

BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

A Step-by-Step Guide

The City Hall is your one-stop spot for a building permit.

The City Hall uses staff from Veenstra & Kimm Inspection Division.

Why does the City issue building permits and how do I benefit by getting one?

Permits are for your safety. The City issues permits to monitor all construction projects for safety and to ensure that all buildings meet minimum standards. These minimum standards protect occupants and neighbors not only in everyday living, but also in case of emergencies and natural disasters. Also, work done without a permit is illegal and can pose serious complications for your fire and homeowner's insurance or for you when you sell your home. By obtaining a Building Permit, you avoid legal and financial liabilities.

When do I need a building permit?

Typically, **ALL** new home construction, remodeling, alterations, and room additions need building permits. You must also obtain electrical, plumbing, and mechanical permits when installing, altering, or replacing electrical wiring, outlets, and service panels; gas and water lines, outlets, drains, water heaters, furnaces and air conditioners. If you are unsure, call Veenstra & Kimm at 515-850-2980.

Some common outdoor improvements that also need building permits are:

1. Retaining walls over 4 feet tall
2. Patio covers
3. Decks
4. Swimming pools and spas
5. Solar energy collection units
6. Storage buildings over 100 square feet
7. Garages and carports
8. All fences

How does the permit process work?

You or your contractor will submit your application and drawings to City Hall staff.

The City Building Official reviews your drawings and inspects each phase of construction for safety and conformance to the building, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical codes.

The Building Official looks at the placement of new structures on property boundaries to verify zoning requirements such as lot size and coverage, density, building setbacks, and height limit for your neighborhood. Zoning restrictions may require a Use Permit or Variance.

What types of plans do I need?

For construction outside the existing walls of your home (e.g., a room addition), you will need the following drawings:

- Plot Plans showing the property lines, existing structures, easements, north arrow, and streets
- Floor Plans labeling the size and location of walls, windows, doors, electrical layout, and room descriptions
- Foundation Plans showing footings and slab construction or footings and underfloor framing
- Structural Drawings explaining the connection details of the project's structural elements
- Elevations showing the outside of the house
- Section Drawings depicting a cross-section of the house
- Energy code documents, Manual J & S.

Why do I need plans?

Good drawings are one of the most important steps of your project. They will be used to value out the job, get estimates from any subcontractors, and obtain the necessary building permits. Better yet, they will give you a much clearer idea of how things will look once you are finished.

If you are doing a simple project, you may be able to do all the drawings yourself. A project that involves no new construction may only need floor plans depicting the before and after look of your house.

The City does not provide plan drawing or designing services, but the City Inspector provides handouts and information to assist you with your project.

Should I hire a contractor or do the work myself?

You may apply for a building permit as “owner/builder.” If you hire a contractor, he/she is responsible for obtaining and signing the building permit.

Before hiring a contractor, verify that he/she is State licensed and possesses a certificate of insurance.

You and your contractor should have a signed contract for all work.

STEPS TO OBTAIN AND FINALIZE A BUILDING PERMIT:

Step 1: Submit the permit application with plans for review.

You or your contractor will submit the permit application and required plans to City Hall. The building permit application review process takes 3 to 5 business days. If corrections are needed, you will be contacted and will need to provide additional information.

Step 2: Pay fees and obtain building permits.

You will be notified when your plans have been approved. Construction may begin only after your building permits have been issued, plans approved, and fees paid.

Step 3: Arrange for building inspections.

24 hour notice required for inspections, call Veenstra & Kimm Inspection Division at 515-850-2980. Inspections are required at various points during construction. Typically, inspections are required for:

- Footings, Foundation Walls and Under-slab plumbing
- Plumbing rough-in
- Electrical Rough-in
- Mechanical Rough-in
- Framing
- Final Inspection

The “rule of thumb” is to not cover anything before it has been inspected and approved. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to notify the City Inspector when the construction work is ready for inspection. If you have any questions regarding when an inspection is required, please contact the City Building Official.

After an inspection, if corrections are required to comply with the codes, the corrections must be completed and re-inspected before continuing construction.

Step 4: Build while your permits are valid.

A building permit is valid for 120 days from the date it is issued by the Building Official. If the start of construction is delayed, you may request an extension of your permit. A letter to the Building Official made prior to the expiration of the permit may allow you additional time to finish the project.

Step 5: Receive final approval.

When the project is completed, call for a final inspection. The City Inspector will make a final, on-site inspection of the improvement (s), sign-off on the permit(s) if all work passes inspection and issue occupancy permit if required.

Remember! The project is not complete for legal purposes or occupancy until it has passed the final inspections.