

Frequently Asked Questions Building / Zoning / Driveway Permits

Q: Is there a list of projects that require permits?

A: It's not always that easy, there is a general list, but as always, if you are unsure about a project requiring a Building or Zoning Permit call the township office and talk to Tammy Sandt, our Permit Coordinator. The following is a general list of work that DOES NOT require permits from the township:

1. Installation or replacement of a window, storm window, door, garage door or storm door in the same clear-width opening if the original dimensions or framing is not altered.
2. Replacement of glass in any window.
3. Replacement of any existing roof material, not including any structural replacement.
4. Painting, wallpapering, tiling, carpeting, cabinet or countertop installation, or similar finish work.
5. Prefabricated swimming pools capable of holding not more than 24 inches of water.
6. Swings or other play equipment customary to single-family dwellings or twins.
7. Replacement of exterior rain gutters or leaders.
8. Replacement of exterior siding.
9. Water tanks supported directly upon grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2 to 1.
10. Residential sidewalks.
11. Installation or rearrangement of communications wiring.

These items require a **ZONING PERMIT** and generally cost \$25.00 unless otherwise noted:

1. Fences not more than 6 feet in height and Retaining walls not more than 4 feet.
2. Concrete patios.
3. Installation of an uncovered deck where the floor of the deck is not exceeding 30 inches above grade.
4. Sheds, carports, detached garages or gazebos not exceeding 1,000 square feet.
5. Grading or Earthmoving (call for fee).

The following items require a **RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMIT** and the costs vary per project:

1. New Construction; Single Family, Town Homes, Manufactured or Modular Homes, Additions, Accessory Structures in excess of 1,000 square feet.
2. Changes to means of egress or any structural change made to an existing building.
3. Pools, in ground and above ground.
4. Fences over 6 feet high and Retaining walls over 4 feet.
5. Decks over 30 inches above grade with or without a roof.

An **ELECTRICAL PERMIT** is required for any service, be it new, replacement, repair, etc.

A **PLUMBING PERMIT** is required for any water or sewer line hook-ups.

COMMERCIAL work requires different and more intensive reviews and inspections, all commercial plans must be Signed and Sealed by a Licensed Professional. Contact the township prior to submitting an application for additional information.

Q: What is needed to submit for a residential building permit?

- A:
1. The building permit application, signed by the owner and contractor.
 2. One plot plan, showing the setbacks from all lot lines.
(For new construction, 3 sets of Signed and Sealed grading plans)
 3. Three sets of construction documents showing as much detail about the project as possible.
 4. Current Worker's Compensation for the contractor is also required.

Q: Must a contractor pull a permit or can I apply for my own?

A: The Township has no preference who applies or acquires the permits, but does require that the owner and contractors sign the applications and that the contractor submits current Worker's Compensation insurance with the township listed as a holder on the policy.

Q: How much will it cost me to get a permit for the work I'm doing?

A: Generally, if it is a zoning permit the fee will be \$25.00 (except for earthmoving, which is calculated by amount of earth moved and grading, which is \$150.00). For new a driveway: \$75.00. For a driveway repave: \$35.00. For all building permit fees, see the building permit fee schedule or call the Township Office.

Q: How long will it take to process my permit?

A: The Township has no more than 15 business days to issue or deny a residential permit, and no more than 30 days to issue or deny a commercial permit. If during the review process any additional documents are required to complete the review, the clock may begin from the date of the receipt of these additional documents.

Q: Do you have an inspector in-house?

A: No, we have two third party inspection agencies. Barry Isett & Associates and Keystone Electrical Inspectors. The contact information along with directions on when to call for inspections and comments to review prior to construction will be given at the time of permit issuance.

Q: What Building Code is used by the Township and where can I view it?

A: North Whitehall Township adopts the International Construction Codes (as updated every three years). You may view a copy of the codes at the Township Zoning Office, the Parkland Library or purchase copies at www.iccsafe.org. Most architects and other design professionals should also be familiar with these codes. PLEASE NOTE: the Building Codes make reference to a variety of affiliated code books. Understanding all of these codes is not a job for a novice.

Q: What can I do to expedite my project and avoid delays and dilemmas?

A: First, you need to understand that the codes are complex and not always easily understood by the average homeowner. Second, our inspectors and township staff cannot help you design your project; this is why so many contractors and design professionals exist.

Some popular misunderstandings:

Discounting some myths about the permit process:

If I come in with one set of plans the Township Office will make the copies for me.

False – If an application is submitted with less than three sets of plans, one plot plan and a COMPLETED application (with signatures from the contractor and owner) it will be considered incomplete and will not be accepted for submittal.

The township inspectors must tell me everything wrong with a plan in detail.

False – While the inspectors hired by the Township work very diligently in reviewing your plans for every detail, it is virtually impossible in all cases to account for all variations of construction. To help with this dilemma, when submitting your plans be as detailed as possible including dimensions, material, construction methods, etc. This not only helps the inspector understand what you are doing and allows them to attach any appropriate comments to your permit, but following a well-detailed plan also helps during the construction process.

Q: How do I determine my setbacks for the plot plan?

A: Setbacks are different for all structures in all districts. They will differ from an addition to a detached garage to a shed. See (link article 3) page XX. Pool setbacks are the same throughout the township, see (link article 4) page XX for details.