

Elkhart County Planning & Development

Public Services Building | 4230 Elkhart Road, Goshen, Indiana 46526
Phone: 574-875-3335 | Fax: 574-875-3308
www.elkhartcountyindiana.com

FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I know if a property I own or plan to own is buildable?

- A. It is advised that you research the ability to build what you want, before you purchase property, pay for design services, sign contracts or invest your funds in the development.
- B. If the property is a lot in a subdivision, the plan has been approved by the Plan Commission and should be buildable. The structure must adhere to current setback requirements. Those are listed in the Zoning Ordinance.
- C. If it is not in a subdivision, it must be at least 3 acres with 100' of road frontage in A-1 zones with or without sanitary sewer; 80' of road frontage is required in R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, B-1 & B-2 zones without sanitary sewer; or 60' of road frontage in R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, B-1 & B-2 zones with sanitary sewer. The property must also not exceed the 3 to 1 depth to width ratio; i.e., the depth of the parcel cannot be more than three times the width of the parcel. The exception is legal non-conforming properties created prior to 1962, and buildable if created prior to July 1975 meeting today's lot standards.

2. If I sell some of my acreage to my son or daughter, what is the minimum for a buildable lot?

In a parent to child 'split' of property, the parent must retain at least 3 acres. The child's split must have at least 20,000 square feet with at least 100' of road frontage in A-1 zones with or without sanitary sewer; 15,000 square feet with at least 80' of road frontage in R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, B-1 & B-2 zones without sanitary sewer; or 7,200 square feet with 60' of road frontage in R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, B-1 & B-2 zones with sanitary sewer. The deed must state that this is a special 'parent to child' split and each parcel should not violate the 3 to 1 depth to width ratio rule.

3. How do I get my gas and electric turned on?

Your building permit is the first step, then completed inspections and you're on your way. Gas pressure capacity must be held at 15 lbs. for a period of 24 hours.

4. How do I know what I can build, or how my property can be used?

The Elkhart County Zoning Ordinance stipulates how each property can be developed and used. To confirm the zoning status, please call or visit the Planning and Development department.

5. If I replace my roof or siding, do I need a permit?

If you are simply replacing roofing or siding, you do not need a permit. But if you are altering the structure in any way or making more extensive repairs, you should inquire about permitting.

6. I am erecting a small storage unit. Does this require a permit?

A permit is required for any structure that measures more than 120 square feet.

7. I want to build a fence. How far from the property line should it be?

Certainly, stay within your property lines. The County does not have an ordinance governing setbacks of fencing; however, fencing cannot be placed within the road right-of-way and cannot block the view of any intersection or driveway.

8. What about a fence around a permanent swimming pool?

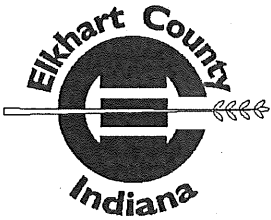
It needs to be at least 5' high with a self-closing gate and latched door. Check with the Building Department.

9. I want to build a personal storage building so how large can it be?

The square footage of your living area must be larger than or equal to the square footage of all personal storage buildings combined. To have personal storage buildings that are larger than your residence you must apply for a variance. All permits must be obtained.

10. Can you send me a building permit application?

A building permit must be completed in person. However, you can get a good head start by filling in the building permit application on the **Building** section of the website and bringing it to the Building Department.



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11. Can you send me an application for a zoning appeal?

The zoning appeal process has its forms on the **Zoning** section of this website. We can also fax it to you if you prefer.

12. How much do I pay for each permit or service?

The required fee for each service is posted under its division. Building, Zoning and Planning services are shown as fees or ordinances. These fees help offset the costs of the Departments' services to you and to the community.

13. What is my deadline for application?

The filing and hearing dates are published on the current year calendar. You must adhere to filing deadlines with a complete application in order to be scheduled for the next hearing opportunity. There are no allowances for missing or incomplete information, since several people must examine your submission. If you are working with a representative agent, urge them to conform to the deadlines posted. The staff is very willing to work with you to achieve a successful project.

14. How do I find out about flooding in my area?

Contact the Flood Plain Manager, Duane Burrow, at 875-3335.

15. I am planning to live in a mobile home. How do I proceed for zoning?

You must apply for a Special Use permit if not living in a mobile home park, and the property must meet ordinance requirements.

16. What licensing is needed for the building trades in Elkhart County?

Elkhart County requires that Electricians have an Elkhart County Electrical License and pay an annual fee to remain active. Plumbers must be licensed by the State and provide a license number to the County. General and Mechanical Contractors are not required to be licensed at this time.

17. Do I need an egress window in my basement?

Egress windows are required for each bedroom, no matter what level. Contact the Building Department (875-3335) for minimum and maximum code requirements.

18. I want to start a business on a certain property. Can I?

This may involve a Special Use application and approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals. Call the Planning Department (875-3335) or visit us to determine what is needed.

19. What should I bring to a hearing?

Bring all the documents you need to answer questions. It is good to familiarize yourself with the 2006 Land Use Plan; any points in your argument that support the plan will help further your case. If your neighbors can testify that your plans will not conflict with their use of property that can also be helpful. The board will want to know if you are furthering the best use of your property, the appearance of the neighborhood, and the peaceful welfare of the community.

20. When should I start the process?

No matter what you are planning, it's good to start now, and learn the process early. Talk to the staff about your options, your timelines, and what you need to secure in order to have a successful outcome. Line up your contractors, your surveyors, and find out their costs. You may find that they have to 'fit you in' to a heavy schedule. Be organized, write everything down and get updates as you go along. A good project takes good planning, and it's never too early to lay out all the facts, costs and timetables.