



## Need More Information?

Additional information on variances from zoning regulations, fees or scheduling a pre-application meeting can be obtained from:

**Permit Center**  
**Douglas County Transportation & Land Services**  
**140 19th Street NW**  
**East Wenatchee, WA 98802**

**Phone (509) 884-7173**  
**Fax (509) 884-3954**

**Or**

Visit us on the Internet at  
**[www.douglascountywa.net](http://www.douglascountywa.net)**  
for on-line applications, comprehensive plans, the county code,  
and other useful information

*This publication is intended to provide general information only.  
It is not a substitute for the requirements of official plans, policies, resolutions and/or codes.*



## ● Variances

A variance grants special relief from zoning standards for physical requirements, such as setbacks and height restrictions.

This process is intended for situations where the zoning requirements overly burden one property more than other properties in the area.

Variances do not authorize uses not allowed in a zoning district or allow the reduction of minimum lot sizes.

## ● Variance Examples

Variations address unique circumstances of property development that are beyond the control of the property owner.

For example, variations may be necessary to allow construction on old lots that are grossly irregular in shape or on lots that have physical constraints, such as a rock outcrop, or an identified critical area, such as a wetland, steep slope, or riparian corridor.

## ● The Process

The first step in the variance process is to re-examine your construction needs and plans. **Trying to make a lot fit a building plan is more difficult than designing a building that fits a lot.**

Consideration should be given to alternative building design and placement to establish the range of options that do not require a variance.

If it appears that no alternatives exist, an application for a variance may be necessary.

Variance applications are classified as “quasi-judicial” by the Douglas County Code. **Quasi-judicial review involves a pre-application meeting and submitting a formal application that is processed for action by the Douglas County Hearing Examiner. This includes a public hearing.**

*Refer to the “Permit Process” brochure for more information on the quasi-judicial review process.*

## ● Five Criteria for Approval

Variations are evaluated on five criteria outlined by state law and the Douglas County Code. **If the proposal fails to meet even one of the criteria, the variance application will be denied.**

The five criteria that must be met are:

1. The zoning district’s **performance standards**—i.e. setback and height limitations—**do not allow a reasonable permitted use of the property; and**
2. The need claimed by the applicant is **related to the property** and is the result of irregular lot shape or size, topography, or natural features; **and**
3. The need claimed by the applicant results from the requirements of the property’s zoning district and are **not the result of deed restrictions or the actions of the applicant or owner; and**
4. The requested variance **would not grant a special privilege** not enjoyed by other properties in the same neighborhood or zone; **and**
5. **Granting the variance will not be damaging** to property in the same neighborhood or district in which the property is located, cause substantial harm to the public interest or be inconsistent with the intent of the zoning district or the comprehensive plan.

Applications for a variance must include a narrative response to each of the criteria and graphic materials supporting the proposal.