



Building Division Requirements for Registered Design Professionals

City of Lynden Planning & Community Development Department
300 4th Street, Lynden, WA 98264 (360) 354-5532

When is an Engineer or Architect Required?

State law generally mandates when the City of Lynden will require that a licensed engineer or architect design and stamp a proposed structure. Some specific circumstances described in the building code also trigger the use of a registered designer. The information below briefly describes applicable State requirements. The State Department of Licensing can be a helpful resource toward understanding specific requirements. [WA State Licensing \(DOL\) Official Site: Home](#)

Stamped plans communicate that a registered engineer or architect is responsible for a project's design. At least one set of original (sometimes called "wet") stamped drawings, calculations, reports and/or details with the licensed design professional's signature on it must be submitted to the City of Lynden. Additional sets can be copies of the original stamped plans. It is highly recommended that, when a licensed professional is required, they be included in the design of the project from the very start. This inclusion can reduce redesign and permit review time.

For items 2, 4, 6, and 12 below, **ALL** drawings submitted to the city must be stamped by the engineer or architect who prepared them. This stamping requirement includes site plans, mechanical, plumbing, electrical and interior layout plans (shop drawings must also be reviewed and stamped by an architect or engineer).

Note regarding Site Work: The City engineering standards typically require a licensed engineer to perform design work for public infrastructure, stormwater management systems, and site design. Please call the Public Works Department at (360) 354-3446 for information about these requirements if site work is planned.

A State Licensed Engineer or Architect is Required for:

1. **Building Enclosure:** All new attached single-family dwellings, townhouses, and similar multi-unit residential buildings, including multi-unit apartment buildings and condominiums, that contain MORE THAN TWO (2) attached dwelling units require a special statement regarding the design of all building enclosure documents in order to satisfy legislative mandates from Washington State regarding the weather proofing, water proofing, and other protections from water or moisture intrusion. Upon completion of the project a close-out letter must be submitted to the Building Official by the engineer or architect stating that all building enclosure inspections have met the requirements as

described on the approved construction documents. Also, any remodel of existing multi-unit residential buildings where the building enclosure is affected and such building enclosure work is valued at more than 5% of the assessed value, requires this same approval on the drawings, and the same special inspection requirements listed above. The engineer or architect must inspect the building while under construction and submit a report to the Building Official.

2. **Commercial buildings over 4000 square feet** of floor area must have an architect or engineer of record for the entire building. Supporting drawings such as a site plan or the interior floor plan for improvements inside the proposed building must also bear the stamp of the registered designer. It is important to remember that the building code definition of floor area includes exterior roof-covered areas that are usable space, such as porches, carports, drive-thru's, as well as basements and attic areas even if used as storage.

A note regarding pre-engineered buildings: Frequently pre-engineered buildings will be designed by an engineer who is not willing or able to act as the engineer of record for the entire project. Consequently, they will not stamp supplemental drawings. However, as noted above, all drawings beyond the pre-engineered building drawings must bear the stamp of the architect or engineer of record for the entire project.

3. **Additions, alterations, and remodels to commercial buildings** must be stamped by an engineer or architect when the existing building is over 4000 square feet or when the addition will bring the total square footage over 4000 square feet. This applies to all additions. All submitted documents, not just the addition, must bear the stamp of the engineer or architect which ensures that the project has been evaluated by a licensed professional. This includes the building plans showing the interface between the existing and proposed structure as well as the site plan. As mentioned above in item #2, one individual must act as architect or engineer of record for the entire building.
4. **Re-used engineering.** All submitted engineering calculations and drawings must bear the original stamp of the architect or engineer. The registered individual must clearly state that his/her stamp applies to the project being built at the indicated address. The City of Lynden design criteria must be shown on the plans. State law requires that an original stamp be placed on the drawing and calculations. To follow copyright laws and purchase stock plans, a permit applicant will need to purchase an original stamped set of plans and the corresponding engineering.
5. **Any building of non-conventional design.** Non-standard construction, regardless of whether the building is residential or commercial and regardless of its size, must be designed by an architect or engineer. Non-conventional construction includes masonry, concrete (beyond the use of typical foundation walls), steel, post and beam, and pole buildings. Any changes to a non-conventional building that involves structural elements must also be designed and stamped. Designers are required to submit calculations which show that the proposed design or change of design meets applicable code.
6. **Sloping conditions.** The building code specifies that in instances when a structure is close to the toe, or the top of a slope, stamped plans are required. Additionally, other

site conditions may warrant an engineered project design or engineered foundations. The Building Official will determine when engineering is required based on site slope.

7. **Non-prescriptive lateral designs** that do not conform to prescriptive code requirements.
8. **Retaining walls over 48 inches high** (as measured from the bottom of the footing). Retaining walls holding surcharges for any height. Note all retaining walls on site plan showing height and any surcharge.
9. **Basement walls over 9 feet in height** and/or do not meet prescriptive code requirements.
10. **Bearing wall stud height more than 10 feet high for wood frame construction** (commercial or residential) must show that the worst-case scenario of bearing for any stud has been designed as a column to carry both the gravity load and any imposed wind loads. This column analysis must be by a licensed engineer or architect.
11. **Design-build construction.** The architect's licensing laws allow "design-build" construction to take place by registered general contractors if the design services are performed by a registered engineer. As defined in the state law, design-build construction when one entity, the design-build firm, offers a single contract to another entity for both designing and building a project.
12. **Remodeling commercial buildings.** The City will require an engineer or architect when a building over 4000 square feet in size is proposed to change occupancy groups or when structural items are proposed to be remodeled in a building of this size. Other remodeling projects will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The City will review applicable codes, including the handicap accessibility code, the energy code, the plumbing and mechanical code to determine if an engineer or architect is warranted.