



Home-Based Business

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Skagit County tries to provide opportunities for rural entrepreneurs to establish work places within their homes that are compatible with surrounding uses.¹ The County has created the “home-based business” land use to allow for such commercial uses in rural residential areas.

What is a Home-Based Business?

A “home-based business” is a home occupation that remains incidental to the use of a residence for general dwelling purposes and is compatible with rural character.²

Skagit County allows three levels of home-based business, with various regulations. A business that doesn’t qualify as a “home-based business” may still qualify as another allowed land use in the zone.

When is a business NOT a Home-Based Business?

A use specifically identified in any zone is not allowed in another zone where that use is not specifically listed.¹ If your proposed use fits into any other defined use (see the list of examples below), it needs to be specifically allowed in your zone for it to be permitted, and you must apply for that use, not Home-Based Business.

- Adult group care facility
- Animal clinic/hospital
- Bed and breakfast
- Church
- Family day care provider
- Farm-based business
- Kennel (day-use, boarding, breeding)
- Laundromat
- Marijuana production/processing/retail facility
- Mini-storage
- Mortuary
- Outpatient medical and health care services
- Overnight lodging
- Preschool
- Restaurants and drive-ins
- Seasonal roadside stands
- Stables/riding clubs
- Temporary events
- Wholesale nurseries/greenhouses

See the definitions in Skagit County Code Chapter 14.04 for more details on each use.

Do I need a permit?

Skagit County Code establishes three types of home-based business. Identify your proposed use in the table below to see what level of permit you may require.

Whether your home-based business is allowed, and whether a special use permit is required, is determined by the specific regulations of your zoning district. Consult Skagit County Code chapter 14.16 for allowed uses in each zone.

Compliance with home-based business regulations is required even if a special use permit is not required. A building permit may also be required for any construction.

Requirements for all HBBs

All types of Home-Based Business must:

- Be clearly incidental and secondary to the use of the property for dwelling purposes,
- Have no outside storage;
- Not create a level of parking demand beyond that which is normal to a residential area;
- Not create a level of electrical interference, line voltage fluctuation, noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odors, heat, glare, traffic and other environmental impacts beyond that which is common to a residential area;

Additionally, all Home-Based Businesses must comply with the general special use criteria, including:³

- Not intrude on the privacy of surrounding uses.
- Not cause potential adverse effects on the general public health, safety, and welfare.
- Maintain the character, landscape, and lifestyle of the rural area.
- Comply with the County’s standards for vibration, heat, glare, steam, and noise.⁴

See the table on the next page for more details by type of Home-Based Business.

¹ SCC 14.16.020(3).

Requirements by Type

The table below summarizes Skagit County land use regulations, but does not describe all of them. For details, please read SCC 14.16.730. State business licenses and other business regulations also apply.

Type	Participation	Outside signs	Clients may visit site	Limit of floor area for HBB use	Special use permit
HBB-1	Family members residing in the home	No	No	25% of dwelling	Not required
HBB-2	Family members residing in the home	≤ 4 sq ft no illumination	Yes	50% of dwelling	Administrative Special Use
HBB-3	Family member(s) residing in the home and up to 3 additional employees	≤ 4 sq ft no illumination	Yes	Size of building must be consistent with residential area	Hearing Examiner Special Use

Farm-Based Businesses

A related use, “farm-based business,” is defined as:

an on-farm commercial enterprise devoted to the direct marketing of unprocessed and/or value-added and soil-dependent agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold on-site. Farm-based businesses are intended to supplement farm income, improve the efficiency of farming, and provide employment to farm family members. Farm-based businesses are separate and distinct from agriculture support services.

This use is available in the Agriculture-NRL and Rural Resource-NRL zones and some Hamilton zones. Each zone has additional rules for farm-based businesses.

¹ Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Goal 3C-10.

² SCC 14.04.020

³ SCC 14.16.900(1)(b)(v).

⁴ SCC 14.16.900(1)(b)(v)(C) and SCC 14.16.840.