



BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Public Property Information & Homeowner Resource Guide

A public starting point for identifying the correct municipality and locating official permit, well, septic, deed, road, drainage, coastal, environmental, radon, and homeowner-assistance resources.

PUBLIC EDITION

Last reviewed: August 23, 2026

CORE PUBLIC RULE

Find the property. Ask the question. Show the right official source. Explain what the available evidence can and cannot establish.

PURPOSE AND LIMITATION

This guide is educational and navigational. It is not a title examination, legal opinion, boundary survey, environmental site assessment, code-compliance certification, or substitute for property-specific inspection or testing. Government records and online systems can be incomplete or change over time.

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1. Start With the Property

Do not determine permit jurisdiction from the city name in a mailing address alone. Confirm the parcel's actual city, village, or township first.

[Berrien County GIS and Mapping](#)

[Berrien County Municipality Maps](#)

- 1** Find the parcel and confirm the actual municipality.
- 2** Choose the property question being researched.
- 3** Identify the current official authority for that question.
- 4** Request the correct record family rather than searching only for a permit number.
- 5** Review what the record establishes and what it does not establish.
- 6** If the answer is incomplete, follow the troubleshooting ladder rather than guessing.

PROPERTY-RECORD LIMITATIONS

A mailing address does not establish municipal jurisdiction. A GIS parcel line is not a surveyed boundary. An assessment record does not replace permit records, and deed history does not establish building condition or permit completion.

2. Permit & Improvement History

Berrien County does not operate a single countywide construction-code program. Building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing authority can differ by municipality and by discipline.

[Michigan LARA Statewide Jurisdiction List](#)

3. Researching Additions and Improvements

For an addition, remodel, converted area, deck, garage, basement or crawlspace change, or another improvement, treat the records as a connected history.

- 1** Confirm the parcel, municipality, and parcel history.
- 2** Check assessment or improvement history for context.
- 3** Identify zoning separately from building and trade authorities.
- 4** Search building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing records independently.
- 5** Request applications, issued permits, plans when retained, inspections, corrections, reinspections, final inspections, and occupancy or use records when applicable.
- 6** Check related well, septic, sewer, soil-erosion, floodplain, and site approvals when the project suggests they may apply.
- 7** For older work, determine whether authority changed after the project date and ask where the historical records are held.

PERMIT-ISSUED LIMITATION

An issued permit does not by itself establish that work matched the approved scope, passed every inspection, received final approval, or reflects present condition.

APPROVED MISSING-RECORD WORDING

No permit record was located through the sources searched. This does not establish that no record exists or that work was completed without a required permit.

4. Well, Septic & Environmental Health Records

Berrien County Environmental Health Forms

Use current Environmental Health resources for private well and sewage permits, water and sewage evaluations, current forms, fees, and contact information.

HISTORICAL RECORD LIMITATION

A historical well or septic record documents information recorded or approved at that time. It does not establish current condition, remaining service life, exact present location, or current drinking-water quality.

5. Deeds, Property Lines & Recorded Documents

Use the Register of Deeds for recorded real-property documents. GIS and mapping help identify the parcel but do not replace recorded instruments, a licensed survey, title examination, or legal advice.

[Berrien County Register of Deeds](#)

USE THE RIGHT SOURCE

A deed search may identify recorded instruments, but it does not establish building condition or permit completion. Precise boundary questions require an appropriate surveyor or legal professional.

6. Roads, Driveways, Culverts & Drainage

Use the Berrien County Road Department for county-road right-of-way work such as new or resurfaced driveways, culverts, tree trimming, and utility work. Confirm whether the road is county, municipal, state, or private before applying.

[Berrien County Right-of-Way and Driveway Permits](#)

The Drain Commission administers county drains, stormwater systems, and lake-level facilities. Not every drainage problem belongs to the Drain Commission.

[Berrien County Drain Commission](#)

DRAINAGE DISTINCTIONS

Separate building or site drainage, road ditches and culverts, county drains, municipal stormwater, soil erosion, floodplain, wetlands, and coastal questions. A visible drainage feature is not automatically a county drain.

7. Lake Michigan & Coastal Property

Coastal property can involve several separate regulatory questions, including High Risk Erosion Areas, Critical Dune Areas, floodplain, wetlands, soil erosion, local zoning, shoreline or Great Lakes permits, and well or septic site limitations.

Michigan High Risk Erosion Area Maps

COASTAL DISTINCTION

A coastal parcel is not governed by one single rule. Use live regulatory maps and confirm parcel-specific applicability with the responsible agency. A mapped designation is a research starting point, not a complete property determination.

8. PFAS, Groundwater & Environmental Research

Begin by determining whether the home uses a municipal or community water supply or a private well. Then review current official investigation information and obtain property-specific agency guidance or testing when appropriate.

Michigan PFAS Sites and Areas of Interest

Michigan EGLE RIDE Mapper

ENVIRONMENTAL MAP LIMITATION

Environmental maps and investigation locations are screening tools. They identify questions worth researching; they do not establish contamination or exposure at an individual home.

9. Radon Information & Testing

Michigan Indoor Radon Program

Michigan Radon Testing Guidance

RADON RULE

Radon maps, ZIP-code results, and risk zones do not determine an individual home's radon level and do not replace property-specific testing.

10. Homeowner Assistance & Safety Resources

Programs should be reviewed according to the homeowner's actual need and current eligibility rules. Funding, geographic coverage, income requirements, and application windows may change.

[Berrien County Housing and Home Improvement](#)

[Berrien County Veterans Services](#)

[Berrien County Elderly Care](#)

ELIGIBILITY REMINDER

A program's inclusion in this guide does not establish eligibility, funding availability, or approval. Confirm current requirements with the administering agency.

11. Troubleshooting & Escalation Ladder

- 1** Confirm the actual municipality.
- 2** Confirm the discipline: building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing may have different authorities.
- 3** Search alternate identifiers, including current and former addresses, parcel numbers, current and prior owners, and legal descriptions.
- 4** Check whether the project predates a jurisdiction transition.
- 5** Ask for the application, issued permit, inspections, corrections, final inspection, and occupancy or use record when applicable.
- 6** Contact the normal record custodian before submitting a public-record request.
- 7** If an official link has changed, locate the replacement official source.
- 8** If authoritative sources conflict, request clarification and do not guess.

DO NOT OVERSTATE

'No record located through the sources searched' and 'the record does not exist' are not equivalent statements.

12. Gray's Evidence Standard

OBSERVED	Directly seen at the property or shown in a record.
VERIFIED	Supported by an authoritative record or appropriate property-specific testing.
INDICATED	Available information suggests a possibility but does not establish it conclusively.
NOT ESTABLISHED	Available information is insufficient to determine the answer.

The government can stay complicated. The homeowner's path does not have to be. When the available evidence is insufficient, the correct conclusion is that additional verification is necessary.

Official Resource Directory

[Berrien County GIS and Mapping](#)

[Berrien County Environmental Health Forms](#)

[Berrien County Register of Deeds](#)

[Berrien County Drain Commission](#)

[Berrien County Road Permits](#)

[Michigan LARA Jurisdiction List](#)

[Michigan PFAS Investigations](#)

[Michigan Indoor Radon Program](#)

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