

# Town of Ridgefield

## Planning and Zoning Development Procedures

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"General Information about Development in Ridgefield"**

**APPLICATION FORMS, PERMIT PROCEDURES, and CHECKLISTS for  
Planning & Zoning Commission, Zoning, and Architectural Review**  
(Click "Inland Wetlands Board", above, for regulations and applications for wetlands permits.)

Many of our permit applications and checklists of requirements are available on-line. Please scroll down to see if you can locate the information you need, or call the P&Z Office at 431-2766.

### **Other helpful links:**

[FAQs \(Frequently Asked Questions\) About Properties and Land Use](#)

- [DATE OF RECEIPT for Submission of Applications to P&ZC and Inland Wetlands](#)
- [Fee Schedule - Planning and Zoning and ZEO Applications](#)
- [Table of Residential Bulk Requirements](#)

### **ACCESSORY APARTMENT APPLICATIONS**

Accessory apartments are permitted in the Town of Ridgefield under two types of permits: (1) Site Plan Approval granted by the Director of Planning (for applications where the apartment or the principal dwelling will be occupied by someone 55 years of age or older, OR where the apartment will be designated "affordable" as per the definition in State statutes), and (2) under Special Permit for market-rate apartment rentals with no age restriction. Information can be found in **Sec. 3.3 paragraphs C and D** of the zoning regulations, and at the links shown below:

[Accessory Apartment Application \(Site Plan for age restricted and affordable\)](#)  
[Accessory Apartment List of Requirements](#)  
[Annual Affidavit of Ownership and Certification](#)  
[FAQs about Accessory Apartments](#)

## **ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW or VILLAGE DISTRICT REVIEW**

The Architectural Advisory Committee acts in an advisory capacity and reviews the design of all construction that requires a Special Permit from the Planning and Zoning Commission, and signs in excess of 10 square feet. The AAC has been designated by the Commission as the Village District Consultant (VDC) for review of all applications for exterior change in the Central Business District (designated as a Village District under Sec. 8-2j of the State statutes). This includes color changes, all signs, and any exterior construction or remodeling. Requirements for Architectural and Village District Review can be found in **Sec. 8.3** of the zoning Regulations.

If you need review of Special Permit construction outside of the Village District (downtown Ridgefield), use the application form for Request for Architectural Review. If your property is within the Village District (CBD zone), you will need the Village District Review Application for any exterior change and for any sign. Go the links below for the applications and information:

[Request for Architectural Review](#)                      [Village District Review Application](#)  
[Architectural Review Checklist](#)                      [Village District Fees and Checklist](#)  
[Village District FAQ'S](#)

## **CERTIFICATION OF ZONING COMPLIANCE**

A certificate of Zoning Compliance is provided to a property owner when work authorized under a Development Permit (building permit) has been completed in compliance with the original Zoning Permit. Look on your Zoning Permit (issued at the beginning of the building process) to see what is required for compliance (e.g., A-2 as-built survey, lot coverage or floor area calculations, proof of compliance with setbacks, etc.). Submit this information to the P&Z office to request review of your project for zoning compliance, or call 431-2766 if you need additional information. (You will need to make a separate call to the Building Department at 431-2743, after you have received Zoning Compliance, in order to request the Certificate of Occupancy.)

## **CERTIFICATION (letter) OF ZONING COMPLIANCE**

The Zoning Enforcement Officer, upon written request, can issue a letter to verify certain zoning compliance issues. Send your request in writing to the ZEO at the Town Hall Annex, or call 431-2768 if you need additional information. A \$25 fee is required.

## **CHANGE OF USE APPLICATION**

Applications to change the use of a commercial space (for example, from a retail store to an office use) may be issued by the Zoning Enforcement Officer if (1) the use is permitted as-of-right in the zone, (2) there is no increase in floor area, and (3) there is no increase in the parking requirements. If you are not sure about whether a particular use is permitted, or whether it can be approved under a zoning permit, call the ZEO at 431-2768. Changes proposing or requiring increased parking will need a Site Plan Approval from the Director of Planning (see "Site Plan Application," below) and changes proposing new floor area will require review under a Special Permit from the Planning and Zoning Commission (see "Special Permit" below). The Change of Use permit application is available by clicking the following link:

[Change of Use Application](#)

## **CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION EASEMENTS / NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Pursuant to Public Act 05-124, codified as Sections 47-42a-d in the Connecticut General Statutes, anyone intending to file an application for exterior work with a "state, local land use agency, local building official or director of health" is required to send notice of the application to the holder of any Conservation Easements or Preservation Easements existing on the subject property, prior to the submission of any land use application for activity on the parcel.

This notification requirement shall apply to any proposed permit application to the Planning and Zoning Commission, Inland Wetlands Board or Agent, Zoning Board of Appeals, Wetlands application, Planning and Zoning Commission application and/or Development Permit for exterior work. The notification can be coordinated through the Planning and Zoning Department, so that the Ridgefield Conservation Commission, Land Conservancy, Historical Society, or other easement holder (or its designated agent) has an opportunity to review the plans.

[State Statutes for Easement Notifications](#)

[Notification Form](#)

### **HOME OCCUPATIONS**

Home occupations are permitted on three different levels:

- (1) "As-of-right" as a home-based business, where there are no employees and no more than 20% of the home is used for the business, and where there are no retail sales on the premises nor storage of stock in trade;
- (2) Requiring a Zoning Permit as a minor home occupation, where there may be no more than one nonresident employee, a maximum of 25% of the home may be used for the business, and where there are no retail sales on the premises nor storage of stock in trade; and
- (3) Requiring a Special Permit for a Major Home Occupation, where the limitations of 1 and 2 above are exceeded.

Home occupations are explained in more detail in **Sec. 2.2** of the zoning regulations (Definitions - under "Home-Based Business Related Terms"), and in **Sec. 3.3** (Accessory Uses) of the zoning regulations. Also check the link below, or scroll down for "Special Permits."

[Home Occupation Hand-Out / Information Sheet](#)  
[Home Occupation \(Zoning Permit - for Level 2, above\)](#)

### **EXCAVATION, FILLING and GRADING**

Excavation activities are covered under **Sec. 7.5** in the zoning regulations. It is suggested that you contact the Zoning Enforcement Officer at 431-2768 to determine the appropriate permit requirements. Up to 99 cubic yards of excavation is permitted "as-of-right", and 100-499 cubic yards of stand-alone excavation (not connected to another type of construction permit, such as for an addition, swimming pool, septic system, utility installation, etc.) can be authorized by the Zoning Enforcement Officer under a Zoning Permit. Excavation in excess of 500 cubic yards usually requires a Special Permit from the Planning and Zoning Commission. There are other requirements and some exemptions for excavation related to pond dredging. Special Permit construction (commercial buildings), and subdivision work. Rock crushing, processing and screening must be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission under a Special Permit. The Zoning Permit application for excavation can be found at the following link:

### [Excavation, Filling and Grading \(Zoning Permit\)](#)

(See below for Special Permits)

### **SIGN PERMITS and APPLICATIONS**

Permits for signs are issued by the Zoning Enforcement Officer. There are special provisions for exempt signs (check zoning regulations in **Sec. 7.2.C**) for things like traffic control, historic structures, political signs, real estate signs (with some restrictions), and signs located on the premises of non-profit facilities (such as libraries, churches, historical societies, museums and schools), for special events, for charitable events, fund-raising, seasonal events, etc. Temporary signs for businesses need zoning permits, and can be displayed for two weeks, but for no more than 4 times per calendar year. Permanent signs over 10 square feet in size need to be reviewed by the Architectural Advisory Committee, and all signs in the Village District need to be reviewed by the Village District Consultant.

Sign regulations can be complicated, but regulations adopted by the Commission on 5/1/07 were greatly improved; call the Planning and Zoning Office at 431-2766, and speak to the Zoning Enforcement Officer if needed, when you have questions about signs. Helpful links below:

[Sign Regulations](#)

[Temporary Sign Application Form](#)

### **SITE PLAN APPLICATIONS**

Site Plan Approvals, with very few exceptions, are granted by the Director of Planning. Site Plan Approval is needed for any Change of Use that requires additional parking spaces (for instance, from office use to retail). Two of the accessory apartment approvals (Senior Occupancy and Affordable) require Site Plan Approval (see "Accessory Apartments", above). Requirements for Site Plan Approval are found in **Sec. 9.1.C** of the zoning regulations. Contact the Planning and Zoning Office at 431-2766 for more information. Forms and information available on-line as follows:

[Site Plan Application](#)

[Site Plan Fees and Checklist](#)

### **SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS**

Special Permits are required for many of the uses in the Business zones, for major home occupations, for accessory structures and uses in the "front yard" of residences, for institutional, recreational and municipal uses, and for accessways to "rear" lots. Requirements for Special Permits can be found in **Sec. 9.2.A** of the zoning regulations. The Commission is required to consider Special Permit uses in accordance with strict standards (listed in the regulations) to ensure that the use is appropriate for the location, and to consider how it will "fit in" with the surrounding neighborhood. Forms, fee schedules, and checklists are linked below:

[Special Permit Application](#)

[Special Permit Fees and Checklist](#)

[Special Permit Cover Letter](#)

[Special Permit Fees Calculation](#)

### **ZONING REGULATIONS AMENDMENTS**

#### **ZONE CHANGES (Zoning Map Amendments)**

The Planning and Zoning Commission can amend its own regulations and map, or an

applicant can "petition" the Commission for changes. Procedures for regulation amendments and zoning map amendments can be found in **Sec. 9.2.B and 9.2.C** of the zoning regulations. Forms, fees, and checklists can be found at the following links:

[Regulation Amendment Application](#)  
[Regulation Amendment Fees and Checklist](#)

[Zone Change Application](#)  
[Zone Change Fees and Checklist](#)  
[Zone Change Petition](#)  
[Sample Sign for Rezone of Property](#)

**WETLANDS APPLICATIONS AND REGULATIONS**  
(Click on "Inland Wetlands Board" at the top of this page.)

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DEVELOPMENT IN RIDGEFIELD**

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT** within the Town of Ridgefield is regulated by two elected municipal agencies, the [Inland Wetlands Board](#) and the [Planning and Zoning Commission](#). The same individuals serve on both boards and they share the same staff.

It is highly recommended that anyone contemplating development within the Town of Ridgefield contact the Director of Planning at the project's inception and during the planning stages (call 431-2766 for the Office Administrator).

Within the State of Connecticut, development procedures and timetables must be rigorously observed. In many instances, project development applications submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission or the Inland Wetlands Board require that regional planning agencies or abutting municipalities be notified and this adds to the timeframe and procedure for review. There have been instances where applicants have been required to seek variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals in advance of presenting applications to the Planning and Zoning Department.

The Planning and Zoning Department typically holds pre-application review sessions on major developments and subdivisions, allowing the applicant to gain valuable input from a variety of Town officials prior to preparing and submitting final plans to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetlands Board. The Town Engineer, Health Department, Building Department, Police Commission, Fire Marshal, Highway Department and the Conservation Commission comment on the proposals. This is most helpful in resolving major issues in advance of the submission of formal applications. While this recommended step adds time to the development process (about 4 to 5 weeks), the benefits have proven to be rewarding to both the applicant and the Town, often shortening the time for formal review of the application in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

It is incumbent upon the applicant to allow sufficient time to complete the application and approval process. Land use staff can provide assistance and support throughout the review process, but Connecticut State statutory time schedules cannot be altered. Review time varies according to the size and complexity of the proposed projects.

### **Recommended Development Procedure:**

1. Contact the Director of Planning and schedule a meeting to discuss details relative to project proposals. The Director of Planning can be contacted by phone at (203) 431-2766.
2. Continue meeting and/or communicating with Town staff during the preparation of site plans and development schemes.
3. File all technical information, maps and documentation for the pre-application review process (no application or fees at this time).
4. Attend the pre-application review session.
5. Implement recommended changes and resubmit the complete application and fees for formal acceptance by the Planning and Zoning Commission and/or the Inland Wetland Board, depending on the appropriate jurisdiction.