

# FAQ –Building Permit Application Guideline (Commercial Other Than One or Two Family)

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## **1. When is a Building Permit Required?**

The Massachusetts State Building Code 780 CMR states that “it shall be unlawful to construct, reconstruct, alter, repair, remove or demolish a structure; or to change the use or occupancy of a building or structure; or to install or alter any equipment for which provision is made or the installation of which is regulated by this code” without first obtaining a building permit. This includes, but is not limited to, new structures, additions, dormers, chimneys, woodstoves, decks, roofing, siding, swimming pools, antennae, and sheds. The only exception is an ordinary repair. An ordinary repair does not require a building permit.

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## **2. What is an ordinary repair?**

The State Building Code defines ordinary repairs as “any maintenance which does not affect structure, egress, fire protection systems, fire ratings, energy conservation provisions, plumbing, sanitary, gas, electrical, or other utilities. This has been interpreted to mean that rotted floor boards can be replaced on a deck, but the deck can not be rebuilt without a permit. Also, damaged roof shingles can be repaired, but the entire roof cannot be re-shingled without a permit. If in doubt as to how much work can be done under ordinary repairs, contact the Building Department.

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## **3. How do I apply for a building permit?**

Applications can be obtained online at [www.holyoke.org](http://www.holyoke.org) or in our office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Annex building. Mail all permits to Building Department Room 300, 20 Korean Veterans Plaza Holyoke, MA 01040.

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## **4. When is payment due?**

Payment must be made in full with application. An application submitted without a payment will be placed aside until a payment has been made. Payment can be made by check, money order, or cash in person. Please make checks out to City of Holyoke. Note that for all projects containing active fire protection (fire alarm, sprinkler) systems and significant renovation projects, a plan review fee of 0.05 cents/square foot is due to the Holyoke Fire Department. Submit this payment to our office.

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## **5. How many sets of plans are required?**

No paper plans are required or desired. Submit all documents in PDF format on a thumb drive. The PDF of the documents will be sent to the Fire Department for a review. The PDF copy is required to be signed and sealed digitally or a color scan of a paper set which was wet stamped is acceptable.

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## **6. What size plans do I submit?**

There is no specific size required however, it must be clear from the plans what work is being done and how it is being done. Plans should be to scale and legible. A title block giving the address of the project must be provided on all sheets. All areas addressed in the building code must be addressed on the plans. In general, plans for new construction should include floor plans, foundation plan, framing plans, sections and elevations. Simply adding a note to the plans that says “all work to comply with codes” is not sufficient. Remember we can only review what is submitted to us. Therefore, the more complete that the plans are, the less likely that any problems will arise after construction.

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## **7. Can we submit by mail or does it have to be in person?**

You may submit by any method including Fed Ex, UPS, USPS or hand delivery.

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## **8. Are plans routed to other departments?**

We send a copy of the plans over to the Holyoke Fire Department to allow for a 10 day review in compliance with 780CMR. We review all applications for compliance with the City of Holyoke Zoning requirements. If there are any other regulations in question such as storm water, conservation, State Sanitary Code, etc. it is best that you check with those regulatory bodies separately.

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## **9. Is a licensed contractor required?**

Every application for commercial work must minimally include a Massachusetts Construction Supervisor (CSL). For projects involving 35,000 cubic feet of space or more a Registered Design Professional who will provide oversight of the project through construction control is required.

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## **10. How long does it take to review/approve a permit?**

The Building Department has a maximum of 30 days in which to issue or deny a building permit. The actual time can vary from 1 day up to the maximum 30-day limit, depending on the number of applications ahead of yours, and the scope of work. Generally, the smaller jobs will take a shorter time, with new buildings taking close to the full 30 days, so allow for this in your scheduling. Commonly projects take less than 2 weeks to review in the months of November-February and over 2 weeks for all other months.

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## **11. What building codes apply in the City of Holyoke?**

The codes that apply are listed on our website as a link. The applicable codes can also be easily found by searching “Massachusetts State Building Code 9<sup>th</sup> edition” since the State

uses the same codes with the only exception being the Stretch Energy Code. The City of Holyoke has adopted the stretch code as a local option. A stretch code compliance form is included in the commercial building permit application package with details.

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## **12. What are the local requirements of building code?**

The City of Holyoke does not have any local requirements. The state building code, 780CMR, is the code that we enforce. This includes many codes under this umbrella which are uniformly applied in the State.

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## **13. Can we defer the submittal for sprinkler or fire alarm work?**

As a default the work to a sprinkler system and fire alarm system requires a building permit. If your application does not include the necessary review of a system, plans, and oversight for the RDP than we expect a separate building permit application for that required work. In order to approve the first building permit it must be made clear on the application or on an attached document that the fire protection work will be submitted by others. No Certificate of Occupancy will be granted until all work to the structure is complete and approved. Please see our “info guide for fire protection systems.”

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## **14. Is there an expedited or over the counter review?**

We do not offer expedited service and operate on a first come first serve basis. We do offer a preliminary review of applications and plans. If you submit documents to us for review and commentary we will place them in the queue upon receipt. The fee for this is \$1 per sheet of plans with a minimum \$50. Once reviewed, you will be sent an email with any and all issues that will need to be resolved for issuance.

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## **15. Can I begin work once I submit my application?**

No. Work cannot proceed until the permit has been issued.

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## **16. Will I be informed when the permit is issued?**

Due to the large volume of permits our office processes we are not able to contact every applicant. Once reviewed by all applicable staff the permit will be promptly issued or contact by email or phone will be made to the applicant listing any outstanding items required to issue the permit. The permit card is mailed to the applicants address. If you would like to check if the permit was issued use the public search of a permits status online. It is found as a link from our main page at <http://www.holyoke.org/departments/building-department/> If no permit comes up for the address it is still under review.

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## **17. How long is a permit good for?**

Once a permit is granted work must commence within 180 days (6 months). So long as work authorized by the permit continues it remains valid. If the work is suspended or abandoned for a period of 180 days (6 months) then the permit is considered expired. A request to extend the permit can be made to our office. The following applies; Submit a letter stating that you would like to renew/extend the building permit. Include a reference to the original building permit number. This letter and the permit extension must include updated supporting documentation that may have expired from the original submission (workers comp, construction control documents, etc.) These will need to be re-submitted with the letter. Permit extensions of expired permits require a \$40 fee and a new field card will be sent to you.

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## **18. What are the inspection requirements?**

The requirements differ from project to project. Every project requires at least one inspection by our staff. In the case of work under construction control the Registered Design Professional will be required to fulfill specific inspection requirements depending on the project. It is the applicant's responsibility to schedule all required inspections with the Building Official as well.

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## **19. Can I change the plans once they have been approved?**

Yes. Revised plans must be submitted prior to constructing the change. Also, an application for revised plans must be submitted and additional fees, if any, paid. Our plan review fee of \$1/sheet and \$50 minimum applies.

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## **20. What do you want?**

This is our most frequently asked question. The simple answer is this: We would like the permit application and plans to be compliant with the Massachusetts State Building Code and any City of Holyoke Zoning Ordinances. It really is just that simple.

If that is not helpful then we could also say that we want the following: A very large bag of unmarked bills (or many small ones, we are not picky but must be enough for a staff of 5 to live off of for a long time). Also a handful of one way plane tickets to a tropical island of your choosing since there is no way we would get our jobs back.

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