



Critical Areas Variance

Frequently Asked Questions and Tips

The City of Algona has created customer tip sheets to inform the general public about the City's land use processes, effect of codes and regulations, and commonly asked questions relating to land development and construction projects. These sheets are not intended to be complete statements or advise customers of all applicable codes and regulations.

The codes and regulations may be revised or amended, please consult City staff to confirm your understanding of requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to understand all requirements and ensure the project meets the City's applicable codes and regulations.

What is a Critical Areas Variance?

A Critical Areas Variance is similar to a variance but applies exclusively to designated critical areas. It permits the applicant to depart from specified development codes or requirements of critical areas due to special circumstances local to the specific property.

When is a Critical Areas Variance necessary?

A Critical Areas Variance becomes necessary when specific circumstances of the lot, land, or something inherent in the land, which is not applicable to other lots in the same district, prohibits the land from enjoying privileges enjoyed by other lots in the same zone.

How long does it take to get a Critical Areas Variance?

The timeline from application submittal: four (4) to six (6) months. However this depends on the responsiveness of the applicant.

How much does a Critical Areas Variance cost?

The city's fee schedule for permits is updated on an annual basis. The fee schedule is located in [Chapter 2.50](#) in the Algona Municipal Code (AMC).

What is the Critical Areas Variance Application process?

1. Submit the Critical Areas Variance application and required materials by email to: juliek@algonawa.gov.
2. The city will review the application for completeness within 28 days.
3. When the application is deemed complete, the submittal materials will be circulated to various departments for review and commenting.
4. City staff prepare a staff report to present to the Hearing Examiner at a public hearing for review and recommendation.
5. Hearing Examiner reviews the application and adopts a decision. If approved, the city will issue the permit

How long is a Critical Area Variance Permit valid?

The city shall prescribe a time limit within which the action for which the variance is required shall begin, completed, or both. Failure to begin or complete within the designated timeline will void the variance.

Note: This Tip Sheet does not include all codes and regulations that may be applicable to your project. The applicant is responsible for demonstrating compliance with adopted codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

For more information: City of Algona | www.algonwawa.gov | (253) 833-2897

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call (253) 833-2897. TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Service.





What do I need to submit?

All application materials must be submitted in electronic PDF format. Additional materials are potentially required depending on the nature of your application. Please contact the city to confirm if additional materials are anticipated to be required.

At minimum, a complete Critical Areas Variance application includes:

- Completed Critical Area Variance Application
- Project Narrative
- Application Fee
- Critical Areas Report
- Site plan
- Vicinity map
- Zoning map
- Survey

Is a pre-application meeting required?

Any person considering a Critical Areas Variance is strongly encouraged but not required to participate in a pre-application meeting with city staff before any plans are drawn. The pre-application meeting shall be an informal review of the proposed project where recommendations can be offered by planning, engineering, building, public works, police, and fire reviewers.

What is a project narrative?

A project narrative is the applicant's opportunity to demonstrate how the proposed use and development of the critical areas addresses the city's criteria for the variance. Responses to each of the approval criteria is required and should be answered as completely as possible.

What are the approval criteria?

The applicant is responsible for demonstrating how the project meets the following approval criteria, listed in [Chapter 16.18A.340 AMC](#).

A Critical Areas Variance may only be granted by the city upon the following findings:

1. Special conditions and circumstances exist that are particular to the land, the lot, or land, and that are not applicable to other lands in the same district;
2. The special conditions and circumstances are not the result of the applicant;
3. Granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that would be denied by by this chapter to other lands, structures, or buildings under similar circumstances;
4. Granting of the variance is will not further degrade the functions or values of the associated critical areas or have negative health and safety impacts within the vicinity;
5. The decision to grant the variance includes the best available science and gives special consideration to conservation or protection measure necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fish habitat; and
6. Granting of variance is consistent with the general purpose and intent of the the City of Algona Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies and adopted development regulations.

