

Building Safety Division FAQs for Homeowners

Planning and Development Services Department

www.lawrenceks.org

The Building Safety Division is responsible for enforcement of the City's adopted building construction and remodeling codes. The City's code adopting the [2015 Edition of the International Residential Code \(IRC\)](#) for one- and two family construction and remodeling can be found at the City's website. The 2015 IRC is available for review in the Building Safety Division office or at the local public library. Building Safety Division functions include review of building permit applications and plans/drawings, issuance of building permits, inspection of buildings and building systems during construction to verify compliance with applicable codes, issuance of Certificates of Occupancy upon completion of building projects, and administration of general contractor and trade contractor licensing regulations.

Below are frequently asked questions (FAQs) from homeowners about building permits, permit inspections, building codes and contractor licensing. Questions may also be directed to Building Safety via email at buildinginspections@lawrenceks.org, fax at (785) 832-3110 or phone at (785) 832-7700, option 2. Additional information is available on the [City's website](#).

What types of construction, remodeling or repair work requires a building permit?

A building permit is required for new building construction; building additions; most building alterations and remodeling; installation of prefabricated buildings; work that involves construction or reconstruction of walls; work that involves installation of new or replacement electrical systems or equipment, plumbing systems or equipment, or mechanical systems or equipment (such as heating or air conditioning systems or equipment); extension of electrical circuits, plumbing supply lines, drains or vents, or heating or air conditioning ductwork; fences over six (6) feet tall above grade; and concrete or masonry retaining walls or fences over four (4) feet tall measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall or fence.

Is there any type of work exempt from a building permit?

Yes, a listing of building [construction or remodeling work exempt from a building permit](#) by City Code can be found on the City's website. Generally, repair and maintenance work, such as carpeting, painting, wall paper, electrical outlet receptacle replacement and fixture replacement (sinks, stools, lighting fixtures); installation of vanities and cabinetry; construction of small uncovered decks 30" or less above ground and not above another building story; construction or installation of small accessory structures (200 square feet or less) used only for storage (and not for storage or parking of vehicles); roof shingle or siding replacement (where no sheathing, decking or structural framing is being replaced or reconstructed); or concrete flatwork (such as patios, driveways and sidewalks) does not require a building permit.

Who can apply for and obtain a building permit?

(1) A person or business possessing a current and valid City of Lawrence, Kansas general contractor or trade contractor license; **OR** **(2)** the owner-occupant of a single-family dwelling who will be performing their own work. To be considered an owner-occupant, the permit applicant must be the single-family homeowner who personally occupies, or will occupy, and undertakes the construction, alteration, repair, or maintenance of such homeowner's single-family residence or an accessory structure thereto.

Why does Lawrence require general contractors and trade contractors to be licensed?

The purpose of contractor licensing is to ensure that construction activities are performed by qualified and licensed contractors to meet the City's adopted code standards. Contractor licensing also ensures contractors are appropriately insured to protect the consumer and to provide workers' compensation for their employees.

If I decide to hire a general or trade contractor, how can I verify they are properly licensed?

Search our [database of contractors](#) currently licensed by the City of Lawrence to provide building construction services or contact Building Safety directly.

If I hire a person or company to re-roof (re-shingle) my house (work not requiring a building permit), is that person or company required to have a City of Lawrence contractor license?

No. Lawrence does not require persons or companies that re-roof or re-shingle houses to have a City contractor license. However, the Kansas Roofing Registration Act was enacted by the Kansas Legislature and signed by the Governor on April 22, 2013. Under the provisions of this law, on and after July 1, 2013, every "roofing contractor" must obtain a roofing contractor registration certificate from the Kansas Attorney General to legally provide commercial or residential roofing services for a fee in Kansas, and must provide and maintain insurance to protect the consumer and to provide workers' compensation for their employees. You can check the State's website to see if a roofing contractor is currently [registered with the State of Kansas](#).

If I want to obtain my own single-family, owner-occupant building permit, how do I proceed?

- (1) Prior to permit application, homeowner-occupants are encouraged to contact Building Safety staff with any questions about any proposed/pending project, the relevant code requirements for the project, and any permit application submittal and project plan review requirements.
- (2) Complete and submit a One- & Two-Family Dwelling Permit Application to the Building Safety Division for any new construction, addition, basement finish or other remodeling and/or mechanical/HVAC, electrical or plumbing project. If the proposed project is for mechanical/HVAC, electrical or plumbing work only, the appropriate Mechanical, Electrical or Plumbing Permit form should be completed and submitted to Building Safety. The appropriate [building or trade permit](#) form can be obtained from the Building Safety office or in a fillable PDF format on the City's website (near the bottom of the page). A completed [Owner/Occupant Form](#) must be submitted with the permit application, and can be obtained from the Building Safety office or online.

The applicant for a permit must provide an estimated construction project valuation at the time of application. The project valuation should be the total value of all proposed work, including materials and labor, and shall include the value of all finish work, painting, roofing, electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and any other permanent equipment being installed. The project valuation is used to compute the building permit fee (see following question and answer).

If your submitted permit application or Owner/Occupant Form is incomplete, or additional project plans, drawings or other information is needed to complete review of your application materials, you will be contacted by Building Safety Division staff to inform you of any additional information required.

- (3) Pay for and pick up your reviewed and approved building or trade permit from the Building Safety office. You will be notified by Building Safety staff when your permit application is approved.

How much is a building permit fee, and what services does the fee cover?

The building permit fee is based on the total valuation of the project, which is submitted with the permit application (see previous question and answer). As soon as the building permit project valuation has been provided by you and accepted by Building Safety staff, staff will calculate the fee and let you know the amount. The fee is due and payable when the permit is ready to be issued to you. A [building permit fee table](#) and [fee calculator](#) is available online.

The building permit fee covers the costs of permit processing, reviews of the building permit application and project plans/drawings, all required on-site building inspections during the project, and any required final inspection or required Certificate of Occupancy paperwork (for new dwellings).

How long does it take for my completed building permit application to be reviewed?

Submitted building permit applications are nearly always reviewed within five (5) business days, and generally within 1-2 days, on average.

When and how are required building permit inspections scheduled and completed?

When you pick up your approved building permit, you will be provided a building permit "job card" that lists the inspections required for your project. You will also be provided information as to when and how to schedule these required inspections. Required inspections can be scheduled by calling Building Safety at (785) 832-7700, option 2, before 5:00 PM on the business day prior to the requested inspection date, or via Building Safety's online "Citizen Access" system or automated, interactive telephone voice system up to 7:00 AM on the day of the requested inspection. Inspections are performed between approximately 9:00 – 11:30 AM, and from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Building Safety's experienced and nationally certified Building Inspectors are there to ensure your project is constructed to meet minimum code requirements, and to answer any questions you might have related to the project.

When will the building permit for my project be officially closed?

Once all required permit inspections have been approved, including a "final inspection", the permit will be closed. If the permit is for a new dwelling, a final Certificate of Occupancy will be emailed (or mailed) to you after the required final inspections have been approved and any required final reports from third-party inspectors (such as energy conservation certificates or blower door tests, or similar) have been submitted to and approved by Building Safety.

Although most fence construction is exempt from a building permit, are there other City code requirements I should be aware of?

Yes. Lawrence has a [City Code regarding fences](#), which can be found on the City's website.

Although concrete flatwork such as patios, sidewalks and driveways do not require a building permit, are there other City code requirements I should be aware of?

Yes, if the concrete flatwork involves the demolition, construction or replacement of a public sidewalk, street curb or driveway apron in the public street right-of-way abutting your lot, you should contact the City's Public Works Department at (785) 832-3123, or in City Hall, 6 E 6th Street, before doing any work. Minimum construction [standards/specifications](#) apply, and a permit from Public Works is required for a street curb cut and/or [driveway apron/curb installation](#). Additionally, if your project involves a new garage for vehicle parking and/or a new or additional driveway, the City's Land Development Code may require that the existing or new driveway be paved with a hard surface material such as asphalt or concrete.