

Planning FAQs

Have questions we haven't answered? Let us know! Contact the barnes [at] ci.cannon-beach.or.us (City Planner) or [Planning Staff](#) via email or call (503) 436-8042.

Under what circumstances do I need a building permit?

1. New construction, except nonhabitable one story buildings with an area that does not exceed 200 square feet or that have a height of ten feet measured to the highest point;
2. Replacement, repair or remodeling that requires changes to the framing or sheeting;
3. Fences more than six feet in height or those which a required barriers around swimming pools or spas;
4. Retaining walls more than four feet in height measured from the bottom of the footing; and
5. Decks, walkways and platforms more than 30 inches above grade, including replacement and repairs.

For building permit applications, visit the [Forms Library](#). For more information on building permits, visit the [Building Department](#).

When do I need to have my property surveyed?

The City requires that property corner boundaries be clearly marked with official recorded survey pins before permits will be issued if your project includes exterior elements of a building. If your survey was recorded prior to January 1, 1986, you may need to have that survey reviewed and confirmed as to its accuracy by a licensed surveyor. In addition, you may need to provide a copy of your recorded survey to confirm that the survey pin placement corresponds with property corners. To obtain information on whether there is a recorded survey for your property, call the Clatsop County Surveyor's Office at (503) 325-8631 or [visit the Clatsop County website](#).

Do I need a permit to cut down a tree?

Maybe. A tree removal permit is required to cut down any tree more than six inches in diameter, when measured at a height of four and-one-half feet above the natural grade. The City issues tree removal permits when at least one of seven criteria is met. [Tree removal permit application forms](#) are available at City Hall.

Can I conduct business activities from my home?

Yes, if a City business license is obtained and the criteria outlined below are met. Although businesses are generally not permitted in residential zones, the City's Zoning Ordinance permits small home businesses, referred to as home occupations. The City permits three types of home businesses: Type I home occupations; Type II home occupations; and cottage industries.

1. Type I home occupations employ only family members that reside at the dwelling and are permitted in all residential zones as an outright use.
2. Type II home occupations are permitted to have one employee, other than a family member, and are permitted in all residential zones on a conditional use basis.
3. Cottage industries are permitted to have one employee, other than a family member, and are only permitted in the RVL zone on a conditional use basis.

For more information, download a [home occupation business license application form](#).

What are the City's restrictions on fences?

The City regulates fence height and material in required yards. [Regulations on fence height and materials](#).

What is the zoning designation of my property and what are the standards for that zone?

City staff can determine the zoning of a specific parcel of property if provided with a street address or map/tax lot number. Once the zoning has been determined, staff can provide the standards with regard to a particular zone, or you may download the information from our website. [City's zoning standards](#).

What are the City's setback requirements in residential zones?

Buildings and other improvements must be setback from property lines. The City's Zoning Ordinance defines this required setback as a "yard." There are five types of yards: front yard, rear yard, side yard, street side yard and ocean yard. [City's setback requirements](#).

Does the City regulate lot coverage?

Yes. The Zoning Ordinance regulates the portion of a lot that can be covered with hard-surfaced materials such as buildings, decks, driveways and walkways. The maximum lot coverage is 50%. [Download a work sheet for calculating lot coverage](#).

Are there restrictions on the size of single family dwellings?

Yes. The Zoning Ordinance regulates the maximum gross square footage of dwellings. The method for achieving this objective is called the floor area ratio (FAR). The maximum FAR is determined by Zoning Districts and is outlined below.

RVL Zone maximum FAR = .5

RL Zone Lots > 5,000 square feet, maximum FAR = .5

Lots = 5,000 square feet, maximum FAR = .6

R1 Zone maximum FAR = .6

R2 Zone maximum FAR = .6

R3 Zone maximum FAR = .6

RAM Zone maximum FAR = .6

RM Zone maximum FAR = .6

For example, if you own a 5,000 square foot lot in the R2 Zone, your house and garage may have a total floor area of no more than 3,000 square feet. The floor area ratio does not apply to multifamily dwellings. [Download a work sheet for calculating floor area ratio](#).

What are the restrictions on building height?

The maximum building height in the City's residential zones is 28 feet. The maximum building height in the City's RM, Residential Motel, Zone is 32 feet. The maximum building height in the

C1, Limited Commercial, Zone is 28 feet. The maximum building height in the C2, General Commercial, Zone is 36 feet. [Building height restrictions and diagrams](#) to calculate existing grade and building height.

Are there restrictions on building in wetland areas?

Yes. The City has prepared maps that indicate where wetlands are located. Areas identified as wetlands are subject to the standards of the City's Wetland Overlay Zone. If your property is identified as a wetland on the City map, you may be required to determine the extent of wetlands on your property prior to any construction; this report is termed a wetland delineation. If your property contains wetlands, at a minimum you have the right to construct one dwelling on piling. The City has a list of persons and firms that prepare wetland delineation.

Both the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Division of State Lands have regulatory authority over wetlands. You may need to obtain a permit from either or both agencies before you can commence construction a wetland area.

What do I need to know about sign regulations?

The City has a [FAQ prepared on signs in Cannon Beach](#).

What projects are subject to design review?

All commercial development is subject to the City's design review process as are duplexes, triplexes, and multifamily dwellings.

For more information on the design review process: [Scope of the Design Review Board](#).

Why should we care about protecting our streams and wetlands?



What is a Watershed?

The rain that falls to the earth either runs directly into a stream or soaks into the ground. Surface and ground water flow from higher elevations to lower springs, streams, wetlands and lakes. As streams become larger on their way to the ocean, they contain more and more surface and associated ground water. The entire land area that is drained by a specific network of streams is considered a watershed. In Cannon Beach, the most significant watershed is Ecola Creek. The City also has many smaller watersheds that drain directly into the Pacific Ocean.

Our Watershed's Health Starts with You

What we do in our daily lives -- from washing a car to fertilizing the lawn to watering the garden -- can affect the health of our watershed. Water runs off our driveways and yards and flows to the nearest wetland or stream. The contaminants that the water picks up along the way affect water quality. Maybe it's a leaky oil pan in your car or a pesticide applied to a garden; if it enters a stream or wetland, it can adversely affect an entire ecosystem. Our everyday decisions about water usage also directly impact the local watershed because the City obtains our water from spring water associated with Ecola Creek, and, during the summer, from the creek itself. Understanding how our activities affect our watershed is an important start in protecting the integrity of the watershed. The quality of our watershed depends on us.

Why Should We Care about Protecting Our Streams and Wetlands?

In Cannon Beach, healthy streams are important to our quality of life. Wetlands, streams, and riparian areas (the edges of streams and rivers) play a vital role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Maintaining the health of the Ecola Creek watershed is particularly important since Ecola Creek and its main tributary, Logan Creek, support coastal coho salmon, which is a threatened species under the [Endangered Species Act](#). The City has developed a [Response Plan to comply with ESA requirements](#). Learn more on the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Program](#) website. Here are several reasons why wetlands, streams, and riparian areas are important:

Fish Habitat: Riparian vegetation is critical in regulating water temperature, which is very important to salmon because they are susceptible to elevated water temperatures. Riparian vegetation also provides food, cover from predators, and are spawning and rearing areas for salmon.

Wildlife Habitat: Wetlands, streams and riparian areas provide a diversity of habitat for many wildlife species. These areas provide wildlife with water, food and cover.

Water quality: The cleansing capabilities of wetlands are important in filtering out chemicals, such as nitrogen and phosphorus associated with fertilizers, and other water-borne pollutants. Wetlands also trap sediments from waters that pass through them. An excessive amount of sediment can damage the aquatic ecosystem and the fish habitat associated with it.

Flood control: Wetlands function as natural water storage areas during periods of flooding. This stored flood water is then released slowly downstream, minimizing the impact of the flood water on the structure of the stream.

Household Tips to Protect Your Neighborhood Streams and Wetlands 1.33 MB