

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can I contact the Planning & Community Development Department?

A: The Planning Department (and rest of City Hall offices) are open Monday-Thursday 8:30am to 5:30pm and Fridays 8:30am to 4pm. We welcome you to stop by our office on the First Floor of City Hall, call us at 603-516-6008, or email Dover-Planning@Dover.NH.Gov.

Q: What zoning district am I in and what are the dimensional regulations and permitted uses in each zone?

A: All lots in Dover are zoned either residential, non-residential, or mixed use. You can find out your zone by visiting www.maps.dover.nh.gov and searching for your property. Each district has a zoning table created for it. The zoning ordinance is online at <https://ecode360.com/DO0878-DIV-06> and the zoning tables are a link within the ordinance. If you need more assistance please feel free to call us at 603-516-6008 or email us with your property address.

If there is an asterisk (*) next to the zoning district on the property record, the property may be located in more than one zoning district. Please inquire in the Planning Department office at City Hall or contact the Zoning Administrator for a final determination based on the official map located in City Hall.

Q: Do you have a building plan or plot plan for my property?

A: We may have a subdivision or site plan on file. It may be worthwhile to check out Dover's GIS at www.maps.dover.nh.gov to see your approximate property lines, figure out what ward, zoning district, or elementary school district a property is in and so much more. The Inspection Services office at the North End Fire station, located at 262 Sixth Street may have a foundation certification and building plan, so feel free to give them a call at 603-516-6038.

Q: Can I place an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on my property?

A: RSA 674:71 allows all homes in zones that allow single-family dwellings to have an Accessory Dwelling Unit. In Dover these are units subordinate to the main dwelling unit and may be located in the main structure or as part of a garage or carriage house. You will also have to pay an impact fee for the ADU (attach impact fee schedule). The application is located here: <https://www.dover.nh.gov/government/city-operations/planning/>.

Q: Can I have a swimming pool?

A: Yes. Swimming pools, much like accessory structures are allowed and have setbacks (10' in a residential zone). There is a requirement that a minimum four-foot-tall fence or wall surround the pool for safety of the property owner and general public.

Q: Can I place an Accessory Structure on my property (detached garage & sheds)

A: Accessory Structures are allowed in most zones, except the Central Business District. Contact the Zoning Administrator with a description of your proposal and the property address. There are separate setbacks for these types of structures (10' in a residential zone). If you have a non-conforming lot you may be able to place the structure closer to the lot line. All accessory structures need to maintain distance between any main building and any accessory building not structurally attached to such main building shall be no less than the height of the rear wall of the accessory building.

Q: Are there size limitations for an Accessory Structure?

A: Any structure less than 100 square feet, there are 0 setbacks required, and however we recommend leaving room to maintain structure. A structure over 100 square feet, but less than 200 square feet, must meet the setbacks for an accessory structure (10' in a residential zone) and no building permit required. A structure over 200 square feet, must meet the setbacks for an accessory structure (10' in a residential zone) and requires a building permit. All accessory structures need to maintain distance between any main building and any accessory building not structurally attached to such main building shall be no less than the height of the rear wall of the accessory building.

Q: My property is a corner lot, does this impact me?

A: The main impact would be that you have two front setbacks, as well as side and rear setbacks. It will effect placement of structures, but other than that there are no real impacts.

Q: Is my lot conforming?

A: To answer that question, we would need to review your property. Please email your address or map and lot ID to the Zoning Administrator and we can review it. An informal email can be used, or for a more formal verification, you can complete a zoning verification or compliance form, and submit it.

Q: My lot is considered non-conforming, do the dimensional/use regulations change?

A: Lots that were made non-conforming by way of a zoning change are considered legally non-conforming and may continue to exist. There may be limitations on expansions or replacement of a structure or use within it. If your lot is 5,000 square feet and has 50 or more feet of frontage, you have the following relief: 50 – 75 feet of frontage: 6 feet side setbacks or 75 – 100 feet of frontage: 10 feet side setbacks. Please contact the Zoning Administrator with a description of your proposal and the property address.

Q: Is there a setback or buffer from wetlands?

A: Yes, the zoning ordinance (Chapter 170-27.1) regulates development in wetlands and sets forth a fifty-foot buffer from wetlands for most activities that change the surface configuration of the land, such as buildings, parking lots, fill, etc. For septic systems the setback is increased to 75 feet. Any development that is proposed within a wetland or wetlands buffer would require an application for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

Q: Is there a setback or buffer from rivers, ponds or streams?

A: Yes, the zoning ordinance (Chapter 170-27) establishes a Conservation District that regulates development near tidal and freshwater water bodies. For tidal water bodies, freshwater rivers and natural ponds there is a 100-foot setback for most activities that change the surface configuration of the land, such as buildings, parking lots, fill, etc. There is a 50-foot setback to any stream, brook or other freshwater body. Any development that is proposed within the Conservation District would require an application for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

Q: My proposed structure can't meet the zoning setbacks - are there any other options?

A: As a last resort you can apply for a variance. This is a form of relief from the Zoning Ordinance and is provided by the Zoning Board of Adjustment, which meets once a month, on the Third Thursday of the month. The application provides an opportunity for a property owner to explain their need and hardship for not meeting the setbacks.

Q: I have an idea for a project. Who can I meet with to discuss the feasibility?

A: The City Planner and/or Director of Planning are happy to meet with you to discuss the feasibility of a project before submitting for TRC or Planning Board approval. The Economic Development Office is also available to help select potential sites and opportunities.

Q: What is Technical Review Committee (TRC) and do I need it?

A: The Technical Review Committee is a group of staff from various City Departments and Board members who review plans to ensure that they meet the technical specifications for development in Dover, as outlined in the Land Use Regulations. Technical Review is needed for larger projects and not every project requires it.

Q: When can I get on TRC?

A: The Technical Review Committee meets weekly on Thursdays at 10:30am. If your application needs TRC review, you would need to submit 8 full size, 11x17, and a pdf plus 8 copies of all other application materials three weeks before the TRC meeting you wish to be on. There may be multiple items on each TRC agenda beginning at different times. Feel free to reach out to staff to discuss the process or have a preliminary review of the application to ensure it satisfies the items listed on the application checklist.

Q: Do I go to Conservation Commission or TRC first?

A: Many applications for major subdivisions or site plans require both TRC and Conservation Commission review. You would submit plans for TRC (as described above) first. Then go before the Conservation Commission and finally Planning Board. This allows any changes to be made at the TRC level rather than needing to revisit the Conservation Commission.

Q: How long does the Planning Board process take?

A: It depends on the application, the schedules of the professional agents hired, and time of year (in terms of number of Planning Board meetings per month). An application that requires technical review committee and Conservation Commission review may take an additional 8 weeks compared to a simple lot line adjustment that can go straight to Planning Board. Typically, the TRC process takes 5 weeks including time for the applicant to make revisions before submitting for Planning Board. Then Planning Board would take an additional 6 weeks between submitting for Planning Board and getting a final signature from the Planning Board Chair. Additional time may be needed if staff finds that the application is not complete, if the Board votes to continue or schedule a site walk, or if the engineer needs additional time for plan revisions, etc.

Q: Why does it seem like the pre-Planning Board meeting application process is very intense compared to other communities?

A: In Dover, we work with applicants to provide the Planning Board with a complete, clean application or plan that has been carefully reviewed prior to presenting to the Planning Board. This requires more time and effort before the Planning Board but often allows only one Planning Board meeting to get approval for most projects.

Q: What are the meeting deadlines and meeting dates for the various land use boards and commissions?

A: Each board has its own deadline. You can find the schedule here.
<https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Meeting%20Schedule%202020.pdf>

Q: Is there a fee for processing the application?

A: Each application has a fee that is approved by the City Council. The fee schedule is located here.
<https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/open-government/budget-revealed/FY2020-documents/FY21%20Proposed%20Fee%20schedule.pdf>

Q: Are signs regulated?

A: Signs are regulated. Typically, residential zones allow signs for non-profits or conforming businesses and are limited to 20 square feet. In commercial and mixed use zones, sign sizes and requirements vary by zone. Your best bet is to go to <https://ecode360.com/DO0878-DIV-06> and the zoning tables are a link within the ordinance. Each table lists the sizes of signs allowed. Section 32 of the Code has the specific sign ordinance. Sign applications are here for permanent signs: [https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Sign%20Permit%20Application%20\(September%202015\).pdf](https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Sign%20Permit%20Application%20(September%202015).pdf) here for temporary signs: [https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Temporary%20Sign%20Permit%20Application%20\(April%202017\).pdf](https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Temporary%20Sign%20Permit%20Application%20(April%202017).pdf) and here for community signs: [https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Community%20Sign%20Permit%20Application%20\(October%202016\).pdf](https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Community%20Sign%20Permit%20Application%20(October%202016).pdf)

Q: I'm opening a business. How much signage can I have?

A: Signage is regulated zone by zone. You can find out your zone by visiting www.maps.dover.nh.gov and searching for your property. The property record will tell you the zone, additionally, you can turn on the Zoning theme on the general map and see the zoning for your lot and the whole City. Once you know the zone, you can review the zoning table created for it, which will indicate sign allowance. The zoning ordinance is online at <https://ecode360.com/DO0878-DIV-06> and the zoning tables are a link within the ordinance. If you need more assistance please feel free to email us with your property address.

Q: Can I operate a business out of my home?

A: In many cases Customary Home Occupation are allowed in homes. These businesses require an annual permit be applied for, and the business must be compatible with residential abutters. You can find the application and regulations here: <https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/1form/planning/Customary%20Home%20Occ%20Application%20Form%20012%20rev%2010-23-12.pdf>

Q: Is a building permit required for installing a fence?

A: Typically, no, however if the fence exceeds 7 feet in height, then yes. Also, please be aware that while side and rear fences can be 8 feet tall, those in front of a house must be 4 feet tall or shorter within 10 feet of the right of way. See the Zoning Ordinance for additional regulations.

Q: Can I convert my single-family dwelling to two-family dwelling, a three-family dwelling, or four + family dwelling?

A: Possibly. It really depends on the zone you are in. 77 percent of the City is zoned for single family residential. Accessory Dwelling Units are allowed in all single family homes, by State law. This type of unit is sometimes called an "in-law" apartment. If your home was built before May of 1964 you can convert to a two-family dwelling by right. Beyond two family you will need to be in a multi-family residential zone or a mixed-use zone. You can find out your zone by visiting www.maps.dover.nh.gov and searching for your property. The property record will tell you the zone, additionally, you can turn on the Zoning theme on the general map and see the zoning for your lot and the whole City.

Q: How do I know if my property is near wetlands/shoreland/conservation district?

A: Unfortunately, we do not have a Citywide wetlands map, and these resources can change over time. You will need to work with a surveyor or wetlands scientists to review the conditions of your lot.

Q: How do I find out more about the proposed waterfront development?

A: The waterfront development is overseen by the Cochecho Waterfront Development Advisory Committee (CWDAC), a committee of volunteers appointed by the Dover Housing

Authority. To keep the public informed of the latest news about the waterfront project, CWDAC publishes an online newsletter that is issued a few times per year. You can sign up for the waterfront newsletter at this link:

<https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=00181hjlAJ2FDZB3cTyrtMiPBI MZBK6H1aqnAnb06Ze0 Ec0vJTrg Kb21 EW6gWwYGgoHinbT-0NZ7X5Eb7oMDg5ouWSyDcV65fiT8MFnlm0%3D>

Additionally, the City web-site contains a page devoted to the CWDAC and their activities. Here is a link to the City web-site page set up for the waterfront development project: <https://www.dover.nh.gov/government/city-operations/planning/cochecho-waterfront-development/index.html> If you have any further questions contact City Planner Steve Bird at s.bird@dover.nh.gov.

Q: Does the City of Dover charge impact fees for new development?

A: Yes, the zoning ordinance (Chapter 170-23) regulates the implementation of an impact fee ordinance. The purpose of impact fees is to provide adequate public capital facilities necessitated by new development and assess a fair share of the cost for those facilities to new development. Impact fees are collected for schools, recreation, police and fire facilities. The Planning Board has adopted an impact fee schedule for various types of residential and commercial development that can be viewed here:

<https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/2document/planning/outreach/ImpactFees/impact.pdf>

Q: Where can I find a Community Trail Map?

A: Information on the Community Trail can be found on the City's Community Trail [website](#) or the CTAC Facebook [page](#). The latest [map](#) can also be found here.

Q: How can I get more involved in the Community Trail?

A: The Community Trail Advisory Committee typically meets six times a year on the first Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm in the First Floor Conference Room of City Hall. The CTAC is continuously open to newcomers to attend meetings. They help oversee the trail extension projects, clean-up events, adopt-a-trail section program, and in general care for the wellbeing of the Community Trail. Feel free to email D.Benton@dover.nh.gov to join the CTAC email distribution list, to learn about updates on the Community Trail and get notices of the CTAC meetings to attend or check out the Facebook page at Facebook.com/DoverCommunityTrail

Q: Am I allowed to cut down trees on my property?

A: In general, a property owner can remove trees located on their property without a permit, with the following exceptions. If the property is located within 100 feet of a river, pond or any tidal water body or within 50 feet of a stream or brook, there are limits to the number of trees that can be removed. Check in Chapter 170-27 for the standards or contact the Planning Department for more details.

Q: What do I need to do to construct a retaining wall?

A: If the wall is decorative and less than 4 feet tall, you can build it without a permit, however if the wall exceeds 4 feet in height, then you'll need a building permit. Please contact Inspection Services at 603-516-6038.

Q: I'm interested in a property that's for sale. What is the best use of it? How many units can I build?

A: The City can't tell you what the best use of a lot is. Our Land Use Analysis Master Plan Chapter, which is found here, [https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/2document/planning/master-plan/LandUse/Land%20Use%202015%20Draft%20Chapter 01 22 15 certofadoption.pdf](https://www.dover.nh.gov/Assets/government/city-operations/2document/planning/master-plan/LandUse/Land%20Use%202015%20Draft%20Chapter%2001%2022%2015%20certofadoption.pdf) will provide some guidance, and staff is certainly happy to chat with you, but in general land use is regulated through zoning and each lot has been assigned a zone. You can find out your zone by visiting www.maps.dover.nh.gov and searching for your property. The property record will tell you the zone, additionally, you can turn on the Zoning theme on the general map and see the zoning for your lot and the whole City. Once you know the zone, you can review the zoning table created for it, which will indicate allowed uses and density. The zoning ordinance is online at <https://ecode360.com/DO0878-DIV-06> and the zoning tables are a link within the ordinance. If you need more assistance please feel free to email us with your property address.

Q: I'm thinking about turning my building into condominiums. What do I need to do?

A: While the State allows the City's Planning Board to review and approve condominiums as a form of land use, in Dover we do not do this. Condominiums in Dover are a form of ownership and not land use. The Attorney General's office for the State of New Hampshire can guide you through the process of creating a condominium <https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/sourcebook/condominium-timeshare.htm>

Q: I received a notice about a Planning Board/Zoning Board meeting but I can't be there. What do I do?

A: You can send an email or a letter to staff and we will provide it to the Board or you can call and leave a message.

Q: Where do I go for a Building or Demolition Permit?

A: The Inspection Services Department located at the North End Fire Station or by calling them at 603-516-6038 can answer all questions on Building Permits. They also have applications on their [website](#).