

Do I need a Zoning Permit?

A zoning permit is required whenever a structure is to be erected, constructed, razed, moved, altered, rebuilt or enlarged or the use of a structure, land or water is established or changed for any purpose.

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 or replacing a roof.