

**ZONING
INFORMATION
BULLETIN NO 5**

Watertown Charter
Township
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Why Do I Need A Building Permit In Watertown Charter Township

The Planning and Zoning office helps to facilitate building and trades permits with the office of the Township Building Inspector. Watertown Township currently contracts with Municipal Inspections Services in Grand Ledge to handle the Township's building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing inspection service. Handling the permits in the Planning and Zoning office also helps save residents time and gas money, by not having to travel to the County Courthouse in St. Johns to pick up permits.

We occasionally hear grumbling from residents and contractors about having to get permits, schedule inspections and pay the fees. But permits serve a wide range of functions, not just for you, but for the township as a whole.

Having to get a permit is nothing new. In fact, building permits have been around since the country was founded. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both advocated for the development of building regulations. Today's building codes range in coverage from fire and structural safety, handicap accessibility, security, and energy conservation. Because of today's rampant changes in technology, building codes serve as a kind of clearinghouse to ensure that homeowners, builders and contractors are using the right tools and techniques for the job while also safeguarding homeowners from inferior products or installation practices.

Many aspects of building can present potential hazards to homeowners, customers or employees. Heating and cooling, electrical wiring, and sanitation facilities all pose a potential risk if not installed properly. Making sure these items are properly inspected reduces these risks.

Permits also help to protect your investment in your home. If you have completed work on your home without securing the proper permits, and your project does not comply with the Township's building code, there may be several impacts. Your homeowner's insurance may not cover the work. The insurer may also deny a claim, if, for example, it stemmed from an electrical fire and the wiring was installed without a permit. If you want to sell your house, and work was done without permits and without disclosure, you may open yourself up to a potential lawsuit if something were to happen.

Overall, building and trade permits are there for your family's safety, and for the safety of your guests. They reduce the potential spread of fire. They help you conserve energy and help the planet. They also protect future homebuyers who expect a reasonable guarantee the home they buy is safe.

A list of projects that do not require permits is available on our Web site. The Planning and Zoning office strives to keep the Web site updated, so check back often!