Understanding UCC Building Permits

North Whitehall Township | Resident Guide

What Is a UCC Building Permit?

A UCC Building Permit addresses construction and safety requirements established by the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC). While a Zoning Permit addresses how property may be used and where improvements may be located, a UCC Building Permit addresses how regulated work must be constructed to meet applicable building safety standards.

Depending on the project, UCC requirements may address structural construction, electrical systems, plumbing, mechanical installations, fire safety, accessibility, and other building code provisions. Certain projects require both zoning approval and a UCC Building Permit. One approval does not replace the other.

Who Reviews and Inspects UCC Building Permits?

North Whitehall Township utilizes two authorized third-party inspection agencies for technical construction plan reviews and required UCC inspections. Applications are submitted to the Township in paper format. The Township's Zoning Officer conducts applicable zoning reviews, and the Township's Building Code Official (BCO) administers the Township's UCC responsibilities, including authorization of permit extensions. The selected third-party agency performs technical plan reviews and construction inspections.

Applicants should direct technical building-code questions and inspection scheduling to their selected third-party agency.

Choosing Your UCC Inspection Agency

Applicants select one of the Township's two authorized agencies on the UCC permit application:

- Barry Isett & Associates
- Keycodes Inspection Agency

Agency contact information and applicable initial review/deposit fees appear on the current Township UCC application. The selected agency will review construction plans and perform required inspections for the project.

How Do I Submit My Application?

North Whitehall Township currently accepts UCC permit applications in paper format. Electronic application submission is not yet available. Applicants must provide the completed application, property owner's signature, identification of the selected inspection agency, required construction documents and supporting information, and applicable fees.

Paper submissions should be delivered or mailed to North Whitehall Township using the current application instructions. The Township will update its procedures as digital submissions become available.

What Should I Include?

- Project address; owner, applicant, and contractor information as applicable
- Clear description and scope of work, dimensions, and estimated construction cost when requested
- Required plot plan or site information when applicable to the work
- Construction drawings, specifications, and other documents required for UCC review

- Applicable workers' compensation documentation and outside approvals
- Property owner's signature, chosen inspection agency, and required initial payment

The current UCC application calls for three complete sets of construction plans for building permit review. Projects involving only interior alterations or similar work may have different site-plan requirements. Always consult the current application for the specific project.

Commercial and Engineered Structures

Certain projects require construction documents prepared, signed, and sealed by a design professional licensed in Pennsylvania, such as a registered architect or professional engineer. This may include commercial construction, structural alterations, and engineered systems or structures, including some pole buildings (post-frame construction) and prefabricated metal buildings.

Not every pole building automatically requires a complete architect-sealed plan set solely because it is a pole building. Requirements depend on the proposed use, structural design, applicable exemptions, and project classification. Manufacturer drawings or contractor sketches do not automatically satisfy professional design requirements where sealed plans are necessary.

Confirm any sealed-plan requirements before purchasing a building package or submitting an application.

How Long Does Review Take?

Residential Applications

Residential UCC plan review may take up to 15 business days, subject to applicable UCC provisions. If the reviewing agency requests corrections, additional information, or revised documents, an additional review period of up to 15 business days may apply after all requested materials have been received. A partial response does not constitute a complete resubmission.

Commercial Applications

Commercial UCC plan review may take up to 30 business days, subject to applicable UCC procedures and exceptions. Applicants should plan for the review period as well as time to make any requested revisions and obtain other required approvals.

These are review timeframes, not promises that a permit will be issued by a particular date. Incomplete submissions and outstanding reviews may delay issuance.

What Happens After Plan Approval?

The selected third-party agency returns the reviewed plans and advises the Township of any remaining agency balance, if applicable. North Whitehall Township contacts the applicant when the permit is ready for release and identifies outstanding payment due. The applicant may bring the payment to the Township or mail it.

The Township issues and releases the UCC Building Permit and approved documents after all applicable approvals are complete and required fees have been paid.

Initial fees or agency deposits may not cover the full cost of the project's permit and inspection services. Additional review, inspection, reinspection, or other applicable charges may arise depending on the work and agency fee schedule. Submitting an application, paying an initial fee, or receiving plan review comments does not authorize regulated work to begin.

Changes to Approved Plans

If the proposed work changes after permit issuance—including changes to layout, structural components, building systems, or the approved scope—revised plans and additional approvals may be required before the changed work proceeds. Contact the selected inspection agency and the Township, as appropriate, before making a substantive change.

Scheduling Inspections

The permit holder or contractor must contact the selected third-party inspection agency to schedule all required inspections. Inspections may include foundation, framing, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and final inspections, depending on the project. Schedule in advance of the work stage that must be inspected; do not conceal work before a required inspection and approval.

Keep the permit and approved plans available at the construction site, as required. Completing construction does not eliminate required inspections or final approvals.

How Long Is My Permit Valid?

North Whitehall Township issues UCC permits for one year. Annual extensions may be authorized up to a maximum of five years from the original issuance date, provided work remains active and applicable requirements are satisfied. A five-year outside limit does not mean the permit is automatically valid for five years.

Separate UCC inactivity provisions may invalidate a permit if authorized construction does not begin within 180 days of issuance or if construction is suspended or abandoned for 180 days, subject to applicable regulations.

How Do I Request an Extension?

Before the current permit expires, submit a written extension request to the North Whitehall Township Building Code Official. Identify the property, permit number, construction status, and reason more time is needed. The Township BCO reviews and authorizes extensions; they are not automatic. Continue coordinating required inspections with your chosen third-party agency.

An extension of a UCC permit does not automatically extend a separate zoning permit or other approval.

Final Inspections and Occupancy

After construction, the applicant must complete required final inspections, corrections, and other applicable closeout requirements. Where a Certificate of Occupancy or other final authorization is required, obtain it before occupying or using the completed improvement.

What If My Application Is Denied or My Permit Expires?

If plans are not approved, the applicant will be informed of the applicable deficiencies or requested corrections; appeal rights may also apply under governing procedures. If a permit expires, or work began without required permits, contact the Township and the selected agency to determine what further review, approvals, inspections, or corrective measures are necessary. Approval after the fact is not guaranteed.

Before You Submit — Quick Checklist

- I selected one of the two authorized UCC inspection agencies.
- The application is complete and bears the property owner's signature.
- I included all applicable drawings, plot plans, professional seals, and documentation.

- I addressed any required zoning or outside agency approvals.
- I enclosed the required initial fees and understand additional fees may be due.
- I will not start regulated work until the Township releases the permit.
- I know my chosen agency handles technical reviews and required inspection scheduling.