

Frequently Asked Questions/ Building

Q. What is a building permit?

A. A building permit is a license that grants legal permission to begin construction of a building project. Permits and inspections are necessary to verify that local building and fire code standards are met. If they aren't, the public's health, safety and welfare may be at risk.

Q. What work requires a building permit?

Please call the building department to verify if your project needs a building permit. Almost all non-residential building projects need a permit. Many residential building projects need permits as well.

Most people know that new buildings, additions to existing structures, renovations, structural changes, demolitions and temporary buildings usually require building permits and inspections. Less obvious projects that may require a permit include swimming pools, decks, patios, driveways, sidewalks, fences, sheds, accessory buildings, roofing, siding, generators, electrical and plumbing alterations, or any projects involving property lines. This is not meant to be a complete list. Call to verify if your project requires a permit.

Q. What is a building permit application?

A. You will have to complete an application for a building permit. It will require basic information about the project, such as who will perform the work, what work will be done and how it will be done. The application process may also require you to submit drawings, plans, plats of survey or other documents for review. If the plans do not meet the City of Sandwich's applicable building codes and zoning ordinances, or other related requirements, the building official will explain what needs to be corrected. Applications are available at the front desk of City Hall.

Q. Is there a fee for a building permit?

A. To receive most permits, a fee will need to be paid. The fee helps defray the cost of the Building's department's time spent on the application, the review and inspection process. Fees vary and may not be able to be determined (as in the case of new homes, additions, major alterations, etc.) before the review has been completed. Smaller projects usually have a fixed fee. Fees must be paid in full **before** any permit will be issued and **before** any work can commence.

Q. When do I need to notify the Building Department about my project?

A. Most minor permits applications are processed within 48 hours. It is important to realize that it may take days or even weeks to process some building permits. It is unreasonable to assume that any permit application will be automatically moved to the forefront due to circumstances the department can't control. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide enough time for an application to be reviewed and a permit issued.

Q. Does the city need to inspect my project?

A. Yes. It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure the proper inspections have been scheduled, performed, and approved. Scheduling an inspection should be arranged 48 hours in advance. If after an inspection some of the work does not meet code requirements, a written list will be provided of the corrections that must be made to bring the work up to acceptable standards.

If work is covered (concrete, drywall, etc.) before an inspection was made, or if work progressed without required inspections, the uninspected work may be required to be undone so that an inspection can be made. Asserting it wasn't known that an inspection was required is both unfortunate and an unacceptable excuse. Any onsite deviations or changes from approved plans must be brought to the attention of the inspector (s). Approval may not be immediate and may require new plans or other documentation.

Q. What documents need to be on job site?

A. A permit needs to be on site. It does not need to be publicly displayed but must be readily available. Any building plans must be on site and readily available.

Q. What are my building setbacks?

A. The lot lines of your property (Plat of Survey) shows the corners and interior dimensions of the lot. Metal lot stakes are generally buried beneath the ground a few inches. The city does not locate them and may not have a plat of survey of your property. It is the responsibility of applicant/ owner to provide a current Plat of Survey if required. Depending on the zoning of property, present conditions, easements, etc. it is impossible to give one standard. A general rule of thumb is 35 feet for front yards, 10 feet for side yards and 30 feet for rear yards. See Municipal Code for more information. No accessory buildings may be erected in an easement.

Q. What times are available for inspections?

A. While office hours are from 8:00 AM until 5:PM Monday through Friday, inspections are only available from 8:30 AM until 4:00PM Monday through Friday. No inspections are performed on Saturdays, Sundays or City of Sandwich holidays. Inspection requests require 48-hour advance notice.

Q. Does the city provide any project design services?

A. The city does not design any plans or procedures. The city only comments after a review of submitted materials from applicant/ owner has been completed. In addition, it is considered a conflict of interest for the building department to offer suggestions/ names of contractors, tradesmen, design professionals, etc.

Q. Who does the plan/project review (s) before permits are issued?

A. The city of Sandwich building department performs most permit reviews, but sometimes must send them to the fire department, an outside architectural service and/ or an engineering firm. Depending on the complexity of the intended project, more reviews may be required from additional sources or new reviews may need performed on resubmitted information, incurring additional fees . It is the responsibility of the applicant to pay the city of Sandwich for all review fees.

Q. I have questions that are not answered here. What can I do?

A. Call the building department (815-786-8802) and request more information or ask the questions on an email. (tsteffens@sandwich.il.us)