

A background image showing a close-up of people's hands working at a desk. One hand is pointing at architectural blueprints on the table, while another hand holds a pen. A laptop is visible in the background, and the scene is lit with warm, natural light.

# Building Code 101 for Planners

Presented by:

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Date: 5/9/2026

# Learning Objectives



UNDERSTAND WHICH  
CODES ARE USED IN  
NH



IDENTIFY KEY SITE  
PLAN CODE  
TRIGGERS



RECOGNIZE FLAGS  
ON SITE PLAN  
SUBMISSIONS



Improve coordination

# Applicable Codes in New Hampshire

## NH RSA 155A for Building Codes and 153A for Fire Codes

- 2021 IRC – Residential
- 2021 IBC – Commercial
- 2021 IEBC – Existing buildings
- NFPA 101 (2021) – Life Safety Code

2024 Codes will be in effect July 1, 2026, with a 6-month Concurrency

## NH RSA 67X series for Land Use

- Local zoning ordinances (setbacks, density)
- Special zoning like Cottage Court

# When Codes Matter in Site Plan Review

- New construction
- Change of use/occupancy
- Additions or expansions
- Site modifications (parking, access, utilities)
- Planning boards don't enforce codes—but should flag issues early

# Building Separation on Lots (IBC/IRC/IEBC Basics)

Fire separation distance = distance to property line

- Impacts:

- Exterior wall ratings
- Opening limitations (windows/doors)

- Key thresholds:

- 0–3 ft → highly restricted openings
- 3–5 ft → limited openings
- 5+ ft → more flexibility

- Common review issue: buildings placed too close without design adjustments



## Building Separation on Lots (IBC/IRC/IEBC Basics)

# Zoning Setbacks VS Building Code Setbacks/ Separation

- **Zoning setbacks VS building code separation**
- Setbacks:
  - Local zoning requirement from property lines
- Separation:
  - Fire walls vs fire separation (IBC/IRC/IEBC)
  - Multiple buildings one lot
  - Accessory structures
- Key takeaway:
  - A project can meet zoning but still violate building code

# Why the Existing Building Code is so important to use when reviewing existing buildings

## 1. **It's tailored for existing conditions**

Existing building codes are written specifically to address the realities of older structures—things like outdated layouts, materials, and structural systems. The IBC is designed for new construction, so applying it strictly can be unrealistic or even impossible in older buildings.

## 2. **More cost-effective**

Bringing an old building fully up to IBC standards can be extremely expensive. Existing building codes allow for incremental improvements and alternative compliance methods, which significantly reduce renovation costs while still improving safety.

## 3. **Provides flexible compliance paths**

Codes for existing buildings often include multiple compliance methods (prescriptive, performance-based, or work-area approaches). This flexibility allows designers and engineers to choose solutions that meet safety goals without unnecessary upgrades required by the IBC.

## Floodplain Requirements (NH + FEMA)

- Governed by:
  - Minimum NFIP standards and FEMA maps
  - Local floodplain ordinances
- Key requirements:
  - Elevation of structure above Base Flood Elevation (BFE) IRC requires that new one- and two-family and Townhouse style homes be built 1' above (BFE)
  - Flood-resistant materials IBC requires builds to be built at or above (BFE) or be flood proofed
  - Protection of utilities

# Floodplain Requirements

## IRC Sec. 322.1

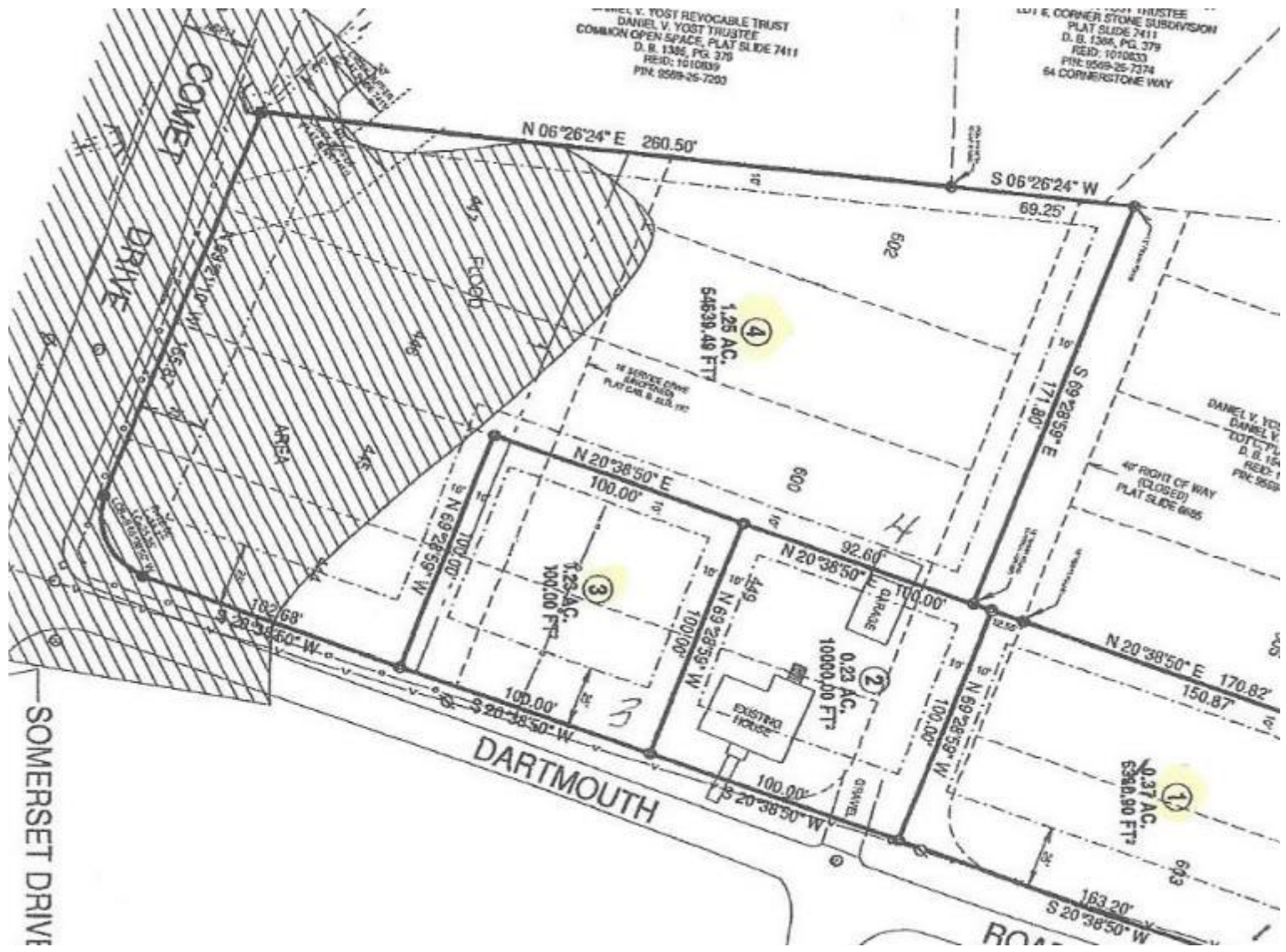
1. Buildings and structures in flood hazard areas, not including flood hazard areas designated as Coastal A Zones, shall have the lowest floors elevated to or above the base flood elevation plus 1 foot (305 mm), or the design flood elevation, whichever is higher.

# Floodplain Requirements

## IBC Sec. 1612

### **1612.2: Design and construction.**

The design and construction of buildings and structures located in *flood hazard areas*, including *coastal high hazard areas* and *coastal A zones*, shall be in accordance with Chapter 5 of ASCE 7 and ASCE 24.



Floodplain know where you can build.

# Fire Apparatus Access and Driveway Widths

- Required by NFPA 101 Fire Apparatus
  - Base on use of the building access to structures
  - Unobstructed fire lanes
- Driveway
  - 20-foot width
  - Driveways longer than 150 feet must provide a turnaround.

# Fire Department Connection (FDC) & Hydrant Placement

NFPA 1

NFPA 24

NFPA 291

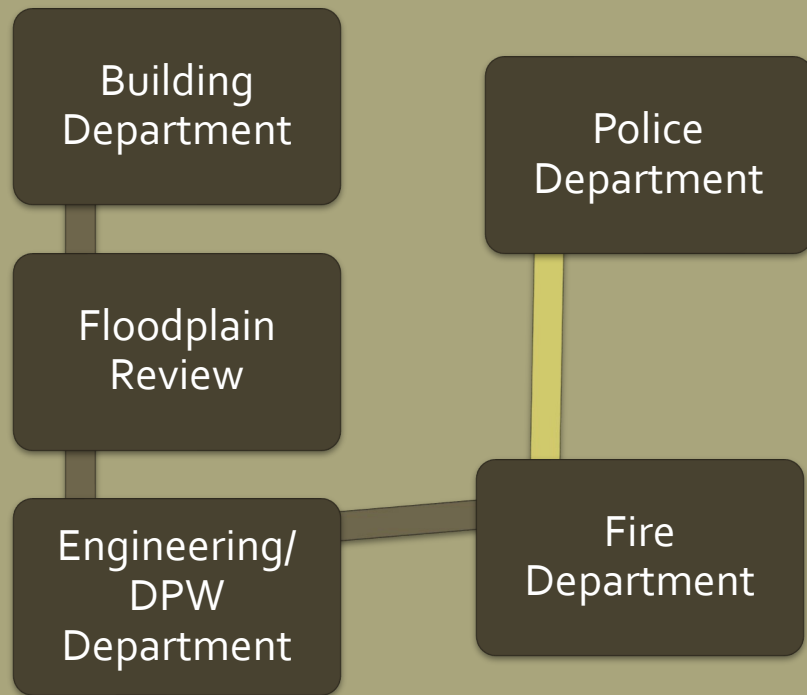
## Key Hydrant Placement Guidelines (NFPA Standards):

- **Distance to Buildings:** Hydrants are typically required to be at least 40 feet away from the building they serve to avoid damage in a collapse.
- **FDC Proximity:** Fire hydrants must be located within 100 feet of the fire department connection (FDC).
- **Spacing Intervals:**
  - **High Density/Commercial:** Generally 500 ft apart.
  - **Light/Ordinary Hazard:** 250–300 ft apart.
  - **Residential:** Spacing should not exceed 500–600 ft.
- **Roadside Location:** Hydrants should be along access roads, typically within 12 feet of the road. They should be located at intersections or on islands to avoid obstruction.
- **Visibility & Protection:** Hydrants must be in unobstructed areas, protected from vehicular damage, and easily visible (e.g., via reflective markers).
- **Accessibility:** Hydrants should not be installed across medians or more than four lanes of traffic.

## Vertical Clearance & Canopies

- Minimum clearance: ~13'6"–14'
- Watch for:
  - Canopies
  - Overhangs
  - Wires

# Coordination



# Questions

Final  
Thoughts

# Thank you

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