



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.

This document explains when you must get a Floodplain Development Permit. The regulations for floodplain management are outlined in King County Code (KCC) Chapter 21A.

For more information or questions, email PermitQuestions@kingcounty.gov.

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

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



Frequently Asked Questions

When do I need a Floodplain Development Permit?

- Before doing work within County designated flood hazard areas.
- Before doing work on a lot that has or is next to a flood hazard area even if the flood hazard area has not yet been outlined by King County or FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency). Flood hazard areas include streams, lakes and closed depressions or wetlands with a surface area of 5,000 SF or more.

How do I know if my site is on or next 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

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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 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. The Certificates do expire, but even expired Certificates will provide valuable background to submit a Floodplain Determination Permit and a new Floodplain Elevation Certificate.
- 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?

- When development will occur within the floodplain.
- Development within the coastal floodplain on Vashon Island does not require a Flood Hazard Certificate.

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.

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What if I think my project site is above the floodplain or I 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>.

Substantial Improvements to Existing Buildings and/or Structures

- New construction, replacement, and substantial improvement usually aren't allowed in the FEMA floodways and may be restricted in other flood hazard areas. Some exceptions apply, such as those in agricultural areas.
- Projects with only improvements to an existing building may be allowed if:
 - The improvements do not increase the footprint of the building and/or structure,
 - AND the improvements will cost less than 50% of the market value before improvements.
- See King County Code (KCC) 21A.06.1270 for the definition of substantial improvement.

Other Forms that may be Required As Part of the Floodplain Development Permit Process

- Depending on your type and location, more forms might be needed. These can be found in the [Flood Hazards form packet](#).
 - Flood Hazard Certificate
Many developments will need a Flood Hazard Certificate to show compliance with the FEMA no-rise (21A.24.260 B.), King County zero-rise (21A.24.250 B.), compensatory storage (21A.24.240 A.), and depth/velocity requirements (21A.24.240 C.). Usually, you will need a professional engineer to complete this form.
 - Elevation Certificate
Required for any new building or major improvement to an existing building, completed by a professional surveyor. It is also needed for a lateral addition.
 - Floodproofing Certificate
Required for any nonresidential structure to be dry floodproofed, completed by a professional surveyor and professional engineer. An Elevation Certificate is also needed.
 - V-Zone Design Certificate
Required for any new building, major improvement, or lateral addition located in a coastal high hazard area, completed by a professional engineer. An Elevation Certificate is also needed.

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How long does my floodplain development permit last?

- The floodplain development permit will expire if no work occurs after 180 days.

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.

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](#)

[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](#)