



Permit Center

210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: (360) 778-8300 Fax: (360) 778-8301 TTY: (360) 778-8382

Email: permits@cob.org Web: www.cob.org/permits

Subject to Field Inspection (STFI) Permits

The intent of this document is to clarify those projects which qualify as over-the-counter or are of such a nature that an abbreviated or “simple” plan review is appropriate and are issued in an expedited manner subject to field inspection.

The City created this voluntary program to expedite the permit process in efforts to save customers time and money on simple projects.

Projects that do not qualify for STFI

When any of the following apply, the project will not qualify for the subject-to-field-inspection program:

1. Projects located within a Design Review District (Downtown, Urban Village, etc.), buildings registered as being historically significant or any other building requiring design review.
2. Projects within a critical area/ buffer, within the Lake Whatcom watershed or requiring shoreline review.
3. Projects requiring additional land use approvals beyond building permits.
4. Projects within buildings protected by a fire suppression system or a monitored fire alarm system.
5. Projects as determined by the Building Official that exceed the scope of STFI review.

Projects that do qualify for STFI and their submittal requirements

	Qualifying Scope of Work	Submittal Requirements
Group 1 Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential window replacements where the outside dimension of the new window is the same as the window being replaced. See Residential Window Replacements Policy for further submittal requirements. • Roof coverings or wall coverings where the structural supports (including sheathing) are not being modified and the new materials are of similar weight to the old materials. Note: Commercial roofs only qualify for STFI if the slope is 2:12 or greater. For commercial projects, the insulation above the roof deck must comply with current code. • Plumbing fixture change outs with minor modification of piping between wall and fixture. • Residential furnaces, air conditioners or heat pumps. • Residential electrical systems. • Commercial mechanical change outs when all of the following apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Same location ○ Same or less energy use ○ Same or less weight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Permit Application • Requisite fees
Group 2 Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation repair/replacement where the foundation is not designed as a retaining wall; height not exceeding 4 feet from the bottom of the footing; where there is no change in height and location of the structure's footprint; and not located in an environmentally critical area. Photographs showing extent of the damage are usually required. • Repairs to damaged buildings. Residential repairs must be limited to no more than 50% of the market value of the structure. Repairs must be like for like. No changes in configuration will be allowed under this program. If the field inspector deems the damage to be too extensive, a full plan review and approval will be required. • Demolition of single family or their accessory structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the requirements of Group 1 • Site Plan
Group 3 Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural alterations (not additions) to existing single family/duplex structures (R-3); openings in bearing walls allowed if walls support only 1 story above and roof loads; and with a maximum structural beam span of 14 feet (30 feet if a manufactured truss is used). • Non-structural interior alterations in single family/duplex structures (R-3) (Note: Converting an unheated basement or attic storage area to livable space requires plan review and therefore cannot be processed as STFI). • Non-structural interior alterations (tenant improvements) in commercial spaces, limited to 4,000 square feet of area for all work being done, not changing the use or occupancy classification, and not changing the number of exits, change in path of travel or distance to exits. Proof will be required prior to permit issuance that the structure was legally constructed under a permit, and the burden of such proof will be the responsibility of the applicant. Buildings with fire sprinklers or fire alarms are not eligible for STFI. • Dormer additions to single family/duplex (R-3) occupancies when plans are prepared by a licensed architect or engineer. Maximum width of 14 feet with a maximum of 200 square feet of new usable floor area. Dormers must be physically independent from any existing dormers, or the total overall width will be counted toward the 14 feet maximum width. Note: Buildings within required setbacks will require additional land use review. • Uncovered residential decks over 30" above grade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the requirements of Group 2 • Floor Plan • Elevation Plan (for dormers & decks) • Key Plan (for multi-tenant buildings)

Definitions

Elevation Plan. Elevations are required when changes are proposed to the exterior envelope of the structure. An elevation shows the height of the structure, including location of the plate and roof ridge in relation to existing and finished grade. It must show the relationship of exterior wall to slope of grade (sloped driveways and ground elevations).

Floor Plan. A floor plan is required when the project involves changes to the interior space of the building. A floor plan must show the layout and use(s) of the interior space of the building, with exact location and square footage of work to be done. This drawing must be clearly dimensioned, showing existing and proposed work.

Key Plan. A key plan is a simple drawing showing scope and specific location of the proposed work within a building. It must be drawn to a scale with dimensions and details as follows.

- For projects involving repair, photographs showing location and extent of damage (including interior and exterior views of the damage when appropriate) must accompany the key plan.
- Show the location of interior walls being altered or relocated in simple plan view.

Over-the-counter. A permit application that is usually issued while the customer waits at the permit center for the application to be processed.

Simple Plan Review. Review of a project of limited scope, complexity, and involvement of other city departments. Simple plan review includes Group II and III projects as defined in this document.

Site Plan. A site plan is required when there is a change to the exterior envelope of a structure. A site plan must show the location of all structures on the site, to representative 1"-20' scale, and identify the location of the work to be performed relative to existing conditions and property lines. The exterior dimensions of the property and all structures shall be called out, and the distance from all property lines to the structure at its closest point shall be noted on this drawing. The site plan must also include all easements, utilities and impervious surface calculations.

Subject-to-Field-Inspection (STFI). Projects that are conventional construction as defined by the building codes and are of a level of complexity that allows field inspectors to discern code compliance without a full set of formally prepared plans. There are different levels of plans required for STFI projects as outlined above.