

What Do I Do To Get Started?

Start by taking a realistic look at the project. Decide if you can complete the work successfully.

Some work may seem quite simple to the non-professional, but ends up requiring special skills and tools....and often a lot more time than planned.

A “do-it-yourself” project that gets out of hand, can easily end up costing more money than hiring a professional contractor would have been.

Do I Need Permits and Inspections?

Our inspectors are available to provide information about how the building codes relate to your specific project.

Getting your completed project inspected insures you that the work was performed in accordance with standard construction practices.

If a problem should occur in the future, especially after you have sold the house, it will help to limit your liability.

Zoning Permit vs. Building Permit

Non-structural work of less than \$5,000 in value requires a zoning permit. An example of non-structural work would be adding or moving a non-loadbearing wall in your home.

Non-structural work over \$5,000 requires a building permit.

Structural (load-bearing) work over \$1,000 requires a building permit. Structural work is

adding a deck or rooms, enclosing a carport or porch, and changing load-bearing walls in your home.

Other Required Permits?

Electrical Work

The only work which does not require an electrical permit is changing fuses in an electrical panel or changing light bulbs.

All other electrical work requires an electrical permit: adding, changing, or replacing fixtures or outlets, or replacing your main electrical panel.

Plumbing Work

Repairing or replacing plumbing fixtures does not require a plumbing permit.

However, each plumbing fixture in your home has a “trap” designed to prevent sewer gases from entering your home.

Any work downstream of this trap or changes in your plumbing design requires a permit.

Heating/Air Conditioning Work

Any work to a heating and cooling system other than changing out filters or component parts requires a heating permit.

Changes or additions to your duct design requires a heating permit.

How to Hire a Contractor

1. Get recommendations from friends, colleagues, building supply stores, realtors, etc.

2. Get at least 3 references and call each. You may want to personally view the work. Ask if they were satisfied with the work.

3. Get a minimum of 3 bids from different contractors.

4. Ask each contractor to bid on identical work. To judge the quotes, make sure you are comparing “apples to apples.”

5. Call the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed against the contractor you have selected.

6. Have a mutually binding, written contract that spells out all terms and conditions of the work to be performed. Include a clause that the contractor has to purchase all required permits.

7. If you do not understand any part of your contract get the aid of an attorney.

8. Make sure that the contractor is covered by Workers’ Compensation Insurance for their employees. (Without it, you could be liable for any injuries incurred on your property.)

9. Check with the City of Winston-Salem Inspections Division (727-2624) to see if the contractor is properly licensed. Ask what permits are required for the work you plan to do.

10. Check with the City of Winston-Salem Revenue Department (727-2281) to see if your contractor has the proper business license(s).

11. Verify with the contractor that he/she has all required permits before work begins. Ask about the status of the inspections while the work is on-going.

Please Note:

Not all construction work requires a licensed general contractor, but almost all work requires a permit.

Unlicensed building contractors are restricted to performing work that does not exceed \$30,000 in total project cost, including labor and materials.

The Inspections Division checks each permit application to insure that only licensed contractors do work which requires a license.

Contractors are required to purchase permits and get inspections.

The Inspections Division inspects work for compliance with the North Carolina State Building Code.

If you need to apply for a building permit please refer to our brochure "*Building Permits for Single Family Homes*" for all the details.

Home Improvements

A Guide to Planning a "Do-It-Yourself" Project or Selecting a Contractor



Do you have:

- The skill to do the work?
- The interest to learn new skills?
- Sufficient time to complete the project?
- The budget to cover unforeseen expenses?
- Would you like to hire a contractor?

If you said "yes" to any of these questions, you may want to read the practical advice we have compiled for you.

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