A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO THE BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

We have designed this guide with the newcomer to the permit process in mind. It details the steps involved in obtaining a building permit – from preliminary review through final approval. This information will help people who have had little or no experience with the building permit process. Experienced building professionals will also find information about the required amount of processing time useful for their scheduling.

Building Permits: When are the required?

Generally, you need to obtain a building permit from the City whenever you construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, remove, improve, convert, or demolish a building or other structure, including a swimming pool. A building could be anything from a tool shed to a house to a swimming pool. In addition to a Building Permit you may need plumbing, electrical, and/or sewer tap permits. The City processes the various permit requirements for your project. Call the Building Official's Office at 217-342-5300, option 3.

Preliminary Review: Before you apply

We encourage you to call or visit us before you submit your building permit application. We will answer your questions and let you know if your proposed project is within the City's development guidelines. You may be referred to other staff members to determine if your project will require any Planning approvals before you can apply for a building permit. Approval may require a variance from the Zoning Board if Appeals or a decision from the Planning Commission and City Council. Our office is located at 201 E. Jefferson Avenue (west end of the building on the first floor).

If your project will require approval through a planning process, you must file a separate planning application and pay the required fees. Those fees are separate from the building permit fees. Planning approvals must be granted before you are allowed to apply for a building permit.

You may also want to discuss your project with the Public Works Department, the Fire Department, or the Health Department to determine if there will be any special requirements. Staff may suggest ideas to make the building permit process easier for you. Asking us questions at the outset may save you processing time. We're glad to take the time to help you – it's part of why we are here.

Do You Need to Hire a Professional? Ask us.

The City is committed to explaining the process as clearly and concisely as possible. However, the permit process can be complex, even for those experienced with it.

Depending on the size and type of your project, you may need the services of a licensed professional. In fact, State law may require that a portion of your entire project be prepared by a licensed architect or engineer. Our best advice is to check with the staff in the Building Official's Office to determine if the services of a licensed professional will be needed.

Applying for a Permit

You may apply for a building permit when the plans for your proposed project are complete and Planning approvals, if required, are granted. To apply you must turn in an **application form** at the **Building Official's Office**, consisting of:

- ❖ Completed application form,
- ❖ Copies of required plans,
- ❖ Supporting documentation as needed (structural, energy, soils analysis)

The application form is available at the Building Official's Office counter, as well as online in the Services/Building Official link of our website at www.effinghamil.com. The information included in the plans and number of copies will vary, depending on the specifics of your project.

The Review Process: What happens next?

After your application is submitted, we will review your plans. Depending on the nature of the project, the review could involve several departments. The Building Official's Office will determine compliance with building, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, energy conservation, disabled access compliance and zoning including required parking, lot coverage, building height, setbacks and density requirements. The Fire Department will check for compliance with fire safety requirements.

Contractor Registration

City codes require that any party doing work on any building register as a contractor with the City. The requirements include providing a bond in the amount of $20,000 with the City listed as insured and payment of a $75.00 fee.

Obtaining a Permit: How long will it take?

The City reviews applications on a first-come, first-served basis. However, we are committed to processing your plans as quickly and efficiently as possible. The City's goal is to complete the initial check within the following time frames:

Category	Initial Plan Check Time	Project Examples
Minor Commercial Projects/Residential Projects	**4 weeks**	Non-structural tenant improvements, residential remodels and additions, single family homes, signs, etc.
Moderate Projects	**6 weeks**	Structural tenant improvements, commercial additions up to 5,000 SF, changes of occupancy
Major Projects	**8 weeks**	New commercial buildings

Corrections, Clarifications, and Changes

The Building Official's Office will notify you when initial plan review for your project is completed. If the plans cannot be approved as submitted, we will provide you with lists of necessary corrections from all departments that reviewed your plans.

Minor corrections can be made on the original plans submitted. However, if major changes are necessary, or if there are numerous corrections, you will be required to correct the base drawings and resubmit copies of the revised plans. Submitting thorough and complete plans initially will help avoid numerous revisions.

When revised plans are submitted, they will be distributed to the departments that generated the initial corrections for subsequent review. Plans submitted for recheck will generally require less processing time than required for the initial check. The City's goal is to process rechecks within two weeks for minor projects, three weeks for moderate projects, and four weeks for major projects.

Issuing the Permit

After the City determines that the plans satisfy all code requirements, you will be notified of the approval, asked to pay all remaining fees, and complete the Contractor Registration. Upon payment and registration, we will issue a building permit. You can then begin construction.

Inspections

Even if you don't need a permit, it is likely you will need an inspection at some point. We will inspect your project as work progresses. Building Official's Office staff will make every effort to conduct an inspection on any weekday you request, **provided you call 217-342-5300 x 3 to request an inspection by at least 4:00p.m. THE DAY BEFORE you wish the inspection to take place.**

When to call:

- During a remodel – any time a wall, floor, or ceiling is opened up and prior to insulating or re-covering the affected area.
- After excavation, but before any footers or foundation walls are poured.
- Before any underground utilities are covered up
- Before insulation is placed in the walls or ceiling and/or before drywall is placed for non-insulated walls
- After completion of any fire rated walls
- Before you move in

Completing Your Project

It is essential that you complete the inspection process. You may have up to eighteen (18) months to finish your project once the permit is issued. You may apply for one (1), six (6) month extension (the fee for the extension is $100.00.) From the day you pick up the permit, you are allowed 180 days (6 months) to begin work on your project to avoid permit expiration. When work is completed, you must schedule a final inspection by the Building Official's Office. With final approval, we will provide a Certificate of Occupancy.

Why is the Permit Process so Complex?

The process of issuing a building permit may seem complex, which it is. It involves many City departments and outside agencies, and it may include a separate Planning process. The City is required by law to enforce numerous Federal, State, and local construction and development regulations to ensure that your project is safe and is an asset to the community.

Some Items Do Not Need a Permit

Please keep in mind that even though a permit isn't needed, there are still certain regulations in place. Don't hesitate to call or email the Building Official's Office is you have questions. Some information is also available on the Building Official's web page.
Fences
Painting
Landscaping
Replacing Flooring
We recommend a licensed professional to conduct the following non-permit work:
Change a light fixture
Change a water heater
Replace outlets and switches or plumbing fixtures

If you are replacing windows, please call the office to ensure you meet all current codes.

Roofing and Re-roofing

While we don't currently require a permit for roofing or re-roofing, a permit may be required if any of the structure (rafters) are affected. The City also does not require that roofing companies register with the City because roofing companies are required to be licensed through the State of Illinois. Please verify your roofing company's license status prior to signing any contract at http://www.idfpr.com/profs/roof.asp. And as always, please call the Building Official's office if you have questions or concerns.

When in doubt if you need a permit, simply call or email the Building Official's Office. We are always happy to assist you.

City phone numbers to keep handy: Building Official's Office   217-342-5300 x 3
                                       Fire Department   217-342-2555
                                       Utilities Department   217-342-5300 x 1