



Town of Kernersville Permit Guide

When is a permit required?

The following development activities within the Kernersville Town Limits and ETJ require a permit:

1. New business opening
2. Existing business relocating to a new location
3. Existing business expanding at the same location
4. New commercial or residential construction
5. Remodeling/renovation/alterations to an existing structure
6. Installation of exterior signage



Why are permits required?

1. To protect public safety and quality of life through administration of the North Carolina Building and Fire Codes.
2. To ensure proposed businesses operate in legally allowed locations and follow development guidelines through administration of the Town of Kernersville Unified Development Ordinance.

What permits are required?

1. For new and existing businesses making no alterations to their space or structure (not including paint and flooring) the following permits are required:
 - **Use & Occupancy Permit**
 - **Sign Permit** (if new signage is being installed)
2. For new and existing businesses performing new construction or structural alterations to their space, the following permits are required:
 - **Building Permit** (use and occupancy are verified as part of the building permit review and you do not need a separate permit)
 - **Sign Permit** (if new signage is being installed)
3. All businesses performing mechanical, plumbing, or electrical work to their space are required to pull the **corresponding trade permit**. This is in addition to any Use & Occupancy or Building permit required.

How are permits obtained?

- You can obtain your permit(s) by going online to: kernersvillenc.viewpointcloud.com
- Use & Occupancy and Sign Permit applications are located under "Business, Zoning, & Miscellaneous Permits."
- Building, Mechanical, Plumbing, and Electrical permit applications are located under "Construction & Development Permits."
- *It is important to note that required Use & Occupancy permits must be secured prior to occupying a commercial space. While business owners are allowed to apply for permits, it is ultimately the property owner's responsibility to ensure compliance.



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Permits Required

When is a building permit required?

- The construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, movement to another site, removal, demolition or change of occupancy type of any building unless specifically exempted... or
- Work specifically not exempted from the \$15,000 permit threshold².

When is a building permit not required?

- The construction, installation, repair, replacement, or alteration performed in accordance with the current edition of the North Carolina State Building Code and costing fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) or less in any single-family residence or farm building unless the work involves any of the following:
 - The addition, repair or replacement of load bearing structures. However, no permit is required for replacements of windows, doors, exterior siding, or the pickets, railings, stair treads, and decking of porches and exterior decks.
 - The addition (excluding replacement of like grade of fire resistance) of roofing.
- Residential accessory buildings where no dimension exceeds 12 feet. An accessory building is defined as a building that is roofed over and more than 50 percent of its exterior walls are enclosed. Examples include garages, storage buildings, workshops, boathouses, treehouses, and similar structures.³ A zoning permit would still be required to verify setbacks, height, utilities, etc. located on the property.

When is a plumbing permit required?

- A plumbing permit is required for installation, extension, relocation, replacement or general repair of any plumbing system unless specifically exempted.

When is a plumbing permit not required?

- Replacement of water heaters in one- or two-family dwellings, provided:
 - The energy use rate or thermal input is no greater than that of the water heater being replaced.
 - There is no change in fuel, energy source, location, routing or sizing of venting and piping.
 - The work is performed by a licensed plumbing contractor and installed in accordance with the current edition of the North Carolina State Building Code.

...or



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- The construction, installation, repair, replacement, or alteration performed in accordance with the current edition of the North Carolina State Building Code and costing fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) or less in any single-family residence or farm building unless the work involves the addition or change in the design of plumbing or the use of materials not permitted by the North Carolina Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings. However, no permit is required for replacements otherwise meeting the requirements of this subsection that do not change size or capacity.

When is a mechanical permit required?

- For installation, extension, alteration, or general repair of any heating or cooling equipment system.

When is an electrical permit required?

- For installation, extension, alteration, or general repair of any electrical wiring, devices, appliances, or equipment.

When is an electrical permit not required?

- In any one- or two-family dwelling unit a permit shall not be required for repair or replacement of electrical lighting fixtures or devices, such as receptacles and lighting switches, or for the connection of an existing branch circuit to an electric water heater that is being replaced, provided that all of the following requirements are met:
 - With respect to electric water heaters, the replacement water heater is placed in the same location and is of the same or less capacity and electrical rating as the original.
 - With respect to electrical lighting fixtures and devices, the replacement is with a fixture or device having the same voltage and the same or less amperage.
 - The work is performed by a person licensed under G.S. 87-43.
 - The repair or replacement installation meets the current edition of the State Building Code, including the State Electrical Code.

Common Permit Scenarios

Common scenarios for single-family structures where a permit is required:

- Adding a window or door (structural).
- Removing a non-load bearing wall. Permit exemption language make no mention of reconstruction or demolition. It only refers to construction, installation, repair, replacement, or alteration.
- Adding a disappearing staircase (structural).



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- Adding an outside deck (structural).
- Kitchen and bathroom remodels if the project cost exceeds \$15,000 or it involves the addition or change in design of both plumbing and the addition, replacement or change in design of electrical wiring, devices, appliances, or equipment.
- Replacing a water heater when converting from an electric water heater to a gas water heater or vice-versa, or if the owner who replaces a water heater without using an appropriately licensed contractor to install the replacement.
- Replacing steps (not stair treads) to a porch/deck (structural).
- Adding a water purification system (installation/addition of a new system).
- Adding a light fixture or receptacle.
- Installing a ceiling fan to junction box because electrical boxes are "approved" or "listed" as appropriate for various applications. The proposed ceiling fan to be added or installed as a replacement may weigh more than the junction box is approved to handle, therefore the installation/replacement must be verified as Code compliant by an inspector.
- Adding an attic fan (because it involves electrical wiring and devices).
- Extending or adding roofing.
- Replacing roof portions if the replacement roof does not have the same fire resistance grade, or if the cost exceeds \$15,000.
- Replacing/adding an HVAC system.

Common scenarios for single-family structures where a permit is not required:

- Replacing a window or door as long as no structural changes, such as increasing the openings, occur.
- Replacing siding or trim with similar grade, unless the cost exceeds \$15,000.
- Replacing a toilet as long as the replacement is connected to the existing lines and there is no installation, extension or general repair of the plumbing system itself.
- Replacing a water heater as long as the work is done by a licensed contractor who installs the replacement pursuant to current State Building Code requirements, the replacement is of the same or lesser capacity and energy usage as the predecessor, and there is no change in fuel, energy source, location, or the routing or sizing of venting and piping.
- Replacing a light fixture/receptacle as long as the replacement is with a fixture/device having the same voltage and the same or less amperage so long as the work is performed by a licensed electrical contractor who installs it according to current Code requirements.
- Adding insulation to a crawl space or attic. It does not involve the construction, alteration, repair, etc, of a building, nor does it affect any plumbing, HVAC or electrical system.
- Replacing roof portions as long as the replacement has the same fire resistance grade and the total cost does not exceed \$15,000.



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- Minor repairs/replacements to HVAC system involving parts that don't change the energy source, fuel type, or routing or sizing of venting or piping, such as compressors, coils, motors, contactors or capacitors may not require a permit.
- Installing/replacing floors (hardwood, carpet, etc.), new wallpaper, window treatments, etc. This does not constitute repair, construction, or alteration to the building itself nor does it typically affect plumbing, HVAC or electrical systems.

Licensed Contractor Required

Building projects requiring a licensed contractor:

- The building construction cost is \$30,000 or more.

Building projects that do not require a licensed contractor (permits are still required):

- The building construction cost is less than \$30,000...or
- Building construction where a person, firm, or corporation owns the land where building construction takes place and the building is intended solely for occupancy by that person and his family, firm, or corporation for a period of 12 months following completion. The owner must also file an affidavit with the local inspection department attesting that they are the owner of the property, they will personally superintend and manage all aspects of the construction and will not delegate that duty to any unlicensed person, and the owner must be personally present for all inspections. The owner does not have to be present for inspections if the building plans were drawn and sealed by an architect licensed pursuant to Chapter 83A of the General Statutes.

Plumbing and Mechanical projects requiring a licensed contractor:

- Installation, extension, alteration or general repair of plumbing or heating and air-conditioning (unless performed by owner who personally occupies the structure).

Plumbing and Mechanical projects that do not require a licensed contractor (permits are still required):

- Installation, extension, alteration or general repair of plumbing or heating and air conditioning performed by owner personally occupying the structure...or
- Minor repairs or minor replacements to an already installed system of plumbing, heating, or air conditioning. This includes the replacement of parts in an installed system which do not require any change in energy source, fuel type, or routing or sizing of venting or piping. Parts shall include a compressor, coil, contactor, motor, or capacitor...or



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- The on-site assembly of a factory designed drain line system for a manufactured home if:
 - The person is a licensed manufactured home retailer, a licensed manufactured home set-up contractor, or a full-time employee of either,
 - Obtains an inspection by the local inspections department, and
 - Performs the assembly according to the State Plumbing Code.

Electrical projects requiring a licensed contractor:

- Installation, extension, alteration or general repair of electrical wiring, devices, appliances or equipment (unless performed by owner who personally occupies the structure).

Electrical projects that do not require a licensed contractor (permits are still required):

- Installation, extension, alteration or general repair of electrical wiring, devices, appliances or equipment performed by any person who is himself and for himself installing, maintaining, altering or repairing electric work, wiring, devices, appliances or equipment upon his own property when such property is not intended at the time for rent, lease, or sale.

Lien Agents

Lien agent requirements

- According to North Carolina General Statute 44A-11.1, a Lien agent is required for any improvements to real property unless it meets at least one of the following exemptions:
 - The improvement cost is less than \$30,000.
 - This includes residential and commercial projects.
 - For manufactured homes, the \$30,000 threshold does not include the purchase price of the home and only covers the cost of transportation and setup.
 - To the owner's existing single-family residence (must be owner occupied), regardless of cost.
 - This includes the addition of an accessory building or structure.
 - Public building projects, regardless of cost.



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Permit Validity

Is my permit still valid?

- From Chapter 2 (Administrative Policies) of the North Carolina Administrative Code and Policies of the State Building Code:
 - In accordance with General Statute 160A-418, a permit expires 6 months after the date of issuance if the work authorized by the permit has not been commenced.
 - If, after commencement, the work is discontinued for a period of 12 months, the permit immediately expires.
 - No work authorized by a permit that has expired may be performed until a new permit has been issued.

Sealed Plans Requirement

Do my plans require a seal from a design professional⁴?

- For new buildings and additions, plans are exempt from the seal requirement if it is in one of the following categories:
 - A family residence, up to eight units attached with grade level exit, which is not a part of or physically connected with any other buildings or residential units.
 - A building upon any farm for the use of any farmer, unless the building is of such nature and intended for such use as to substantially involve the health or safety of the public.
 - An institutional or commercial building if it does not have a total value exceeding two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000).
 - An institutional or commercial building if the total building area does not exceed 3,000 square feet in gross floor area.
- For commercial upfits, plans are exempt from the seal requirement if it is in one of the following categories:
 - If the work does not alter or affect the structural system of a building.
 - If the work does not change the building's access or exit pattern.
 - If the work does not change the live or dead load on the building's structural system.
 - If the work has a total value of less than two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) and a total project area of less than 3,000 square feet.



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What if the commercial project is an upfit of a shell or unfinished structure⁵?

- For upfits for shell buildings or unfinished structures, plans are exempt from the seal requirement if it meets the following criteria:
 - The building or structure has a current certificate of occupancy. This would require finished drywall, a completed bathroom, completed trade finals (plumbing, mechanical, and electrical) and valid occupancy classification⁶.
 - If the upfit has a total value of less than two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) and a total project area of less than 3,000 square feet⁴.

(1)North Carolina Real Estate Commission 2012-12 Update Course.

(2)House Bill 255 in July, 2015 raised permit threshold from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

(3)2018 North Carolina State Building Code: Residential Code.

(4)From N.C.G.S. 83A-13. Values and size of construction updated per House Bill 308, Session Law 2020-74. The building inspector will determine if a design professional seal is required. Further questions should go to the NC Board of Architecture or the NC Board of Examiners for Engineers and Land Surveyors.

(5)From NC Board of Examiners for Engineers and Land Surveyors website located at <https://www.ncbels.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/sealbrochure.pdf>.

(6)Town of Kernersville interpretation based on information from the NC Board of Examiners for Engineers and Land Surveyors website.