



Department of  
Licenses & Inspections

# START RIGHT

## A Guide to L&I Services



BUSINESS OWNERS



CONTRACTORS



HOME OWNERS



The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) is an indispensable resource for developers, contractors, property, and business owners – protecting investments by helping to keep projects on track, up to code and safe. Proper permitting, licensing, plan review, guidance, information, resources and more from L&I will help protect your investment, project, family, business and clients.

**PROTECT YOUR  
PROJECT WITH L&I**

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**Learn more at [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI)**

**Go online to obtain licenses, permits,  
and manage projects 24/7 via eCLIPSE.**



# BUSINESS OWNERS

**Protect your investment by making sure your project has the proper permits, licenses, plans and professionals in place.**

## **What is the purpose of permits and codes?**

Permits are required to meet legal and building safety standards. Permit applications are professionally reviewed to ensure that projects have been planned to be structurally sound and protect from fire and other hazards.

Certified L&I inspectors check permitted projects for compliance with building codes and approved plans. Permits also provide a permanent record of work performed.

Several variables will affect the content of your permit application. The scope of work will determine whether you need plans, a license design professional, and/or a licensed contractor.



# START RIGHT

1.

Verify  
Zoning

2.

Obtain  
Permits

3.

Obtain  
Inspections

4.

Obtain Required  
Business Licenses

## Will I need a Zoning Permit?

**YES**

1. Change in use
2. Change in height
3. Change in floor area
4. Signage
5. Construction of accessory structures
6. Change in parking conditions

**NO**

Change in ownership or tenancy

**Note:**

Zoning applies to the property – not the person who owns or operates from the property

## Determine Existing and Allowable Uses:

You may view Zoning history, including the last approved use, through the Atlas site at [atlas.phila.gov](http://atlas.phila.gov).

To determine if a new use is permitted:

1. You can either click on the "Zoning" section on [atlas.phila.gov](http://atlas.phila.gov) to identify the base and overlay Zoning Districts for your desired location.
2. Check Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code or use the Zoning Generator at [phila.gov/zoning-summary-generator/](http://phila.gov/zoning-summary-generator/) to confirm that the proposed use is permitted in that Zoning District.

## Zoning Appeals:

If the proposed use or construction is not permitted under the Zoning Code, you may still appeal to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a variance. To do so, you must apply for a Zoning Permit with the Department of Licenses and Inspections, obtain a refusal, and submit the appeal to the Board Administration. A public hearing will be scheduled within several months from the appeal. Prior to the hearing, the appellant is required to meet with registered community groups to educate the public on the proposal.

### → TIP BOX

Before purchasing a property, or signing a lease, determine if the site is appropriately zoned for your business. Refer to the Commercial Leasing notice guide for additional guidance

[phila.gov/documents/commercial-leasing-notice-guide/](http://phila.gov/documents/commercial-leasing-notice-guide/)



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## Do I need a Building Permit?

**YES**

1. Any type of construction, unless specifically excluded by this section.
2. Signage or equipment installation
3. Change in occupancy classification as defined by Chapter 3 of the Philadelphia Building Code
4. An increase in lawful occupancy

**NO**

1. Change in ownership or tenancy
2. Change in use with no change in classification
3. Ordinary repairs to structures, not including the cutting away of any wall, partition or structural member
4. Non-masonry fences up to six feet high
5. Pointing of masonry
6. Painting and papering / Floor coverings
7. Cabinets and finishing work
8. Movable cases, counters and partitions below 6'-0"
9. Construction trailers
10. Retaining walls or masonry fence walls up to two feet high
11. Site work (paving, grading) in areas less than 5,000 sq. ft.

## Do I need an Electrical Permit?

An Electrical Permit is required for the installation, alteration, replacement or repair of electrical and communications wiring and equipment within or on any structure, and for the alteration of an existing installation.

An Electrical Permit is not required for the following work provided that property is not on the Philadelphia Historic Registry.

- Minor electrical repair/maintenance (i.e. replacement of lamps, circuit breakers and fuses; repairing or replacement of switches, lamp sockets, ballasts, drop cords, receptacles, bulbs)
- The connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles

## Do I need a Plumbing Permit?

A Plumbing Permit is required for the installation, alteration, renewal, replacement or repair of plumbing.

A Plumbing Permit is not required for the following work provided that property is not on the Philadelphia Historic Registry:

- Minor plumbing repairs (i.e. replacement of faucets, valves or parts; removal and reinstallation of water closets with existing pipes / valves, stopping leaks and clearing stoppages).



## Where must I make application?

Permit applications can be submitted online at [eclipse.phila.gov](http://eclipse.phila.gov) or in-person at the Permit and License Center located in the Municipal Services Building. To submit an application in-person, you must make an appointment to visit the Permit and License Center at [phila.gov/li/appointment](http://phila.gov/li/appointment).

## Who may make application?

**Building and zoning permit applications** may be submitted by the business owner, the licensed design professional, attorney, expeditor, or contractor associated with the project.

**Electrical and plumbing permit applications** must be submitted by the licensed contractor, the licensed design professional, attorney, or an expeditor.

## How long does the process take?

Permit applications that do not require the submission of plans are typically processed on the same day that they are submitted in-person at the Municipal Services Building (or within 5 business days when submitted online via [eCLIPSE](http://eclipse.phila.gov)). All other applications are processed within 20 business days. If the application is incomplete or requires clarification, each subsequent submission is also processed within 20 business days. Some work types are eligible for an accelerated review at an additional fee. See [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI) for details.

## What are the associated fees?

Permit fees vary based on scope and may be viewed on our website; [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI). Applications must be accompanied by a \$100 filing fee with the balance of the permit fee due upon permit approval.

## How long is a permit valid?

Permits must be picked up within 60 days of notice of approval. Work must commence within six months of permit issuance. If work stops for a period exceeding six months or is not completed within five years of the date of issuance, the permit is expired.



## Do I need a Plan?

**A Zoning Permit application** may require plans for a new use and always requires plans for an addition, new construction, signage, or parking.

**A Building Permit application** requires plans with some exceptions:

- Interior demolition of non-load-bearing partitions
- Interior alterations in a tenant space less than 2,000 sq. ft. that do not include the construction of new partitions
- Siding and most other exterior wall coverings
- Retaining walls
- Security gates and grilles
- Exterior window and door replacement within an existing opening
- Replacement of roof covering and limited sheathing
- Installation of ductwork contained within tenant space with a maximum area of 2,000 sq. ft., with no demising wall or floor penetrations, and a maximum capacity of associated equipment of 2,000 cfm
- Kitchen Hood Fire Suppression System
- Relocation of sprinkler heads only

Work in response to a violation issued by the Department on a structurally unsafe condition does not require a plan but may require a report prepared by a professional engineer licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**An Electrical permit application** requires plans with the following exceptions:

- Electrical alteration within a tenant space less than 2,000 sq. ft.
- Replacing electrical equipment rated 600 V or less
- Replacing fire alarm notification and initiation devices
- Service conductor installation with a connected load of 200 amps or less
- Telecommunications / data work, except work within hazardous occupancies

**A Plumbing Permit application** requires plans with some exceptions:

- Alterations or repairs in spaces, excluding restaurants, less than 2,000 sq. ft. with a total fixture count of seven or less
- Replacement of curb trap or fresh air inlet, house drain, fixtures, water distribution, sealing a lateral and pipe repair regardless of occupancy
- Installing of a backflow device or alterations in buildings with four or fewer dwellings, up to four stories high



## → TIP BOX

### Hiring a contractor

Requires a written contract and clearly identify who is responsible for obtaining permits

Confirm tax compliance beforehand

Request proof of insurance

## Do I need a contractor?

Yes, a license contractor must perform all work.

## What type of contractor must I hire?

Electrical work must be performed by a licensed electrical contractor, plumbing work must be performed by a registered master plumber, and sprinkler work must be performed by a fire suppression contractor. A Philadelphia Contractor's License is required to perform all other applicable work. All Philadelphia Contractor Licenses may be verified through [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI).

## Do I need an architect or engineer?

**Zoning plans** are not typically required to be sealed by an architect or engineer.

**Building plans** are required to be sealed by a registered design professional with the following exception:

- A non-structural alteration ( i.e. no modification to bearing walls or floor framing) with an associated cost of work less than \$25,000.

**Electrical plans** are required to be sealed by a professional engineer under the following circumstances:

- Any installation where the connected load is 100 kw and/or 400 amps or more
- When upgrading service in existing building when load is 100 kw and/or 400 amps or more

**Most plumbing plans** are not required to be sealed by a design professional.

**A business owner or his agent may prepare all other plans**, provided that they are of professional quality, drawn to scale, and comply with minimum sheet size, even when the design professional is not required.

## → TIP BOX

### How may I find a design professional?

Many professional organizations maintain a public database of services provided by membership. A listing of local architects may be accessed through the website of the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects: [aiaphiladelphia.org/find-architect](http://aiaphiladelphia.org/find-architect)

You may also verify your architect or engineer's license through the Pennsylvania Department of State's website [licensepa.state.pa.us](http://licensepa.state.pa.us)



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## Are inspections required?

All work covered under a permit must be inspected. The contractor or business owner must contact the appropriate district identified on the permit. The inspector must be notified 48 hours in advance of work and all required inspections must be scheduled 48 hours in advance.

The inspector will evaluate work for compliance with the code and approved permit documents. A Certificate of Occupancy or a Certificate of Approval will be issued once the project passes final inspection.

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## Commercial Activity Licenses:

All businesses (except registered nonprofit organizations) operating in Philadelphia must have a Commercial Activity License (formerly known as a Business Privilege License). This is a free, lifetime license for which an application may be made at any time.

### How to apply for your Commercial Activity License:

#### You will need:

1. Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) from the IRS
2. Sole proprietorships may use a Social Security Number
3. City of Philadelphia Tax Account Number - register any trade name under your tax account
4. Pennsylvania State Sales and Use Tax Number (only for businesses collecting sales tax)

Apply online at [eclipse.phila.gov](http://eclipse.phila.gov) or in-person at the Permit and License Center located at the Municipal Services Building. To apply in-person, you must make an appointment to visit the Permit and License Center at [phila.gov/li/appointment](http://phila.gov/li/appointment).

### Additional Licensing:

Some businesses may require additional licenses based on activity. Please visit [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI) for a complete catalog of licenses and required application documents.



# CONTRACTORS

**Protect your projects and your business. It is your responsibility to secure all licenses, permits and plans.**

## **What is the purpose of permits and codes?**

Permits are required to meet legal and building safety standards. Permit applications are professionally reviewed to ensure that projects have been planned to be structurally sound and protect from fire and other hazards.

Certified L&I inspectors check permitted projects for compliance with building codes and approved plans. Permits also provide a permanent record of work performed.

Several variables will affect the content of your permit application. The scope of work will determine whether you need plans, a license design professional, and/or a licensed contractor.



# START RIGHT

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Apply for a  
Contractor  
License

2.

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Inspections

## What licenses are required to do work?

### 1. Commercial Activity License (formerly Business Privilege License)

All contractors operating in Philadelphia must have a Commercial Activity License. This is a free, lifetime license for which application may be made at any time.

#### To apply for a Commercial Activity License, you will need:

- Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN). Sole proprietors may use Social Security Number City of Philadelphia Tax Account Number
- Pennsylvania State Sales and Use Tax Number (for businesses collecting sales tax)
- Please visit our website, [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI) for application details.

### 2. Contractor License

Most general construction can be performed with a Philadelphia Contractor's License. General construction on an existing one or two-family dwelling may be performed with the PA Home Improvement Registration provided that the contractor possesses a Commercial Activity License and provides proof that they carry insurance equivalent to that which is required by the Philadelphia Contractor's License.

#### The following work must be performed by an individual with a specialized trade license:

- Electrical work
- Plumbing work
- Sprinkler work
- Demolition
- Installation or alteration of duct work, ferrous and non-ferrous
- All work involving appliances connected to a chimney or flue

Note: Trade license requirements vary, refer to website, [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI) for more details.



# START RIGHT

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Apply for a  
Contractor  
License

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## When do I need a Zoning Permit?

A Zoning Permit is required for a change in use, a change in height or gross floor area of the building, signage (including the re-facing of an existing sign), the adjustment of property lot lines, the construction of certain accessory structures, or a change in parking conditions.

Zoning applies to the property – not the person who owns or operates from the property.

A Zoning Permit is not required for the following elements:

### To apply for a Commercial Activity License, you will need:

- Fences and walls in compliance with the Zoning Code
- Retaining walls not exceeding 2 ft in height
- Decks less than 12 inches above grade, and not located over basements or other stories
- Building service equipment (solar panels, mechanical, electrical, plumbing)
- Canopies or awnings (120 s.f. or less) for one-or-two family dwellings
- Trailers used in conjunction with construction operations
- To reflect a change in ownership or tenancy
- Swimming pools, sheds, playhouses, pergolas, and similar structures (in the rear yard and 120 s.f. or less) installed on the property of a one-or-two family dwelling
- Concrete or other hard surface materials, such as driveways and patios

## Determine Existing and Allowable Uses:

You may view Zoning history, including the last approved use, through the Atlas tool at [atlas.phila.gov](http://atlas.phila.gov).

To determine if a new use is permitted:

1. Click on the "Zoning" section on [atlas.phila.gov](http://atlas.phila.gov) to identify the base and overlay Zoning Districts for your desired location.
2. Check Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code or use the Zoning Generator at [phila.gov/zoning-summary-generator/](http://phila.gov/zoning-summary-generator/) to confirm that the proposed use is permitted in that Zoning District.

### Zoning Appeals:

If the proposed use or construction is not permitted under the Zoning Code, you may still appeal to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a variance. To do so, you must apply for a Zoning Permit with the Department of Licenses and Inspections, obtain a refusal, and submit the appeal to the Board Administration. A public hearing will be scheduled within several months from the appeal. Prior to the hearing, the appellant is required to meet with registered community groups to educate the public on the proposal.



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## 1.

Apply for a  
Contractor  
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Inspections

## Do I need a Building Permit?

### YES

1. Any type of construction, unless specifically excluded by this section.
2. Installation of signage or equipment
3. Change in occupancy (Chapter 3 of the Philadelphia Building Code)
4. An increase in lawful occupancy

### NO

(UNLESS  
ON THE  
PHILADELPHIA  
HISTORIC  
REGISTRY)

1. Change in ownership or tenancy
2. Ordinary repairs to structures, not including the cutting away of any walls, partitions, or structural member
3. Pointing of masonry
4. Painting and papering / Floor coverings
5. Cabinets and finished work
6. Movable cases, counters and partitions below 6'-0"
7. Non-masonry fences below six feet high
8. Construction trailers
9. Retaining walls or masonry fence walls two feet high
10. Site work (paving, grading) in areas less than 5,000 sq. ft
11. Replacement of exterior stairs, ramps, platform lifts, steps and landings (less than six feet high, accessory to a one-and-two family dwelling)
12. One-story detached structure, less than 200 sq. ft. (accessory to a one-and-two family dwelling)
13. Replacement of windows and doors in existing openings (accessory to a one-and-two family dwelling)

## Do I need an Electrical Permit?

An Electrical Permit is required for the installation, alteration, replacement or repair of electrical and communications wiring and equipment within or on any structure and for the alteration of an existing installation.

An Electrical Permit is not required for the following work if property is not on the Philadelphia Historic Registry.

- Minor electrical repair/maintenance (i.e. replacement of lamps, circuit breakers and fuses; repairing or replacement of switches, lamp sockets, ballasts, drop cords, receptacles, bulbs)
- The connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved, permanently installed receptacles
- Installation of low voltage wiring in one-and-two family dwellings



## Do I need a Plumbing Permit?

A Plumbing Permit is required for the installation, alteration, renewal, replacement or repair of plumbing.

A Plumbing Permit is not required for the following work associated and if property is not on the Philadelphia's Historic Registry:

- Minor plumbing repairs (i.e. replacement of faucets, valves or parts; removal and reinstallation of water closets with existing pipes / valves, stopping leaks and clearing stoppages)

## What are the applicable codes?

2018 Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code, incorporating 2018 ICC codes with 2021 ICC accessibility provisions and local modifications (Title 4 of the Philadelphia Code)

- The 2018 International Plumbing Code
- The 2018 Philadelphia Fire Code
- The Philadelphia Zoning Code (Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code)
- The 2017 National Electric Code

## Where must I make application?

The Permit applications must be submitted online at [eclipse.phila.gov](http://eclipse.phila.gov) or in-person at the Permit and License Center located in the Municipal Services Building. To submit an application in-person, you must make an appointment to visit the Permit and License Center at [phila.gov/li/appointment](http://phila.gov/li/appointment).

## Who may make application?

**Building and zoning permit applications** may be submitted by the owner, licensed design professional, attorney, expediter, or the contractor associated with the project.

**Electrical and plumbing permit applications** may be submitted by the licensed contractor, licensed design professional, attorney, or expeditor.

## How long does the process take?

Permit applications that do not require the submission of plans are typically processed on the same day that they are submitted in-person at the Municipal Services Building (or within 5 business days when submitted online via [eCLIPSE](http://eclipse.phila.gov)). All other applications are processed within 20 business days (except residential applications which are reviewed within 10-15 business days). If the application is incomplete or requires clarification, each subsequent submission is also processed within 20 business days. Some work types are eligible for an accelerated review at an additional fee. See [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI) for details.

## What are the associated fees?

Permit fees vary based on scope and may be viewed on our website, [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI). Applications must be accompanied by a \$25 filing fee (for one-or-two family dwellings) or \$100 filing fee (for any other occupancy) with the balance of the permit fee due upon permit approval.

## What is required for permit pick-up?

If picking up a permit in-person at the Municipal Services Building, you must bring:

- The copy of the invoice (if you have not yet paid for it)
- An electronic check or credit card
- A certificate of tax compliance and a certificate of insurance for the contractor issued no more than 30 days prior to date of permit pickup.

## How long is a permit valid?

Permits must be paid for within 60 days of notice of approval. Work must commence within six months of permit issuance. If work stops for a period exceeding six months or is not completed within five years of the date of issuance, the permit is expired. There are exceptions for demolition projects and those related to the repair of structure which pose a threat to life safety. Please see the Philadelphia Administrative Code for details.



## Do I need a Plan?

**A Zoning Permit application** may require plans for a new use and always requires plans for an addition, new construction, signage, parking, or property lot line adjustment.

**A Building Permit application** requires plans with some exceptions:

- Interior demolition of non load-bearing partitions
- Interior alterations in a tenant space less than 2,000 sq. ft. that do not include the construction of new partitions
- Siding and most other exterior wall coverings
- Above-ground pools and spas, retaining walls, security gates and grilles
- Window and door replacement within an existing opening
- Replacement of roof covering and limited sheathing
- Installation of ductwork contained within tenant space with a maximum area of 2,000 sq. ft., with no demising wall or floor penetrations, and a maximum capacity of associated equipment of 2,000 cfm
- New installation or replacement of appliances in one-or-two family dwellings
- Kitchen Hood Fire Suppression System and relocation of sprinkler heads

Work in response to a violation issued by the Department on a structurally unsafe condition does not require a plan but may require a report prepared by a professional engineer licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**An Electrical permit application** requires plans except for:

- Electrical alteration within a tenant space less than 2,000 sq. ft., replacing electrical equipment rated 600V or less, and replacing fire alarm notification and initiation devices
- New construction, additions, or alterations on one-or-two-family dwellings with connection load less than 200 amps and all equipment rating of 600V or less
- Service conductor installation with a connected load of 200 amps or less
- Electrical vehicle charger stations meeting the EVC permit standard
- Telecommunications/data work, except work within hazardous occupancies

**A Plumbing Permit application** requires plans with some exceptions:

- Alterations or repairs in other spaces less than 2,000 sq. ft. with a total fixture count of seven or less except restaurants. Restaurants always require plans
- Replacement of house trap, house drain, fixtures, water distribution, and laterals regardless of occupancy
- Installing of a backflow device or alterations in buildings with four or fewer dwellings, up to four stories high

Please visit [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI) for associated standard identifying conditions and construction requirements for each work type.



## Do I need an architect or engineer?

**Zoning plans** are not typically required to be sealed by an architect or engineer.

**Building plans** are required to be sealed by a registered design professional with the following exceptions:

- A non-structural alteration with an associated cost of work of less than \$25,000.

**Electrical plans** are required to be sealed by a professional engineer under the following circumstances:

- Any installation where the connected load is 100 kw and/or 400 amps or more
- When upgrading service in existing building when load is 100 kw and/or 400 amps or more

**Most plumbing plans** are not required to be sealed by a design professional.

**An owner or his agent may prepare all other plans**, provided that they are of professional quality, drawn to scale, and comply with minimum sheet size, even when the design professional is not required.

### → TIP BOX

#### Understand who hold the permit

Who is the permit holder? Contractor information is required for permit issuance; however, the owner is the permit holder. The owner has the authority to change contractors before or after permit issuance.

## START RIGHT

1.

Apply for a Contractor License

2.

Verify Zoning

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Obtain Permits

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Obtain Inspections

## Are inspections required?

All work covered under a permit must be inspected. The contractor or business owner must contact the appropriate district identified on the permit. The inspector must be notified 48 hours in advance of work and all required inspections must be schedule 48 hours in advance.

The inspector will evaluate work for compliance with the code and approved permit documents. A Certificate of Occupancy or a Certificate of Approval will be issued once the project has passed final inspection.

**Protect your investment and safeguard your loved ones by following these simple steps.**

The scope of work determines whether you need plans, a licensed design professional, and/or a licensed contractor.

The scope of work will also impact fees, and where and how you must apply.



# HOMEOWNERS

**Protect your investment by making sure your project has the proper permits, licenses, plans and professionals in place.**

## **What is the purpose of permits and codes?**

Permits are required to meet legal and building safety standards. Permit applications are professionally reviewed to ensure that projects have been planned to be structurally sound and protect from fire and other hazards.

Certified L&I inspectors check permitted projects for compliance with building codes and approved plans. Permits also provide a permanent record of work performed.

Several variables will affect the content of your permit application. The scope of work will determine whether you need plans, a license design professional, and/or a licensed contractor.



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Apply for  
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Comprehensive  
Project Type List

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Find a Contractor

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Find an Architect/  
Engineer

## Do I need a Zoning Permit?

A Zoning Permit is required for a change in use, a change in height or floor area of a structure, the construction of certain accessory structures, a change in parking conditions, and property line adjustment.

*Refer to Comprehensive Project Type List on page 20 for more information.*

## Do I need a Building Permit?

A Building Permit is required to repair, change, or add to a structure and for the installation of equipment.

*Refer to Comprehensive Project Type List on page 20 for more information.*

## Do I need a Plumbing Permit?

A Plumbing Permit is required for the installation, alteration, renewal, replacement or repair of plumbing.

A Plumbing Permit is not required for the following work, if that property is not on the Philadelphia Historic Registry:

- Minor plumbing repairs (i.e. replacement of faucets, valves or parts; removal and reinstallation of water closets with existing pipes / valves, stopping leaks and clearing stoppages)

## Do I need an Electrical Permit?

An Electrical Permit is required for the installation, alteration, replacement or repair of electrical and communications wiring and equipment within or on any structure and for the alteration of an existing installation.

An Electrical Permit is not required for the following work provided that property is not on the Philadelphia Historic Registry.

- Minor electrical repair/maintenance (i.e. replacement of lamps, circuit breakers and fuses; repairing or replacement of switches, lamp sockets, ballasts, drop cords, receptacles, bulbs)
- The connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.
- Installation of low voltage wiring in one and two-family dwellings



## Do I need Plans?

Plans are not required for electrical or plumbing work.

Refer to Comprehensive Project Type List on page 18 for more information on zoning and building permit requirements.

## Where must I make application?

Permit applications can be submitted online at [eclipse.phila.gov](http://eclipse.phila.gov) or in-person at the Permit and License Center located in the Municipal Services Building. To submit in-person, you must make an appointment to visit the Permit and License Center at [phila.gov/li/appointment](http://phila.gov/li/appointment).

## Who may make application?

**Building and zoning permit applications** may be submitted by the owner, licensed design professional, attorney, expeditor, or the contractor associated with the project.

**Electrical and plumbing permit applications** may be submitted by the licensed contractor, licensed design professional, attorney, or expeditor.

## What are the associated fees?

Permit fees vary based on scope and may be viewed on our website: [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI). Applications must be accompanied by a \$25 filing fee with the balance of the permit fee due upon permit approval.

## How long does the process take?

Permit applications that do not require the submission of plans are typically processed on the same day that they are submitted in-person at the Municipal Services Building (or within 5 business days when submitted online via [eCLIPSE](http://eclipse.phila.gov)). All other applications are processed within 10-15 business days. If the application is incomplete or requires clarification, each subsequent submission is also processed within 10-15 business days.

**To keep your permit valid**, work must commence within six months of permit issuance. If work stops for a period exceeding six months or is not completed within five years of the date of issuance, the permit is expired.

## Are inspections required?

All work covered under a permit must be inspected. The contractor or homeowner must contact the appropriate district identified on the permit. The inspector must be notified 48 hours in advance of work. All required inspections must be scheduled 48 hours in advance.



# START RIGHT

1.

## Apply for Permits

## 2.

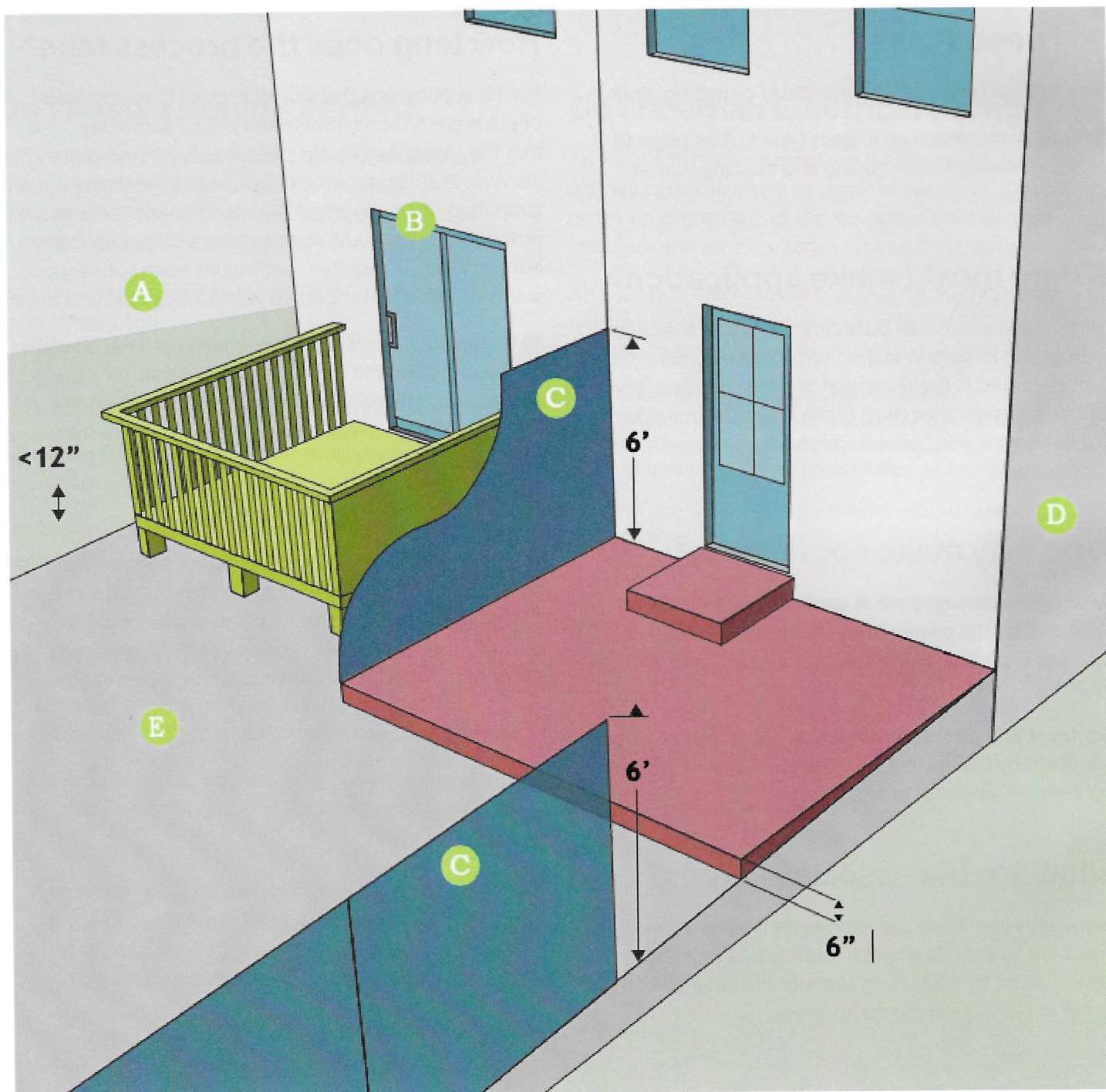
## Comprehensive Project Type List

### 3.

## Find a Contractor

## 4.

**Find an Architect/  
Engineer**





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Comprehensive Project Type List

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Find an Architect/Engineer

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Proposed Activity or Change:	Zoning Permit Required?	Site Plan Required?	Building Permit Required? <sup>3</sup>	Construction Plans Required?
Addition to building	YES	YES	YES	YES
Decks, less than 12" above ground	NO	NO	NO	NO
Decks, more than 12" above ground	YES	YES if >216 sq ft or above 1st floor level or in front / side yard	YES	YES if >216 sq ft or above 1st floor level
Door and window openings, new	NO	NO	YES	YES
Doors & windows, replacement in existing openings (no change in size)	NO	NO	NO	NO <sup>1</sup>
Fences or fence walls	NO if <6'-0" at rear or <4'-0" at front and <50% opaque at front	NO if permit required	NO if non-masonry & <6'-0" in height	YES masonry >2'-0", non-masonry >6'-0" in height
Garages & carports	YES	YES	YES	YES
HVAC work	NO	NO	YES	NO <sup>1</sup>
Parking spaces, new or reconfigured	YES	YES	NO	NO
Playhouse or swing set	NO	NO	NO	NO
Porch, new	YES	YES	YES	YES
Porch, repair	NO	NO	YES	NO <sup>1</sup>
Ramps, exterior <sup>2</sup>	NO	NO	YES	YES
Retaining walls	NO if wall does not extend above upper grade level	YES if permit required	NO if <2'-0" in height	YES if >4'-0" in height
Roof covering replacement	NO if limited to covering only	NO	YES	NO <sup>1</sup>
Sheds	NO if <120 sq ft, <10'-0" height and located in rear yard	YES if size limitations exceeded	NO if <200 sq ft footprint	YES if permit required
Siding	NO	NO	YES	NO <sup>1</sup>
Sprinklers, modified / relocated	NO	NO	YES	NO <sup>1</sup>
Sprinklers, new	NO	NO	YES	YES
Stairs, exterior <sup>2</sup>	NO	NO	YES	YES
Swimming pool, above ground/in-ground	NO	NO	YES	NO <sup>1</sup>
Site work paving, grading	NO unless new parking is established	YES	YES if area of disturbance exceeds 5,000 sq. ft.	YES for grading plans

<sup>1</sup>Shall comply with applicable EZ permit standard <sup>2</sup>Maximum area of landings limited to 36 square feet <sup>3</sup>Building permit is required for exterior modifications if the building is registered historic



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## Do I need a Contractor?

A homeowner who resides on the premises may perform all work except as noted below:

- Structural work with potential impact on an adjacent property or walkway
- Electrical, plumbing, and sprinkler work
- Installation of a warm air appliance connected to a chimney or a flue

If homeowner is performing work, he/she is required to provide a driver's license for proof of residency.

## What type of contractor must I hire?

Electrical work must be performed by a licensed electrical contractor, plumbing work must be performed by a registered master plumber, and sprinkler work must be performed by a fire suppression contractor.

A warm air installer must complete all work involving appliances connected to a chimney or flue.

A state registered home improvement contractor may perform work on existing one- or two-family dwelling, provided that the has a Philadelphia Commercial Activity License and required levels of general liability, automobile, and workman's compensation insurance.

A Philadelphia Contractor's License is required to perform all other work.

## How do I select a contractor?

All Contractors working on existing residential properties must register with the PA Attorney General's Office and adhere to requirements for contract content of every job with a cost of work greater than \$500. You may search for registered contractor at [hicsearch.attorneygeneral.gov](http://hicsearch.attorneygeneral.gov).

All Philadelphia contractor licenses may be verified through [phila.gov/LI](http://phila.gov/LI).

### → TIP BOX

#### Hiring a contractor

Requires a written contract that clearly identifies which party is responsible for obtaining permits and project schedule.

Request proof of insurance.

Inquire about your contractor's violation history.



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## Do I need an architect or engineer?

**Zoning plans** are typically not required to be sealed by an architect or engineer.

**Building plans** are required to be sealed by a registered design professional with the following exceptions:

- A non-structural alteration with an associated cost of work of less than \$25,000.

**Electrical plans** are required to be sealed by a professional engineer under the following circumstances:

- Any installation where the connected load is 100 kw and/or 400 amps or more
- When upgrading service in existing building when load is 100 kw and/or 400 amps or more

**Most plumbing plans are** not required to be sealed by a design professional.

**A homeowner or his agent may prepare all other plans**, provided that they are of professional quality, drawn to scale, and comply with minimum sheet size, even when the design professional is not required.

### → TIP BOX

#### How may I find a design professional?

Many professional organizations maintain a public database of services provided by memberships. A listing of local architects maybe accessed through the website of the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects: [aiaphiladelphia.org/find-architect](http://aiaphiladelphia.org/find-architect)

You may also verify your architect or engineer's license through the Pennsylvania Department State's website: [licensepa.state.pa.us](http://licensepa.state.pa.us)





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