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Toronto Building

Homeowner's Guide to Building Permits

Making our city's buildings safe, healthy, accessible, and sustainable



toronto.ca/building

Safe, healthy, accessible, and sustainable buildings are critical to making Toronto a great place to live.

Permits for construction, along with inspections from City of Toronto inspectors, assist in upholding the standards that make our buildings among the safest and healthiest in the world.


This guide provides a general outline of the building permit process and will help first time applicants complete their projects. It summarizes many of the applicable regulations but it does not and is not meant to provide an exhaustive accounting of all potential requirements. Each application and situation is reviewed and evaluated on its own particular facts.

If you have questions specific to your project call 416-397-5330 or visit one of Toronto Building's Customer Service Counters.

Toronto Building Homeowner's Guide to Building Permits

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Why are building permits necessary?

Building permits help protect you, your home, and the interests of your community by making sure the project is structurally sound and follows the Ontario Building Code, municipal zoning and other applicable laws.

Whether you are building a new home or renovating an existing one, you want to make sure the result is safe and legal for you and any future occupants.

Our buildings are getting safer! Due to continuously improving Building Code standards, fire education, and other prevention measures, the number of fires in Ontario resulting in an injury, fatality or dollar loss fell by 35 percent between 2003 and 2013 (Source: Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal and Emergency Management)



When is a building permit required?

Most construction projects require the property owner to apply for and obtain a building permit.

Specifically, a permit is required when you are:

1. Building a new structure that is larger than ten metres squared (108 square feet).
2. Building any addition to an existing structure.
3. Renovating, including alterations that affect your building's compliance with building regulations (known as *Material Alteration**).
4. Demolishing all, or part of, a building.
5. Installing new, or altering existing, mechanical or plumbing systems.

***Material Alteration** refers to alterations that will affect your project's compliance with building regulations. For example, if a project involves alterations to the structural design of the building; mechanical, electrical, plumbing services; fire separations; and existing fire protection systems; and/or a change to the use of a building.

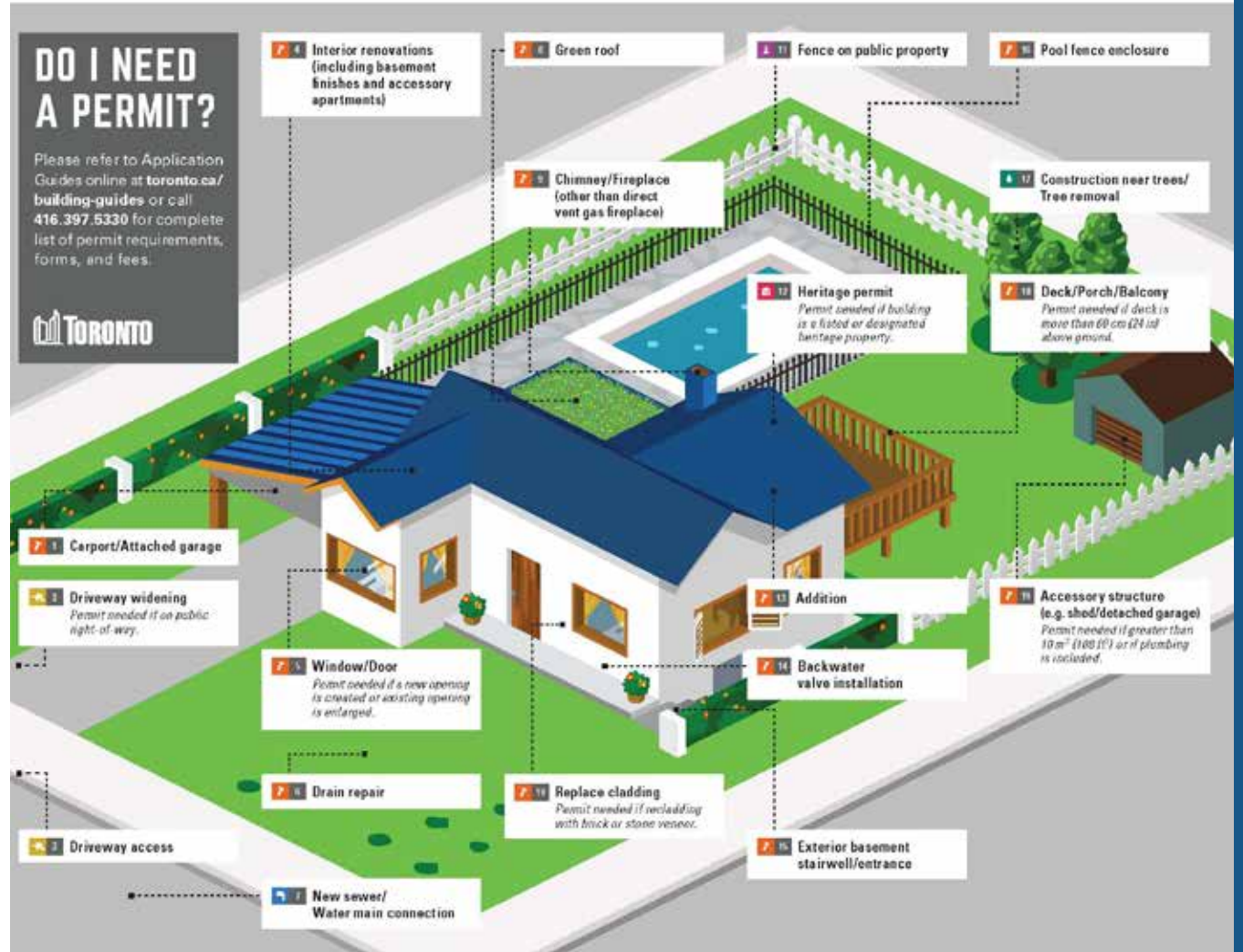
Work that requires a building permit:

Generally, all of the following work requires a building permit before beginning construction:

- Carport/attached garage
- Interior renovations including:
 - basement finishes
 - accessory apartments or the addition of a second suite
 - new or altered plumbing or mechanical system
- Window/door (if a new opening is created or existing opening is enlarged)
- Drain repair
- Green roof
- Chimney/fireplace (other than direct vent gas fireplace)
- Recladding with brick or stone veneer
- An addition
- Backwater valve installation
- Exterior basement stairwell or entrance
- Pool fence enclosure
- Deck/porch/balcony (if the deck is more than 60 centimetres (24 inches) above the ground)
- Accessory structure (if greater than ten square metres, such as a garage)

Examples of when a permit is not required can be found online at www.toronto.ca/building-permit-required

Please note, even if you do not require a building permit, compliance with the Zoning Bylaw is required.



How do I get a building permit?

Every project is unique and your building permit process is determined by the scope of your project. Generally, the permitting process has five steps:



Determining if your project complies with zoning and applicable laws.



Drafting your own plans or **hiring** a qualified designer to prepare your application and drawings.



Applying for a building permit application to the City of Toronto and obtaining a permit.



Starting construction and **calling** for your inspections.



Closing your permit by **calling** for your final inspection.

Getting your permit



Determining whether your project complies with zoning

Every property and every project is unique. Before beginning your project, you must know whether the work you plan on doing will comply with the Zoning Bylaw.

Research your property. To determine building size limits, setbacks, parking, and other zoning requirements, view the City of Toronto's harmonized Zoning Bylaw online at toronto.ca/zoning.

You will also need to research the former Zoning Bylaws that are still in effect. You can view these bylaws by visiting one of Toronto Building's Customer Service counters. Customer Service counters are open Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Upon arrival, visitors sign in to secure their place in line. Visitors should sign in before 3:30 p.m. to ensure service.

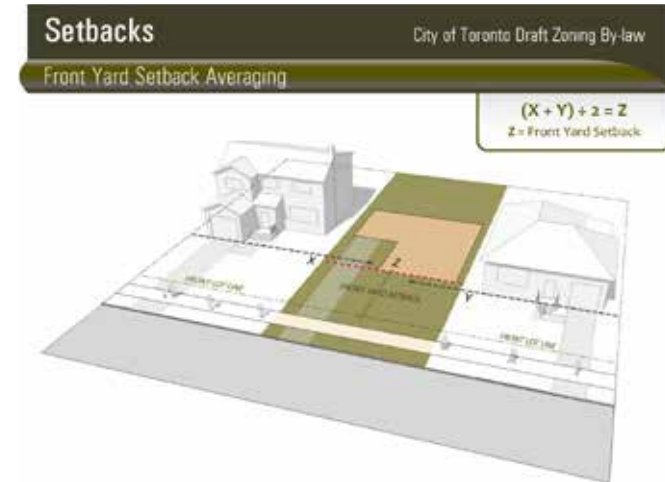
Toronto Building Customer Service Locations

Toronto City Hall 100 Queen Street West Ground Floor	North York Civic Centre 5100 Yonge Street Ground Floor	Etobicoke 2 Civic Centre Court, 1st Floor	Scarborough Civic Centre 150 Borough Drive 3rd Floor
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Apply for a preliminary zoning review. The City of Toronto offers a service called preliminary zoning review, in order for you to determine whether your project complies with the zoning requirements for your property before applying for a building permit.

The preliminary zoning review is not mandatory, but getting a preliminary zoning review means that when you are ready to apply for your building permit, it can be processed faster.

Toronto Building offers two types of preliminary zoning reviews for residential projects: a **Zoning Certificate Review** and a **Preliminary Project Review**. The highlights and benefits of each are outlined online at toronto.ca/apply-zoning.



Find more illustrations, such as the one above, that show you the basics of the Zoning Bylaw at toronto.ca/zoning.

Request building records. If someone has done work on your property, you may be able find copies of the site plans, surveys, drain plans, and building plans in our records. Learn how to access those records by applying for a routine disclosure at toronto.ca/building-records.

Getting your permit

Other municipal approvals



When doing any work, you need to consider the impact on trees.

For any property listed on the Toronto Heritage Register, you must get Heritage Approval before starting work.

Street construction permit information

Streets are public property and the City needs to ensure that they are protected.



If you plan to undertake any landscaping work within the public right of way (the area beyond your property line), you need a **Landscaping Permit** prior to starting work. If you plan to store construction materials or containers on the street, you need a **Street Occupation Permit**.

The City of Toronto also requires homeowners to provide a security deposit, generally known as a **Municipal Road Damage Deposit** in case any work damages the sidewalk.

Tree Permit



A permit is required if you plan on removing or may damage any trees on your property. The City of Toronto's **Tree Protection Policy and Specifications for Construction Near Trees** are online at: toronto.ca/trees.

Heritage Permit



When a **Heritage Permit** is required, the review occurs in parallel to the building permit review process. To determine if your property is a listed or designated property, search the City of Toronto's Heritage Register at <http://app.toronto.ca/HeritagePreservation/>.

Contact

Transportation Services

Etobicoke York (416) 394-8418 | North York (416) 395-6303 |
Toronto and East York (416) 392-7877 | Scarborough (416) 396-7505

Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Etobicoke York (416-338-6596) | North York
(416) 395-6670 | Toronto and East York (416)
392-7391 | Scarborough (416) 396-5131

Heritage Preservation Services

416-392-1975
heritagepreservation@toronto.ca

Getting your permit

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)



If you live close to a stream, river, valley, or watercourse of any kind, a wetland or on the waterfront, you may need approval from the TRCA before proceeding with any work.

The TRCA regulates and may prohibit work from taking place within valley and stream corridors, wetlands and associated areas of the Lake Ontario waterfront.

If the proposed work is located within a regulated area, the owner must apply for a **Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses permit** from the TRCA.

Are you in a TRCA-regulated area?

You can use the regulation area search tool to find out by visiting <http://trca.on.ca/planning-services-permits/regulation-area-search.dot>

TRCA Planning and Development Inquiries

Planning and Development

Phone: 416-661-6600 Extension 5271 or 5221

Fax: 416-661-6898

Email: planning&permits@trca.on.ca

TYPICAL PROCESS:

TRCA receives permit application, including appropriate studies and supporting documentation.

TRCA conducts site visit (if required) and reviews permit application regarding:

- Development affecting the control of flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches, pollution or conservation of land.
- Interference and/or alterations to wetlands, shorelines and watercourses.

Application revised and resubmitted (if required).

TRCA confirms all issues and concerns have been addressed.

Coordination with other agencies (e.g. DFO)

Recommendation of approval forwarded to TRCA's Executive Committee.*

Executive Committee approves permit.

TRCA issues permit.

*Recommendation of refusal forwarded to Hearing Board

Getting your permit



The Committee of Adjustment

Your project may not comply with local zoning bylaws, but you have options.

You can make adjustments to your plan to comply with the bylaws, or you can apply for relief from the zoning requirements from the **Committee of Adjustment. This relief is known as a minor variance.**

The Committee of Adjustment is an administrative tribunal responsible for making decisions on minor variances from the Zoning Bylaw independent from City Council. The Minor Variance process involves a public hearing.

The Committee of Adjustment for the City of Toronto is divided into four panels that serve each of the four Districts. The members of each panel are citizens appointed by Toronto City Council.

The process for applying for a minor variance is shown on the opposite page. A key step in the process is a public hearing. Hearings are held regularly in each of the four districts.

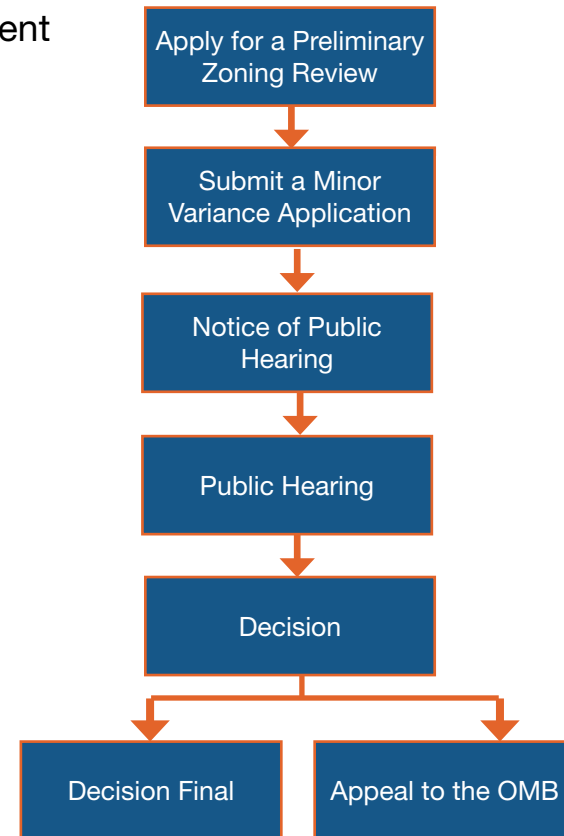
The meeting schedules are online at toronto.ca/planning/comm_adj.htm.

Committee of Adjustment Process

When making an application for a minor variance to the Committee of Adjustment, there are **four tests** that you must answer to. These tests have been established in the *Planning Act* and have been tested in the courts.

The **four tests** are:

1. Is the variance minor?
2. Is it appropriate for development of the site?
3. Is the variance within the intent of the Official Plan?
4. Is the variance within the intent of the Zoning Bylaw?



Getting your permit



Drafting your plans

When submitting drawings to the City, it is important that they are complete and of high quality. Sketches are not acceptable drawings. A plan examiner can only approve a project when all of the information is on the drawings.

Hiring a Designer. The Ontario Building Code requires that designers preparing plans are qualified and registered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. You can confirm your designer's qualifications by accessing the QuARTS Public Search Registry at <https://www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/BCINSearchWeb/search.html>.

The Ontario Building Code requires designers to provide information about their qualifications, (as required under the Ontario Building Code certification process), design responsibility, as well as their **Building Code Identification Number** (BCIN) on every document submitted for a building permit.

This template or something similar should be incorporated onto the drawings, preferably in the title block.

The undersigned has reviewed and takes the responsibility for this design, and has the qualifications and meets the requirements set out in the Ontario Building Code to be a designer.		
QUALIFICATION INFORMATION Required unless design is exempt under 2.17.5.1. of the building code		
NAME	SIGNATURE	BCIN
REGISTRATION INFORMATION Required unless design is exempt under 2.17.5.1. of the building code		
FIRM NAME		BCIN

Hiring an Architect or Engineer. Architects are qualified and registered by the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) and Engineers are qualified by the Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO). Architects and Engineers are not required to be registered or qualified with the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Doing it yourself. If you have a good working knowledge of house construction and the Ontario Building Code, you may design a residential project intended for your own use. In some cases, such as if you plan on lowering a basement floor (underpin existing foundation walls), you may be required to hire an Engineer to prepare the drawings for you.



Getting your permit



Obtaining a property survey and preparing your lot grading plan

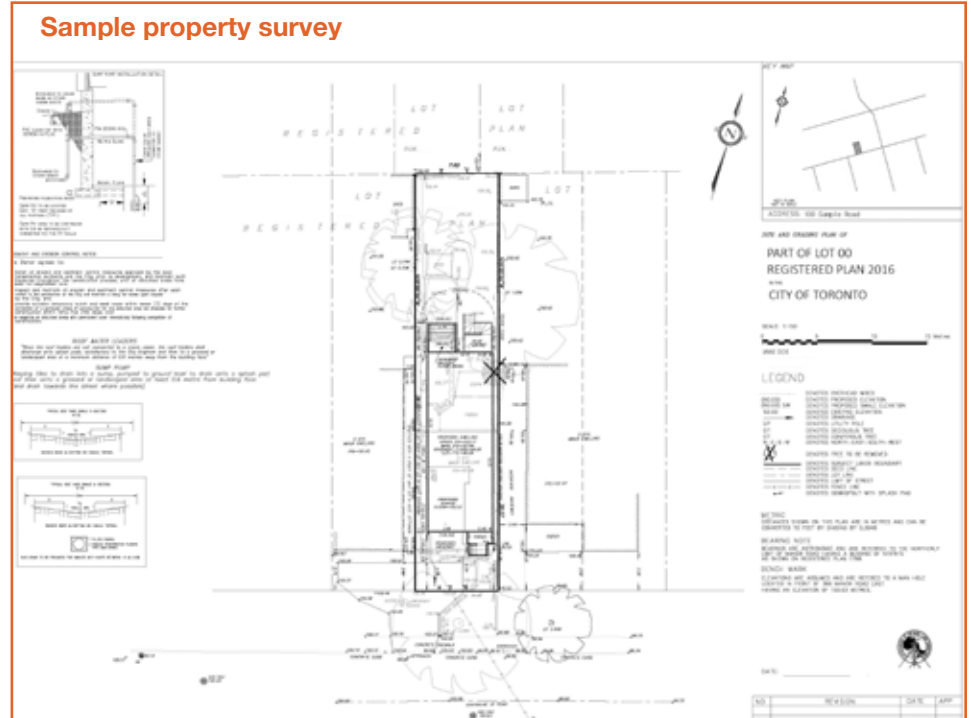
In addition to the drawings that show **how** the project will be built, you will need to provide drawings that show **where** the project will be built. There are three key documents that show plan examiners how your project affects your neighbours, your neighbourhood, and property.

A property survey is a formal legal document prepared and sealed by a registered Ontario Land Surveyor that describes your property. It is used to establish the accurate dimensions of your lot, as well as the location of your building on that lot. It is not the same as a **lot grading plan or site plan**, so make sure you do not confuse them.

If you require a new property survey, contact a private land surveying company which can provide you with this service. Land surveying companies can be found in the Yellow Pages under “Surveyors – Land,” or by visiting the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors (www.aols.org).

A site plan shows where the proposed work will be built on a site. A site plan is not sealed by a surveyor and is required in addition to a property survey.

A lot grading plan, like a property survey, provides information on the lot such as dimensions of the lot lines, the location of any existing and/or proposed buildings, but also shows proposed changes to the elevations on the property. A grading plan is required if you are building a new house.



A lot grading plan must be prepared by a lot grading consultant. A lot grading consultant can be any of the following:

- an Ontario Land Surveyor;
- a Civil Engineer registered in Ontario;
- an Architect registered in Ontario;
- a registered Landscape Architect;
- or, a member of A.A.T.O or O.A.C.E.T.T.

Getting your permit



Other drawings that may be required.

For a complete list of required documentation and general information required for your project, visit toronto.ca/building-application-guides or call Toronto Building at 416-397-5330.

Cross section

A cross section is a cut-away view of the building from the footings to the roof. The cross section is required to show the building materials and how they relate to each other.

Elevations

Elevations show all exterior views of a building. Elevation drawings may be required for any project that would alter the exterior of your house.

Floor plans

Floor plans are required for each floor level that is affected by the proposed work. For additions to existing buildings, floor plans of all or part of the existing building may be required.

HVAC design

A Heating/Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) design is required for all new mechanical systems serving each dwelling unit. Some additions may also require a completed HVAC design.

Roof plan

Existing and new roof and ceiling framing must be indicated on the plans. If engineered roof trusses are going to be used then the truss layout and designs are required to be submitted with the building permit. Also, any hip or girder trusses must be noted on the floor plans.





How do I make an application?

You can submit your application two ways:

- 1 By **email*** to bldapplications@toronto.ca, or
- 2 **In-person** at Toronto Building customer service counters Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You must sign in by 3:30 pm.

To begin processing your application, you must include all of the required forms, drawings and, if required, site plans and grading plans.

Filling out an application might seem simple, but often there are additional types of information and approvals that you have to provide with the permit application form for your application to be considered as complete.

A full list of [Application Guides](#) for different types of building permits can be found online at toronto.ca/building-guides.

*Most residential permit applications may be submitted by email. For a full list of projects eligible for email submission, visit toronto.ca/apply-building.

Getting your permit



Example: An application for a deck, veranda, or porch

The following forms must be submitted as part of your plans. Forms can be downloaded online at: toronto.ca/building-forms.

- 1. Application for a Permit to Construct or Demolish:** Used to capture project information to begin processing the permit application.
- 2. Schedule 1: Designer Information -** Used to identify who is responsible for the design of the project.*
- 3. Tree Declaration -** Used by Parks, Forestry, and Recreation to determine if a protected tree will be affected by the project.

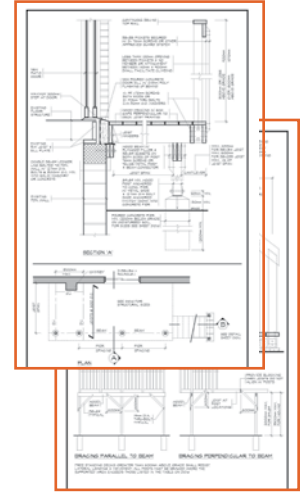
*Schedule 1 is not required to be completed by a holder of a license, temporary licence, or a certificate of practice, issued by the Ontario Association of Architects. Schedule 1 is also not required to be completed by a holder of a license to practise, a limited licence to practise, or a certificate of authorisation, issued by the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario

The image shows three overlapping screenshots of permit application forms. The top form is the 'Application for a Permit to Construct or Demolish' (Form 101), which includes fields for project name, address, and contact information. The middle form is 'Schedule 1: Designer Information', which identifies the designer and their qualifications. The bottom form is the 'Tree Declaration' form, which includes a table for recording tree details.

Tree No.	Tree Name	Tree Species	Tree Size (DBH)	Tree Location	Tree Status
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

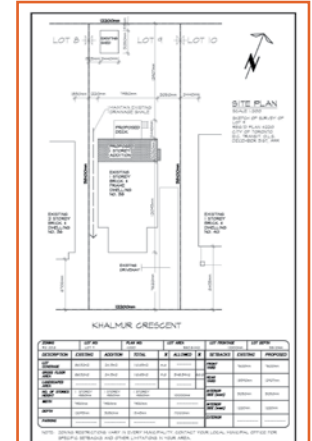
Plans for decks and verandas must show the following:

- Details of footings, including footing size, spacing, depth, height above grade and frost protection details.
- Sizes and locations of all columns; sizes, locations and spans of all beams.
- Stair construction details, including height and depth of stair treads and headroom above stairs.
- Guard construction details, including information about openings and the location of the guards with respect to stairways, landings, and edges of the proposed platform.



A site plan must show the following:

- Property lines, lot area, rights-of-way or easements (referenced to a current survey).
- Location of existing/proposed buildings with overall dimensions including setback dimensions to property lines and adjacent buildings.
- Summary of permitted and proposed zoning provisions to include lot area, building area (GFA), coverage, and grade elevations to confirm height.
- Dimensions of parking areas, driveways, hard & soft landscape treatments, accessory structures (sheds, decks, detached garages, etc).



Getting your permit



Residential FASTRACK

Fastrack is an enhanced Building Permit service that aims to either issue a **building permit or a **notice** outlining all the items that are not in compliance with the Building Code or Zoning Bylaws within **five business days**.**

The following projects qualify for the Residential FASTRACK service:

- additions with a total floor area up to 100 square metres
- minor interior alterations
- second suite to a residential dwelling
- converting two or three dwelling units into a single dwelling unit
- decks, verandas, porches and canopies
- garages and carports
- accessory structures (such as gazebos and storage sheds)
- basement entrances, underpinning
- pool fence enclosures
- fire damage repairs
- plumbing permits for residential dwellings
- HVAC for Residential FASTRACK permits after issuance of related building permits
- revisions to Residential FASTRACK Permits

An Application Examiner can inform you if your project is eligible for Residential FASTRACK when you make your application.

The different types of building permits

Building Permits are issued for different things, so you may have only one project, but multiple building permits.

For example, the City of Toronto issues the following types of permits, three of which are pictured below, for houses. The three letters on the permit placard indicate the permit type, while the final two letters indicate the type of work.

- Building Permit (BLD) for a Small Residential Project (SR)
- Plumbing Permit (PLB) for Plumbing System (PS)
- Heating and Ventilation Permit (HVA) for a Mechanical System (MS)



Getting your permit



Building Permit Fees

The fees for your proposal will vary with the type of work you are doing. A list of all of the fees can be found at toronto.ca/building-fees.

The following is a partial list of how some of the fees are calculated:

- For a new house, your fees will be based on the total floor area of the house, in dollars (\$) per square metre. This fee includes any proposed decks, fireplaces, or porches.
- For an addition to an existing house, your fees will be charged based on the floor area of the proposed work, in dollars (\$) per square metre.
- For a new deck, fireplace, or detached garage, you will be charged a flat fee, regardless of the size of the deck, fireplace, or garage you are building.
- For a finished basement, you will be charged based on the floor area of the proposed work, in dollars (\$) per square metre.

No permit will be issued until all fees are paid.

To pay your fees from home, call the Toronto Building Fee Payment Line, at (416) 397-5222.

Refunds

If you change your mind and no longer want to continue with your project, you are able to request a refund, except if the fees charged are less than the minimum fee. The refund will be calculated as follows:

- 75%** if the application is cancelled prior to review.
- 50%** if the application is cancelled prior to permit issuance.
- 40%** if a permit has been issued and the project has been cancelled, minus the minimum fee for each field inspection performed up to the cancellation date.



Getting your permit



Plan Review Process

Once you submit your application, Toronto Building's Plan Examiners will need some time to review it for compliance.

Zoning Review



The Zoning Examiner will review your proposal in order to determine compliance with the Zoning Bylaw and municipal and provincial building regulations (which are known as Applicable Law).

Building Code Review



The Building Code Examiner will then review your plans in order to determine compliance with all of the requirements of the Ontario Building Code.



You can follow the progress of a permit through the plan review and inspection stage by checking the **permit status** at <http://www.toronto.ca/building-permit-status>

Once your permit is reviewed, there are two possible outcomes:

1. Your permit is issued!

Everything is in order and you may begin building in accordance with the approved plans!



2. Your application does not satisfy certain requirements

If compliance is a problem, you will be issued a notice documenting why your project does not comply. You will have to submit further information or a revision of your application if you want it to continue.



How do I book an inspection?



The Ontario Building Code requires that a person who is issued a building permit notify the City when they reach each mandatory stage for **inspection**.

The Toronto Building Division conducts inspections of new construction and renovations.

We work with you and your builder to ensure that your project meets health and safety standards and matches your approved building permit plans.

Depending on the nature of your project, inspectors will likely visit your site several times.

Inspections



Tips to follow during construction

It is important for you to keep nearby residents informed of your building plans at all times.

Your construction site must be kept safe for both neighbours and workers.

- **Call before you dig (1-800-400-2255 or visit www.on1call.com).** Contact your local utilities to locate underground services before you start digging.
- Protect your neighbours' **property, trees and plants**. Make sure construction operations and trucks are kept away from your neighbours' landscaping. Put protective boarding or fences around trees and shrubs.
- Enclose your construction site with **protective fencing** to restrict access (required by the Toronto Municipal Code).
- Place **portable toilets** well away from your neighbours' homes and out of sight.
- Do not **litter** your neighbours' property with garbage bins or debris.
- Respect your neighbours' **parking needs**. Do not park any construction vehicles on your front lawn or block neighbours' driveways.
- Do not **burn** construction waste.
- Do not leave any potentially **dangerous** building materials, equipment or vehicles on the site unattended.
- Insist that your workers wear and use **proper safety equipment**, such as approved hard hats and protective work boots.

When to call for an inspection

You can call Toronto Building TelePermit seven days a week at any time to request, cancel or reschedule an inspection.

Toronto Building TelePermit Inspection Booking Number

Toronto and East York District 416-338-0700	North York District 416-395-7541	Etobicoke York District 416-394-8055	Scarborough District 416-396-7322
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When will the inspector arrive?

A minimum of **48 hours'** notice is required when booking an inspection for your site. Inspections are held from Monday to Friday during normal business hours.

When conducting mandatory inspections, building inspectors must be able to see the part of work under inspection. Any building elements covered before the required mandatory inspection has been made may need to be uncovered for inspection and passed before the completion of your project.

Inspections



Required Inspections for Building, Plumbing, and Mechanical Permits

Below is a list of inspections typically required. Additional inspections may also be required depending on the scope of work. Please consult with your inspector for further information.

Required Building Inspections	When to Call for Inspection
Footings	at completion of formwork and prior to pouring concrete
Foundations*	at completion of footings and foundations and prior to backfill
Structural Framing*	at completion and prior to insulating
Insulation and vapour barrier	at completion and prior to drywall
Fire Separation	at completion of all required fire separations and closures and prior to drywall
Occupancy	prior to occupancy, only applicable to new houses
Final interior	at completion of all interior construction associated with the issued permit
Final exterior	at completion of all exterior construction associated with the issued permit
*Construction may be done in phases. Such projects may require additional inspections.	

Required Plumbing Inspection	When to Call for Inspection
Drains	at completion of underground rough-in, prior to covering (ball test required)
Rough-in, drainage and venting systems	at completion of drainage systems and venting systems, prior to covering (leak test required)
Rough-in, water distribution system	at completion of water distribution system, prior to covering (leak test required)
Final	at completion of installation of all required fixtures

Required HVAC** Inspection	When to Call for Inspection
Rough-in HVAC/air extraction	at completion of ductwork and piping for heating and air-conditioning systems, prior to covering
Final	at completion of all heating and air-conditioning systems
** Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning	

Closing your permit



Following your final inspection, confirm your permit has been closed by calling the **Toronto Building TelePermit number.**

It is your responsibility as the owner of a property to ensure that all inspections are carried out, including the final inspection, and that your **permit is closed** upon project completion.

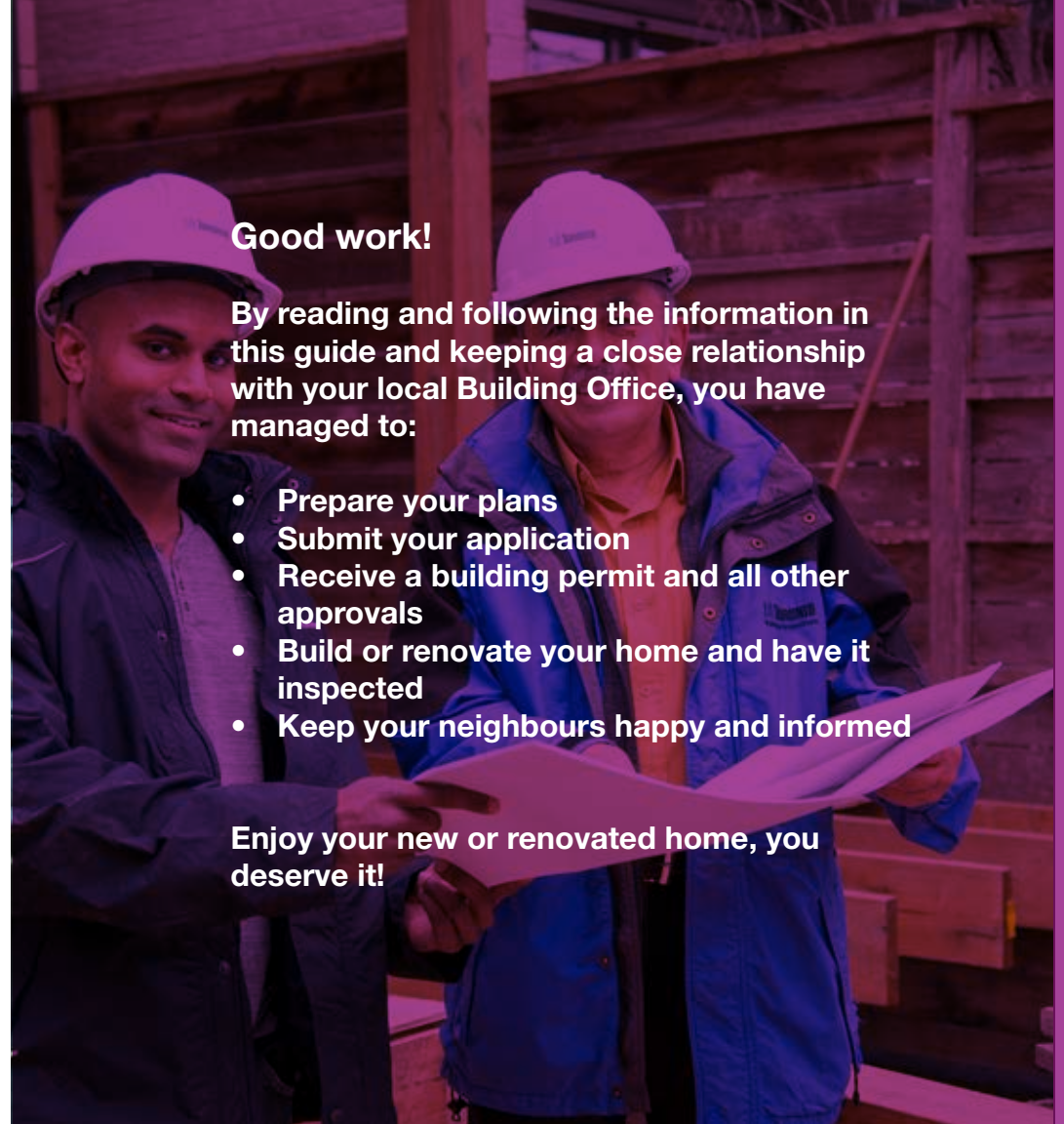
Your **permit is closed** when all necessary inspections have been completed and the work you carried out is safe and meets the requirements of the Building Code and other applicable law, according to the inspector.

Good work!

By reading and following the information in this guide and keeping a close relationship with your local Building Office, you have managed to:

- **Prepare your plans**
- **Submit your application**
- **Receive a building permit and all other approvals**
- **Build or renovate your home and have it inspected**
- **Keep your neighbours happy and informed**

Enjoy your new or renovated home, you deserve it!





Call **3•1•1**