



# Architect/ Engineer Requirements

**BB-13**

BULLETIN

## Community Development Department

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## WHEN IS AN ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER REQUIRED?

Architects and engineers are licensed by the State of Washington under state laws. Those laws are generally what have mandated when the City of Ellensburg asks for a “stamped” design. However, the building code also requires that a licensed engineer or architect be used to design structures or buildings under specific circumstances. The majority of cases where an engineer or architect is required has come from those state laws, most of which are listed below. For questions about the state law, you can call the Department of Licensing at (360) 753-1153 (architect information) or (360) 664-2551 (engineer information).

Proof that a registered engineer or architect did the design work is made by the person “stamping” their work. Therefore, 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 for our files. For City of Ellensburg submittals, the other sets can be a copy of the stamped plans. It is important that developers and contractors hire an architect or engineer from the very start of a project. By hiring an architect or engineer, it is likely that many problems encountered during building permit review can be avoided.

For items #1, 3, 4, 6, 12 and 13 below, **ALL** drawings submitted to the City must be stamped by the engineer or architect who prepared them. Please remember that this stamping requirement includes site plans, mechanical and plumbing plans (can be reviewed and stamped as “shop” drawings if bidder-design is not by an engineer), interior layouts, and electrical plans (if required).

The City of Ellensburg Public Works Engineering Department sometimes requires a licensed engineer to perform design work for projects that involve public infrastructure or that involve storm-water management and site design. Please call their office at (509) 962-7230 for information about when an engineer is required for that work.

## A STATE-LICENSED ENGINEER OR ARCHITECT IS REQUIRED FOR:

- 1. Apartments, condominiums, and townhouses.** Single-family dwellings, duplexes, or multiple-family dwellings up to and including 4 units, generally do not require an architect-of-record. Such buildings **DO REQUIRE** an architect for the “enclosure” as explained in item #2 below. All other multiple-family buildings, (over 4 units per building) need an engineer or architect of record to prepare **ALL** submittal drawings, including the site plan and interior plans.
- 2. Apartments, condominiums, and townhouses.** (Effective August 1, 2005) All new, multi-family buildings, townhouses, attached-single-family dwellings, row-houses, and similar multi-unit residential buildings, including multi-unit apartment buildings and condominiums, that contain **MORE THAN two (2)** attached dwelling units require a state-licensed architect to stamp and sign all building enclosure design documents (together with a special statement regarding the design) in order to satisfy legislative mandates from Washington State regarding the weatherproofing, waterproofing, and other protections from water or moisture intrusion of the aforementioned buildings.

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This document is intended to provide guidance in applying certain regulations and is for informational use only. It cannot be used as a substitute for the Construction Codes or for other city, state or federal codes and regulations. For more information see the City website at: [www.ci.ellensburg.wa.us](http://www.ci.ellensburg.wa.us).

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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 stamping and statement on the drawings, and the same special inspection requirements listed above. The architect must then **INSPECT** the building while under construction.

3. **Commercial buildings over 4000 s.f.** of floor area must have an architect or engineer of record for the entire building. For pre-engineered buildings, an engineer will design the metal building and perhaps the foundation, but that engineer is usually not willing to act as the engineer of record for the entire project. Consequently, they will not stamp any supplemental drawings, such as the site plan or the interior floor plan for improvements inside the building. Required supplemental drawings beyond the pre-engineered building drawings must bear the stamp of the architect or engineer of record for the entire project. Remember, the building code definition of floor area is used to calculate the 4000 s.f., and that definition includes exterior roof-covered areas that are useable space, such as porches, carports, drive-thru's, etc. It also includes basement areas and attic areas, even if used as storage.
4. **Additions, alterations and remodels** to commercial buildings must be stamped by an architect or engineer whenever the existing building is already over 4000 s.f., or when the addition will bring the total s.f. to over 4000. This applies to all additions, including even small additions. All submitted documents must bear the stamp of the engineer or architect in order to ensure that the project has been evaluated in all aspects by the architect or engineer, not just those of the addition itself. This includes the site plan and plans showing the interface between the existing building and the addition. As mentioned above in item #2, someone must act as architect or engineer of record for the entire building.
5. **Re-used engineering.** All submitted engineering calculations or drawings must bear the original stamp of the architect or engineer. The engineer or architect must clearly state that his/her stamp applies to the project being built at the proposed address. The City of Ellensburg design criteria must be shown. This type of problem usually occurs on "stock" plans purchased from a building design company. State law requires that an original stamp be placed on the drawings and/or calculations that were prepared by the engineer or architect. This often requires that the applicant for permit actually obey the copyright laws, too, since they have to purchase both the original set of plans and the engineering to go with it.
6. **Any building of non-conventional design.** That is, non-standard construction, regardless of whether the building is residential or commercial and regardless of its size, the structure must be designed by an architect or engineer. Non-conventional would include masonry, concrete (beyond the use of such things for foundation walls), steel, post and beam, AND pole buildings. Any changes to non-conventional buildings that involve structural elements architect or engineer to design the change. For example, suppose that in a reinforced CMU bearing wall, an owner wants to cut in another door. The design for supporting the door must be by a licensed engineer or architect. Calculations and documentation that the design was done in accordance with the code must be submitted. **THE CITY OF ELLENSBURG REQUIRES ALL POLE BUILDINGS TO BE DESIGNED BY A LICENSED ENGINEER OR ARCHITECT.**
7. **Sloping Lots and other sloping conditions.** The building code specifies instances where a structure is too close to either the toe of a slope or the top of a slope, as well as other conditions that may require an engineer or possibly an engineered foundation design.
8. **Non prescriptive lateral designs** that do not conform to prescriptive code requirements.
9. **Retaining walls over 48" high** or retaining walls 48" and higher holding surcharges for any height.
10. **Basement walls over 9 feet high** and/or do not meet prescriptive code requirements.
11. **Bearing wall stud height more than 10 feet high** for wood frame construction (commercial or residential) to 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.

12. **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 is where one single entity, the design-build firm, offers a single contract to someone for both designing and building a project. Thus, the general contractor and the engineer or architect must be co-owners, partners, or employees of the same firm.
13. **Remodeling Commercial Buildings.** When a building changes occupancy groups, the City will require an engineer or architect if the building is over 4000 s.f. Other remodeling projects will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The City will look at what combination of codes, including the handicap accessibility code, the energy code, the plumbing and mechanical code, make the project complicated enough for an engineer or architect of record to be needed. If structural items are being remodeled in a building of 4000 s.f. or more, then an engineer or architect will be required at least for those specific items and possibly for other parts of the remodel.