



Cottage Industries

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Administrative Uses and Approvals

What are cottage industries?

Property owners within Whatcom County may apply to place a cottage industry on their property in most residential zones. Cottage industries, as defined by Whatcom County Code 20.97.087, are small light industrial, commercial or service operation, on a parcel where the operator resides. Under Administrative Approvals, cottage industries must also meet the following criteria as well as those listed in WCC 20.84.220 and WCC 20.97.087:

1. Employment of no more than two on-site people other than family members who reside on the property. Up to four employees may be approved through a Conditional Use Permit.
2. In no case shall the floor area of any newly constructed building for the cottage industry exceed 2500 square feet. Also, the total land for area used for buildings, outside storage or other uses related to the cottage industry shall not exceed 10,000 square feet or 25% of the lot, whichever is less.
3. If materials for the cottage industry are to be stored outside, screening shall be required to conceal the material from view of surrounding uses or roads.
4. The parcel size shall not be less than one-acre. If the parcel size is less than one acre, a Conditional Use Permit is required.

One non-illuminated sign is authorized, provided that it is mounted on the property and that it does not exceed eight square feet in size. A larger sign up to 32-square feet may be approved through a Conditional Use Permit.

Will I still need a building permit?

Yes. Administrative Approvals permit certain land use activities. To construct buildings, garages, etc., you are required to obtain additional permits including the building permit. Once you have received the Administrative Approval, you may apply for a building permit for the accessory dwelling unit. Information packets for building permits are available at the PDS counter. **Please bring a copy of your Administrative Approval with you when submitting your building permit application.**

Application process

In order to determine if you qualify for a cottage industry, you must provide Planning and Development Services with your assessor's tax parcel number. This is a 12-digit number followed by 4 zeros that can be found on your tax notice. This number identifies your property on zoning maps and enables PDS staff to determine the parcel location, zoning designation and property size. Once a determination has been made that your property qualifies for a cottage industry, you will be required to provide the following information for permit submittal:

THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES HANDOUT SERIES

Whatcom County Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226
Phone (360) 676-6907 ▪ Fax (360) 738-2525 ▪ Inspections (360) 738-2520

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1. A completed Master Land Use Application and Supplemental Application.
 2. A copy of your deed for the property. If the property where the cottage industry is to be located is currently serviced by an on-site sewage system and/or well and the employees and/or clients have access to these facilities, the Whatcom County Health Department may require a Group-B Water System. Please contact the Health Department with specific questions because your existing services may or may not be adequate to support the cottage industry. If public water and sewer serve the property, a signed water verification form from the approved water purveyor will be required. This form is available at the PDS counter.
 3. Three (3) copies of a site plan indicating the location, size and setback of **all** buildings on the site (including garages, sheds, etc.), location of septic systems and wells and easements, and the location, width and length of driveway access. Site plans must be drawn in ink and all dimensions shall be clearly labeled or a scale shall be provided. Adjacent roads shall be labeled and a north arrow shall be placed on the plan.
 4. A list of the names, addresses and parcel numbers for all property owners within 300 feet (if parcel is located in an Urban Growth Area) or 1000 feet (if parcel is located outside of an Urban Growth Area) from the boundaries of the subject site. In addition, stamped addressed envelopes for each of these property owners shall be submitted with the application. This list of names, addresses and parcel numbers can be obtained from the Whatcom County Assessor's Office in the Whatcom County

Courthouse at 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

Note: Please do not put your return address on the envelopes as we stamp them with the PDS return address before mailing.

6. Fees - Please refer to the current Whatcom County Unified Fee Schedule.

In addition to submitting the above documents, you will be required to place a Posting Notice (provided by PDS) on the subject property, visible to the road, which shall be maintained for the duration of the permit process. You will also be required to sign a Certification of Posting of the time and date that you posted the notice on site.

Following the public comment period and various reviews by PDS, Engineering, the Fire Marshal's Office, and Health, you will be advised of the concerns each agency has and will be asked to address each one, if any. These concerns will need to be addressed prior to the issuance of the Administrative Approval.

Information

Due to the administrative complexity of these regulations, it is usually best to visit with PDS staff or contact the Zoning Administrator to answer any additional questions.

Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, Washington 98226 USA
E-mail: pds@co.whatcom.wa.us

Staff Contact: Zoning Administrator
Phone: (360) 676-6907