

DOES MY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT REQUIRE A BUILDING PERMIT?

Note: industry jargon that you are likely to hear often is included in italics. Throw around these terms to impress your friends!

The quick answer is that unless it is a single-family residence or duplex, **every commercial construction project requires a building permit**. (There are some exceptions for commercial construction, but they are for work of such small scale that you probably aren't looking for an architect!) Most municipalities have a *local building authority* (LBA) which legally enforces some version of the *International Building Code* (IBC). The IBC, in turn, grants the local building authority the right to issue a building permit.



So, if we assume your construction project will require a building permit, let's discuss how to help you. When we complete the *construction documents* (CDs), they are submitted to the LBA for *plan review*. The plan review generally takes three to four weeks, depending on the municipality, and looks for conformance with all enforced codes and ordinances. The LBA may request changes (*revisions*) to the CDs. Once the CDs have been revised, a building permit is issued for construction. For a *fast-track* project, partially completed CDs may be submitted and, if there is enough scope covered to meet the satisfaction of the LBA, a *conditional building permit* may be issued for construction, which allows a specific portion of the building to be constructed.

The LBA's revisions can be numerous and some may be difficult to swallow. There is a lot of gray area in the codes and ordinances and every plan examiner or building inspector may interpret the code differently, which also differs from the architect's interpretation. Following the plan review, we often present arguments to the LBA on behalf of the owner. Our experience arguing these cases and navigating the building codes may save you thousands of dollars, construction delays and countless headaches.

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