



Planning and Community Development

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the best way to get questions about developing or improving my property answered by Town staff?

Emails are the most efficient way to get your questions answered, because 1) staff can secure essential information, 2) most issues relate to more than one department and your question can be more easily circulated and responses better coordinated for you and 3) written communication enables more accuracy and specificity. The Department responds to all emails no later than the end of each business day. Emails can be sent to [Curtiss Grieve](#).

How can I find information on my property?

The Planning and Community Development Department webpage includes Map Geo, an interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) which you can use to look up information any property in Cumberland. Click [here](#) to access the GIS system.

By double clicking on a *lot*, a property card will appear on the left side of your screen. Information includes: owner, plat and lot number, date last purchased and sale price, acreage area, land use, and land evidence record book and page.

If you click on "*property record card*" at the upper left, you can access the information from the Tax Assessor's office, including: Town appraised value, year built, living area, and structural specifications.

By clicking on "*themes*" tab on the upper right you can access aerial photos, zoning (including local historic districts), wetlands, areas under water resource protection, natural hazard areas, areas subject to inundation during a hurricane event, land that is under conservation, and voting districts.

If you click on "*mark up*" and then click on "measure" you can measure linear distances by clicking on "*line*" or areas by clicking on "*polygon*."

How do I determine the location of my property line? Who can I hire to survey my property?

The only way to accurately determine where your property line is to have access to a survey performed by a RI Registered land surveyor. The Planning Department maintains a list of surveyors who frequently work in Cumberland.



How do I move my property line?

Moving the property line between two existing lots or parcels is called an Administrative Subdivision. Administrative Subdivisions require application to the Planning Department and are reviewed and approved by the Administrative Officer of the Planning Board. Click [here](#) for further information.

How do I merge lots together?

Lot mergers are considered Administrative Subdivisions. Administrative Subdivisions require application to the Planning Department and are reviewed and approved by the Administrative Officer of the Planning Board. Click here for further information.

How do I know if I live in a Historic District?

Cumberland has seven local historic districts comprised of 223 properties. Historic Districts include: Ashton Village, Town Hall, Lonsdale Village, Tower Hill Road, Old West Wrentham Road, Upper Scott Road, Diamond Hill Road/Nate Whipple Highway.

To see if your property is within a local historic district, get on Map Geo, and click on *Themes* and then *Zoning*, lots within a local historic district will be covered with a pattern of red lines.

I live in a Historic District. What approvals I must apply for if I want to change the exterior of my house?

Within a Historic District, for any demolition, new construction or exterior alterations one must apply for a “*certificate of appropriateness*” from the Historic District Commission (HDC). They usually meet the second Tuesday of every month.

The Cumberland historic district *Property Owner’s Guide* provides guidance for improving your property in a way that is consistent with historic preservation best practices. Go to “You may be interested in..” and select Historic District Commission for a link to the *Guidelines*.



Land Development Review Process

What Town entity governs the subdivision and development of land?

Rhode Island General Laws place municipal land use authority in the Town Planning Board. Dimensional or use *variances* may be granted by the Town Zoning Board, provided that the relief is based on special circumstances beyond the property owner's control.

The Planning Department, working closely with the Town Engineer and Town Building director, administers the subdivision and development process.

Do I have a buildable lot? What can I build on my property?

The Cumberland Zoning Code Article 5 "Dimensional Regulations" includes tables which show the minimum dimensions (area, housing density, width, frontage, front, rear and side yard setbacks, lot coverage) for lots located in various zones. The minimum requirements are affected by whether the lot has Town water or sewer service.

Vacant lots that do not meet the minimum standard may be buildable if they were in existence prior to the Town's enacting its first zoning ordinance in May, 1952.

The table found in "B Attachment 1" of the Cumberland Zoning Code shows what land uses are allowed on a lot within a specific zoning district.

How do I develop or subdivide my property?

There are three types of *subdivisions*. Each type of review requires a completed application, a site survey by a registered land surveyor, application fee, and completed checklist.

An *Administrative Subdivision* either moves lot lines and/or merges more than one lot without creating additional lots. This process is done without going to the Planning Board.

Minor and Major land development projects or subdivisions must be approved by the Planning Board.

A *Minor Subdivision* is the division of a lot or adjacent lots that result in no more than five lots and no creation or extension of public streets and requires no waivers or variances (relief from zoning standards). The Planning Board must approve this application. Minor subdivision applications are frequently subject to just one Planning Board meeting. Final Plan is approved administratively.

A *Major Subdivision* results in more than 5 lots and/or the creation of a new public street. All subdivisions require application to the Planning Department, and the review process is



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dependent on the type of subdivision requested. The Planning Board must approve a Master Plan, then a more detailed Preliminary Plan. Final Plan is approved administratively.

What is the review process for my development project?

The review process for a development project depends on the size and scale of the proposal. [Click here for further information.](#)

When does the Planning Board meet?

The Planning Board meets the last Wednesday of the month (except December). Applications are due by the first of each month. Meetings are open to the public.