Building & Construction Guide -- What You Need to Know

Planning to construct, enlarge, repair or demolish any structure within the city limits of Great Falls?

The project will probably require that the plans and specifications for the project be approved and a building permit obtained from the Department of Planning and Community Development located in the Civic Center. The permitting process helps to ensure that Great Falls develops in a quality manner and that lives and property are protected.

The City of Great Falls has adopted the following national codes:

1. International Building Code, 2009 Edition (IBC), together with the following:
    1. As amended by the State of Montana: ARM 24.301.131.
2. National Electrical Code, 2011 Edition (NFPA 70),
    1. As amended by the State of Montana: ARM 24.301.401
3. International Energy Conservation Code, 2009 editions(IECC).
    1. The IECC, as modified and amended 3/26/2010 by the following rules:
        1. ARM 24.301.160.
4. International Existing Building Code, 2009 Edition (IEBC)
    1. The IEBC, as modified and amended by the following rules:
        1. ARM 24.301.171
5. International Residential Code, 2006 Edition (IRC).
    1. The IRC, as modified and amended by the following rules:
        1. ARM 24.301.154
6. Uniform Plumbing Code, 2009 Edition (UPC), together with the following:
    1. UPC Appendix Chapters
        1. Appendix A, Recommended Rules for Sizing the Water Supply System
        2. Appendix B, Explanatory Notes on Combination waste and Vent Systems
        3. Appendix D, Sizing Storm water Drainage System
    2. The UPC, as modified and amended by the State of Montana:
        1. ARM 24.301.301
        2. ARM 24.301.351
        3. ARM 24.01.371
7. National Electrical Code, 2011 Edition (NEC).
    1. The NEC, as modified and amended by the following rules:
        1. ARM 24.301.401
8. International Mechanical Code, 2009 Edition (IMC).
    1. The IMC, as modified and amended by the following rules:
        1. ARM24.301.172
9. International Fuel Gas Code, 2009 Edition (IFGC).
    1. The IFGC, as modified and amended by the following rules:
        1. ARM 24.301.173
10. International Property Maintenance Code, 2009 Edition (IMC),
    1. As amended by the Building Official, and including Appendix A.
11. International Fire Code, 2012 Edition

The City also has ordinances governing, landscaping, off-street parking and signage. See Official Codes for the City of Great Falls or contact Charlie Sheets, Development Review Coordinator, 455-8431.

Design Criteria for the City of Great Falls, MT

Type	Requirements
Multifamily and Commercial	Design per IBC 2009

Type	Requirements
One and Two Family Dwellings	Design per IRC 2006
Seismic Zone	"B"
Wind Load	f3s - 90 mph ffm - 75 mph
Foundation Depth	42 in. frost depth - to bottom of footings
Roof Snow Load	Minimum design roof snow load after allowed reductions shall be 30 psf (i.e. Pf = 30 psf)

Design Review Board

Persons interested in constructing or remodeling a commercial structure or a residential structure with eight or more units will need Design Review Board approval of the building and site design. Contact Charlie Sheets, Development Review Coordinator at 455-8431 in the Planning and Community Development Development to schedule design review early in your planning process. Design review will need to be approved by the Design Review Board before a building permit can be issued.

See also: Application for project review by the Design Review Board.

Electrical, Plumbing and Gas Permits

Homeowners can do their own plumbing and electrical work if they live in the residence. Gas permits may be issued only to licensed gas contractors. All commercial or rental properties needing electrical or plumbing work must contact a licensed contractor to do the work. The contractor will secure the proper permits from the Department of Planning and Community Development. Homeowners wishing to do their own plumbing or electrical work may get a permit from the Planning and Community Development Department.

Building Permit Exemptions

1. One-story detached accessory buildings used as tool and storage sheds 120 square feet or less
2. Fences not more than 6 feet high
3. Cases, counters and partitions not more than 5' 9" high
4. Retaining walls not more than 4 feet high measured from bottom of footing
5. Painting, papering and similar finish work
6. Window awnings if they don't project more than 54 inches.
7. Decks that are not attached to a building, that are less than 30 inches above grade at any point, and that are 120 square feet in area or less

Questions - please call:
Building - Craig Raymond, Building Official, 455-8530
Design Review Board - Charlie Sheets, Development Review Coordinator, 455-8431
Parking or Landscaping - Charlie Sheets, Development Review Coordinator, 455-8431
Code Enforcement/Property Complaints - Heather Rohlf, Code Enforcement Officer, 455-8574

Supporting Documents

Design Review Board Application (38 KB) (PDF)

Web Links

Official City Codes for the City of Great Falls

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