	Development or work within the regulated FEMA Floodway?
No	No additional submittal documents required
Yes	Include applicable code references from KCC 21a.24.260 in project narrative that project is permissible.
Question:	Is there potential for more than 1 source of flooding? Sources of flooding include, but are not limited to: lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, closed depression, marine shoreline or other water feature.
No	Show the limits of the floodplain, mapped and unmapped as determined by Section 4.4.2 of the KCSWDM.
Yes	Include the limits of all flood hazard areas. The most restrictive flood hazard area shall be used for computations.

## Required Submittal Documents

Required Submittal Documents	
	Floodplain Development Application
	Completed Flood Hazard Certificate (FHC)
	Site Plans – showing the extent of the floodway and floodplain, See Residential Site Plan Requirements
	Flood Study Technical Report

## Less Common Supporting Documents

Less Common Submittal Documents	
	Building/Architectural Plans <a href="#">Electronic Plan Requirements handout</a>
	Substantial Improvement Calculation – Contractors Bid
	HEC-RAS Model – Supporting Documentation for Section B

## Floodplain Development Permit Information, continued

	Elevation Certificate(s) will be required during and post construction of a residence that is within a Flood Hazard Area
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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*My property does not have a FEMA Floodplain, why do I need a floodplain development permit?*

While many properties in King County are outside of the FEMA regulated flood hazard area, there are a large amount of unmapped flood hazard areas. These areas may include a river, stream, lake, wetland, closed depression, marine shoreline, or other water feature. The King County Surface Water Design Manual provides a hierarchy of how to evaluate unmapped flood hazard areas. See section 4.4.2 for guidance. These flood hazard areas are located within Zone X.

*My project is outside the delineated floodplain (mapped or unmapped), how do I complete the Flood Hazard Certificate?*

The Flood Hazard Certification (FHC) is required for all floodplain development applications to document compliance with the floodplain regulations. While a project site may be located outside a flood hazard area, this document is still required. An applicant or contractor may complete Section A of the FHC citing that all work is outside the flood hazard area as delineated on the site plan.

*What level of work can I do within a flood hazard area without a floodplain development permit?*

Nearly any level of work or development within or adjacent the flood hazard area requires a floodplain development permit. Work, or development is defined as any man-made change to improved or unimproved real estate (property/land/structures), including but not limited to buildings, or other structures, mining, dredging, filling, grading, paving excavation or drilling operations or storage of equipment or materials. King County must require a permit for all proposed construction or other development, so that King County can determine whether the construction or other development is proposed within a flood-prone area.

Work that is permissible without a floodplain development application consists of routine maintenance of permitted activities, gardens, or post type structure such as a mailbox or flag pole. The intent is to verify new work/development will not create a new obstruction to flood flows, alter drainage or have potential to be a substantial improvement.

*When do I need a Floodplain Development Permit?*

A floodplain development permit is required whenever work is completed within or adjacent to a King County regulated flood hazard areas even if the flood hazard area has not yet been delineated by King County or by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Flood hazard areas include a river, stream, lake, wetland, closed depression, marine shoreline, or other water feature. The minimum size for a wetland or a closed depression requiring a flood development permit is 5,000-sf or larger as defined by *Closed Depression* in the KCSWDM.

## **Floodplain Development Permit Information, continued**

*How do I know if my site is on or adjacent to a flood hazard area if it's not already outlined by FEMA or on the King County floodplain map (see [Property Research and Mapping Resources](#))?*

If you are unsure if a water body such as a stream, lake, or closed depression on your lot or next to your lot is a flood hazard area contact the King County River and Floodplain Management Section for help and [take a look at their page here](#).

*Why does King County require a Floodplain Development Permit?*

King County is a part of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) managed by FEMA. As a participant, King County must record any work in, or near a mapped or unmapped floodplain. We do this by requiring Floodplain Development Permits. Property owners in unincorporated King County can buy flood insurance through the NFIP. Flood insurance rates are partly based on how well the community handles flood issues. Following floodplain rules lowers the cost of flood insurance. For more on FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS), visit FEMA's website.

Since any action in the floodplain can impact other properties, the County tracks development through floodplain development permits to ensure no property is negatively impacted by others' actions.

*Do I need to hire an engineer to complete a floodplain development permit?*

The Floodplain Development Permit application asks for basic information about your property and project site. A professional engineer is not required to complete the application. But it may be necessary to hire a professional engineer to help identify flood information and perform any necessary floodplain studies that may be required. If your project is within a Flood Hazard Area, a civil engineer is required to complete Section B of the Flood Hazard Certificate.

If your project includes a building, you may need a surveyor for information about the flood elevations and proposed elevations of the building. Check the [King County iMap service](#) to see if a Floodplain Elevation Certificate has been issued for structures on your property.

A Floodplain Development Permit may need to show compliance with certain other standards like zero-rise, compensatory storage, and others. A Flood Hazard Certificate and a flood study may be needed to demonstrate compliance with these regulations.

*Does the floodplain development permit mean I still need any other permits?*

Yes, you may still need other permits like building permits, clearing and grading permits, and shoreline development permits. If you think you are in a floodplain, apply for the floodplain development permit before applying for your building permit or clearing and grading permit.

*When is a Flood Hazard Certificate required?*

A Flood Hazard Certificate (FHC) is required for all projects that require a Floodplain Development Application. If the work is clearly outside a mapped flood hazard area, and not within an

## **Floodplain Development Permit Information, continued**

approximate or minor floodplain study as defined in the King County Surface Water Design Manual, then each portion of Section A may be marked as 'not required' stating "No work conducted within the delineated flood hazard area".

If work is within a delineated flood hazard area that is not a Coastal High Hazard Area (VE) and associated AE areas adjacent to VE zones; then Section B of the FHC is required and shall be prepared by a Licensed Civil Engineer.

If the project is within a Coastal High Hazard Area, the FHC is required, but is only subject to Section A. Citing Code Section KCC 21a.24.272.J and designating each section as not required is permissible.

*What is the difference between the zero-rise floodway and the FEMA floodway?*

The zero-rise floodway is a county designation for the floodplain. The FEMA floodway is only a portion of the floodplain and has stricter standards for development.

*What if I think my project site is above the floodplain or believe the flood maps are wrong?*

First, check to see if a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) has already been approved by FEMA. Use the [King County iMap service](#) for this. The mapping service also provides a link to the parcel's LOMA.

If a licensed surveyor can show that your project site or property is above the base flood elevation, then you might be able to get a Letter of Map Amendment to remove your property from the floodplain. This Letter of Map Amendment can also remove the requirement by your bank to purchase flood insurance, but that is at the bank's discretion. For this process, apply directly to FEMA. More info here: <https://www.fema.gov/letter-map-changes>.

*What is substantial improvements or substantial repairs, and it is necessary even for when a natural event damaged my residence, such as a tree strike?*

A substantial improvement calculation assessment is required for all projects that are proposing any maintenance, repair, structural modification, addition or other improvements of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds fifty percent of the market value of the structure prior to the improvement or when the damage occurred.

If the work is an addition to an existing structure, the addition is required to meet the requirements of a Flood Hazard Certificate with a major floodplain study as outlined in the KCSWDM section 4.4.2. Additional information regarding substantial improvements can be found in the Substantial Improvement handout available at King County permit [website](#), or within the NFIP Substantial Improvement [reference P-758](#).

New construction, replacement, and substantial improvement are restricted in the FEMA floodways and may be restricted in other flood hazard areas. Some exceptions

## Floodplain Development Permit Information, continued

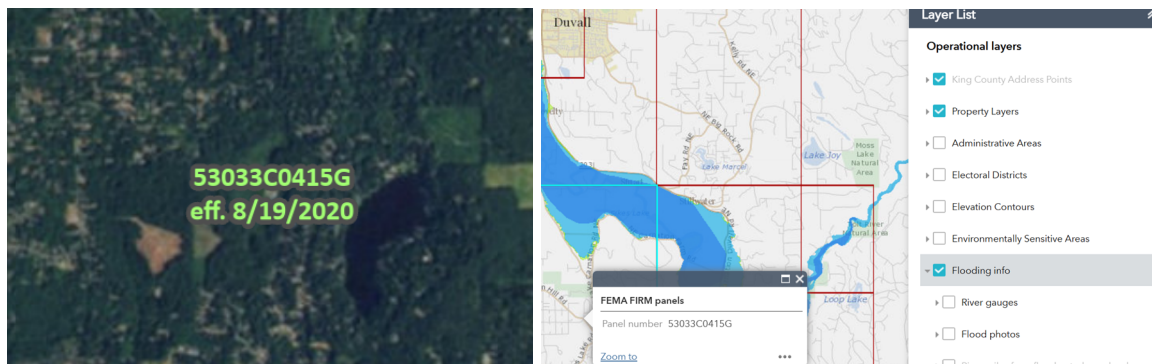
apply, such as those in agricultural areas. If your structure is within a FEMA Floodway please submit for a preapplication meeting to discuss applicable flood regulations.

### *How much will my permit cost?*

See the [fee schedule](#). Refer to Use Fees section for “Fee Guide 08, Use or Shoreline Permits, Variances and Zoning Amendment.” This includes all related permit application fees that may be needed for a floodplain development permit application.

### *Where can I find information regarding my Map and Panel Number on the Floodplain Development Application?*

This information can be found on King County iMap or FEMA Map Service Center, see the additional resources tab below. The map is the first six characters, the panel is the last five characters on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). In the image below, 53033C is the map number, and 0415G is the panel number.



### *Why is a Critical Area Notice on Title required for my property?*

A notice on title is required for all flood hazard areas as outlined in King County Code 21a.24.170 and KCC 21a.06.254. Recording a notice that specifically identifies flood hazard areas ensures compliance with federal floodplain management requirements. This requirement notifies future property owners and supports flood insurance and mitigation measures.

## Additional Resources

### King County

[Department of Natural Resources and Parks](#)

[\(DNRP\) Water and Land Resources Division](#)

[\(WLRD\)](#)

[Department of Local Services, Permitting Division](#)

[Floodplain Development Permit Information, Forms and Application packet](#)

## **Floodplain Development Permit Information, continued**

[Property Research and Mapping Resources](#)

[Online Permit Status, Invoice Payment and Inspection Scheduling](#)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

[National Flood Hazard Layer](#)

[Viewer](#) [Map Service Center](#)