

DO I NEED A ZONING PERMIT?

Zoning permits are required whenever a property owner intends to build a structure, add onto a building or structure, alter a building or structure, demolish or move a structure, and/or change the use of land or buildings. So, if you're planning on making improvements to your property, the answer to the question, "Do I need a permit?" is probably yes.

A permit is issued when the property owner, through submission of an application and supporting documentation, (such as a plot plan) demonstrates the proposed improvements are in compliance with the zoning ordinance, i.e., the proposed shed will be set-back far enough from the property boundary. Acquisition of a zoning permit prior to the start of work is a legal obligation of the property owner. Issuance of a zoning permit demonstrates the proposed improvement is lawful, and as such, obtaining a zoning permit helps to protect the value of the investment.

Most people are aware that a permit is required to build a house or garage, but sometimes it's not so clear when contemplating projects of a smaller scope. The lists below identify some common residential improvements and whether or not a zoning permit is required.

The following projects need a zoning permit:

- Building a deck.
- Building a patio.
- Constructing a pergola or trellis.
- Building a shed, or having a prefab shed installed on your property.
- Enclosing an existing screened-in porch.
- Building a roof over an existing deck.
- Building/installing a fence.
- Finishing an unfinished basement.
- Finishing an unfinished attic.
- Starting a business at your residence.
- Construction/installation of above-ground and in-ground swimming pools.

The following projects do not need a zoning permit:

- Planting a garden.
- Planting trees and landscaping (unless it involves construction of walls and/or hardscaping).
- Constructing/installing a garden pond. Note: large ponds involving alteration of drainage patterns and storm water flow require a permit.
- Erecting a swing set or trampoline.
- Placement of a seasonal child's wading pool, provided it is less than 24" deep.
- Replacing siding.
- Replacing roofing.

- Replacing windows and doors, provided the size of the openings are not changing and the work does not involve alterations, e.g., changing a door opening into a window or a window into a door.
- Home repairs, cosmetic improvements and maintenance.

Keep in mind: In addition to the requirement of a zoning permit, many of the projects listed above may also require a building permit in accordance with the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code, and sometimes building permits may be required when a zoning permit is not, such as for changes to plumbing or electrical work.