

Zoning - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

When in doubt, please contact the Zoning Office - (973) 680-4167

Q: When do I need to apply for a zoning permit?

A: A zoning permit is required for all types of development or improvements to your property, whether you are adding or replacing.

This includes but is not limited to:

- New construction
- Additions
- Enclosing a porch
- Finishing a basement
- Finishing an attic
- Decks
- Pools (above and in-ground)
- Hot Tub/Spa
- Fences
- Retaining Walls
- Driveways (new, repaving or expanding)
- Walkways
- Handicap ramp
- Patio
- Generator
- HVAC
- Sheds
- Greenhouse
- Pergola
- Gazebo
- Commercial Change of use or Occupancy
- Commercial Signage

PLEASE NOTE: If your project exists within an historic district or within Bloomfield Center, additional steps are required.

Q: How do I apply for a zoning permit and what information do I need?

A: You will need to submit a Zoning Permit application along with a copy of a current property survey. Zoning Permits are online under Township Forms. The survey should accurately reflect existing conditions on your property, and also illustrate any and all proposed work on the property. It shall contain all property lines, easements and lot restrictions.

Q: How long does it take for a zoning permit to be reviewed?

A: State law provides 10 business days for review. We always try to do our reviews in less time than that, but sometimes, depending on volume and other factors, we do take the full time allowed.

Q: Does the Township have copies of my survey?

A: The Township does not maintain records of private property surveys. You should have received a copy of your survey with your deed when you purchased the property. If you need your survey and don't have a current one, you will have to hire a professional land surveyor.

Q: I need a rebuild letter where can I get one?

A: You can email the Zoning Officer at rbeese@bloomfieldwpnj.com, please provide the address for the property.

Q: I want to build a pergola, gazebo or a greenhouse on my property. What are the requirements?

A: A zoning permit is required and these are considered accessory structures and would have to meet the same requirements as a shed. No more than two accessory buildings shall be permitted on any one residential lot. No accessory building or structure shall be permitted in any front yard.

Q: What are the setback requirements for sheds?

A: Sheds can only be 80 square feet and 8 feet tall and must maintain a rear yard setback of 5 feet and a side yard setback of 5 feet, except if your rear lot line serves as a front or a side lot line of an adjoining property then it is 10 feet.

Q: I'm replacing my shed and wish to put it back in the same place do I need a permit?

A: Yes, we need to ensure that the shed conforms to the 80 square feet and 8 feet tall and also needs to adhere to current setbacks.

Q: Do I need a zoning permit to install or replace my patio?

A: Yes, a zoning permit is required for the replacement or addition of all patio and walkways as the zoning code has a maximum amount of impervious coverage per property and we have to review your project for compliance. All decks, patios and terraces shall be located in the rear yard only and must meet the required yard setbacks for principal buildings.

Q: What are the requirements for installing a pool?

A: All pools including the replacement of a pool require initial zoning approval to ensure compliance with setbacks and lot coverage requirements. For semi in-ground or in-ground pools, the application process involves a topographical survey of current and proposed grading conditions. Pools need to be placed in the rear yard and can be no closer than five feet to any accessory structure or side or rear lot line or 10 feet to the principal building on the lot and 10 feet from neighboring structures. Also construction permits for building, electrical and plumbing are needed.

Q: I bought one of those pools from Walmart do I need a permit?

A: All pools whether permanently installed, portable, collapsible or otherwise, 24 inches in height or more require zoning approval.

Q: Do I need a permit to install or repave (resurface) my driveway?

A: You need a zoning permit, even if you are just repaving the same area

Q: Can I install a driveway on the front lawn?

A: No. In residential zones, no required parking shall be permitted in any front yard except in a driveway leading to a garage.

Q: I want to expand my driveway so we can fit two cars across can I?

A: No. The width of a driveway shall be limited to the width of the garage.

Q: Do I need a zoning permit to turn my basement or attic into a living space?

A: Yes. The zoning code has a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) and we have to review your project for compliance with of this standard.

Q: Can I turn my detached garage into livable space?

A: No accessory building shall be used for human habitation

Q: Can I turn my attached garage into livable space?

A: One- and two-family dwellings shall provide two parking spaces per dwelling unit, at least one of which shall be located within an enclosed garage, so a variance would be required.

Q: How can I turn my 2 family home into a 3 family home?

A: We only have single and two family residential zones so this would require a use variance along with site plan approval showing parking.

Q: Do I need a permit to put a fence on my property?

A: Zoning approval is required for all fences, including the replacement of existing fences.

Q: How high can my fence be?

A: 4 feet in a side yard and 6 feet in a rear yard. Note that corner lots have two front yards. Both street frontages are front yards from a zoning perspective. Fences are not permitted in the front yard of the R-1A Zone, but in other Zones need to 4 feet and 60% open.

Q: Where can I put my fence?

A: Fences may go on the property line.

Q: Which way does my fence have to face?

A: Decorative side faces out.

Q: I want to knock down my deck and rebuild it do I need a permit?

A: Yes the zoning code has a maximum amount of impervious coverage per property and we have to review your project for compliance of the side and rear setbacks.

Q: Can I operate an Airbnb, Rooming House or Boarding House?

A: Per Township Code Chapter 433, no residential premises, including dwelling houses, apartments, rooming houses or boarding houses or any parts thereof or rooms therein, except duly licensed hotels and motels, shall be rented or let for occupancy by any person or persons for a period or term of less than 30 days.

Q: I have a complaint I would like the Zoning Officer to investigate, how do I go about filing the complaint?

A: You may email the Zoning Officer at rbeese@bloomfieldtwpnj.com, please make complaints Zoning related only.

Q: My neighbor and I are having a dispute regarding the boundary line of our properties. Can the Zoning Office help me?

A: This is not a zoning issue. Boundary disputes are personal legal matters and are not within the jurisdiction of the municipality (NOTE: Unless a municipal boundary is the subject of the problem). You should consult an attorney or your title company to assist you.

Q: It looks like my neighbor's shed or fence is on my property. What should I do?

A: This is not a zoning issue; it is a private matter. You need to talk to your neighbor.

Q: My neighbor's fence is in disrepair can you help me?

A: You may contact the Health Department (973-680-4024) for this property maintenance issue.

Q: Can I park a commercial vehicle on my property?

A: No commercial vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 5,000 pounds shall be parked or stored outdoors overnight in any residential zone. Not more than one commercial vehicle of any kind shall be parked or stored on any residential lot.

Q: Is my property in the floodplain?

A: To confirm whether or not you are in the floodplain and what your potential exposure to flood risk may be; you may contact the Engineering Department (973-680-4009) or visit FEMA's Flood Map Service Center website.

Q: I think I live in an illegal apartment what should I do?

A: You can email the Zoning Officer at rbeese@bloomfieldtwpnj.com to see if the unit is legal or not

Q: I want to open a new business what do I do?

A: You can contact the zoning officer to see if that proposed use is approvable or you would bring the proposed lease that states the exact use to room 105 and fill out a change of use or occupancy form to see if that is approvable. After that is approved you would then proceed to step 2 and inquire about building permits, sign permit(s) and other processes prior to opening.

Q: Can I open a gym on the second floor?

A: personal services are permitted on the ground floor only.

Q: What is the process to open up a hookah lounge or smoking club?

A: Per the clean air act smoking indoors is prohibited.

Q: Are tattoo parlors allowed?

A: Tattoo parlors and establishments of any nature whatsoever which utilize needles for the purpose of making indelible markings upon the body by the insertion of pigment under the skin or by production of scars.

Q: Can I operate a cannabis location?

A: Cannabis locations can be located in the B-2, CBD, BCRD-I and BCRD-II Zones, you would need to check the conditions that must be met. If you do meet the criteria you would then apply to the Planning Board, if you do not you would apply to the Zoning Board. There are a limited number of licenses.

Q: Do I need a permit to put up a business sign or window signage?

A: It shall be unlawful for any person to erect, repair, alter, relocate or keep within the Township of Bloomfield without first obtaining a zoning permit.

Q: Can I put an animated sign in my stores window?

A: Changeable message signs, animated, moving or revolving signs and signs using blinking, flashing, vibrating, flickering, tracer or sequential lights, which display movement or the illusion of movement, including interior signs visible from the exterior of the premises, except for clocks, temperature displays, or signs commonly known as barber poles used in conjunction with barbershops are prohibited.

Q: How much signage can my store have?

A: no more than 2 types of signs are permitted at any one site.

Q: I'm a business owner who wants to put LED bead lights in my windows can I?

A: Per code 315-42 exposed lighting in or around windows or on the façade of a building, except for holiday displays and security lighting, is prohibited.

To View Township Ordinances – <https://ecode360.com/BL0918>
and <https://www.bloomfieldtwpnj.com/1494/Adopted-Ordinances>

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