

What You Should Know about Building Permits

Does your project require a permit?

Whether you're making repairs yourself or hiring a contractor, you're responsible for finding out if you need permits -- and getting them before you start work. If you don't, you can be fined.

You need building permits for:

- New construction
- Additions and alterations
- Demolition
- Retaining walls, decks, fences, sheds, garages, and vaults
- Signs, awnings, and canopies
- Swimming pools
- Christmas tree and fireworks stands

You need a **raze permit** for demolition of buildings and structures. To raze structures larger than 500 square feet, you must show a certificate of insurance for \$500,000 in coverage.

Your project may require **water or sewer excavation permits** or **supplemental systems installation permits**. Only licensed DC contractors in the specific trades may apply for them.

Work that requires a water or sewer excavation permit includes:

- Water or sewer pipe installation
- Connections to water and sewer mains in the street
- Excavation for water meters and meter vaults in public space

You'll need supplemental systems installation permits for:

- Air conditioning installation
- Electrical installation
- Gas appliance installation
- Plumbing fixture installation
- Refrigeration system installation

You may need public space permits

The Department of Transportation issues public space permits. There's an additional application and fee for those permits, which apply to:

- Dumpsters in public space
- Sidewalk construction and repair
- Flag poles, planter boxes, retaining walls, and fences in public space

What work does NOT require a permit?

Unless you're in a historic district, you don't need permits for:

- Brick pointing, caulking, patching, and plaster repair
- Installation of cabinets and architectural millwork
- Installation of window screens and storm windows
- Repair of existing fences with like materials
- Retaining walls, 18 inches (0.46M) or less in height
- Construction of garden storage sheds that meet DC Official Code § 107.3.3 requirements
- Painting, if it's not with fire-retardant paint
- Replacement of:
 - non-rated windows and doors
 - roofing, coping, siding, gutters, and downspouts
 - private sidewalks, driveways, and patios
 - non-rated suspended ceiling tile
 - floor coverings
 - gypsum board, up to 160 square feet (9.3m)
 - storm drain piping, up to 50 linear feet (15.24m)
 - sanitary/drainage system piping, up to 10 linear feet
 - sanitary venting piping (3.05m), up to 20 linear feet
 - hydraulic system piping (6.10m), up to 50 linear feet
 - duct work (15.24m), in non-hazardous and commercial kitchen exhaust systems, up to 10 linear feet (3.05m)

Complete your permit application online

Use our new, easy-to-use Online Construction Permit Intake (OCPI) application, at dcra.dc.gov, under "Permits." Fill in all your information online, any time, day or night – and be guided through each section, as soon as you fill in your property address. Print out your application and bring it to the Permit Center. Your data will be waiting for confirmation – when you arrive.

What should you bring when you apply?

Visit dcra.dc.gov or come to our Permit Center, 941 North Capitol St NE - 2nd Floor to get these fact sheets that will tell you more:

- 12 Steps to Drafting a Building Plat
- Building Permit Application Requirements by Permit Type
- Building Permit Reviews by Permit Type
- Developer's Guide to Building Permits
- Development Ambassador Program
- Homeowners Center FAQ's
- Job Classification System (Permits)
- Preliminary Design Review Meeting
- Residents Guide to Building Permits
- You Can Build It!



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