

City of Brunswick --- FAQ: Building Codes & Permits

What are codes and why do we have them?

Codes are a set of rules that specify the minimum standards for constructed objects such as buildings and non-building structures. The main purpose of building codes are to protect public health, safety and general welfare as they relate to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures.

What codes do I have to follow and who determines which codes to follow?

The current codes that we follow are:

2012 International Building Code with Georgia Amendments

2012 International Residential Code with Georgia Amendments

2012 International Plumbing Code with Georgia Amendments

2012 International Mechanical Code with Georgia Amendments

2012 International Fuel Gas Code with Georgia Amendments

2014 National Electrical Code

2009 International Energy Conservation Code with Georgia Amendments

The codes that we follow are adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the City of Brunswick.

Are there any special considerations when designing the construction?

Yes, since Brunswick is located in a hurricane prone area, all construction is designed for 120 mph wind gusts. Additionally, depending on where you live in the city, you may have to build for flood resistance.

The City of Brunswick also has the Old Town National Register Historic District. Any work that affects the exterior appearance of the building or the property – including the construction of fences, sheds, driveways, etc. require a Certificate of Appropriateness and approval of the Brunswick Historic Preservation Board before work begins.

Why do I have to get a permit?

Permits are required to ensure that the codes are adhered to. When a permit is issued, the construction will be inspected by a certified inspector to ensure that the structure is safe for the property owner and their guests.

When do I need to get a permit?

The code states:

“Any owner or authorized agent who intends to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building or structure, or to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system, the installation of which is regulated by this code, or to cause any such work to be done, shall first make application to the building official and obtain the required permit.”

Are there things that I can do that do not require a permit?

Some of the things that are exempt from the requirement of a permit are:

Building:

- 1. One-story detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses*

and similar uses, provided the floor area is not greater than 120 square feet (11 m²) for non-residential property and 200 square feet (18.58 m²) for residential property.

- 2. Fences not over 7 feet (2134 mm) high.*
- 3. Oil derricks.*
- 4. Retaining walls that are not over 4 feet (1219 mm) in height measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, unless supporting a surcharge or impounding Class I, II or IIIA liquids.*
- 5. Water tanks supported directly on grade if the capacity is not greater than 5,000 gallons (18 925 L) and the ratio of height to diameter or width is not greater than 2:1.*
- 6. Sidewalks and driveways not more than 30 inches (762 mm) above adjacent grade, and not over any basement or story below and are not part of an accessible route.*
- 7. Painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work.*
- 8. Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.*
- 9. Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3 occupancy that are less than 24 inches (610 mm) deep, are not greater than 5,000 gallons (18 925 L) and are installed entirely above ground.*
- 10. Shade cloth structures constructed for nursery or agricultural purposes, not including service systems.*
- 11. Swings and other playground equipment accessory to detached one- and two-family dwellings.*
- 12. Window awnings in Group R-3 and U occupancies, supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches (1372 mm) from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.*
- 13. Non-fixed and movable fixtures, cases, racks, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches (1753 mm) in height.*

Items that do not require a permit may require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Brunswick Historic Preservation Board. Contact the Planning Department before performing work on properties within the Old Town National Register Historic District.

Electrical:

Repairs and maintenance: *Minor repair work, including the replacement of lamps or the connection of approved portable electrical equipment to approved permanently installed receptacles.*

Radio and television transmitting stations: *The provisions of this code shall not apply to electrical equipment used for radio and television transmissions, but do apply to equipment and wiring for a power supply and the installations of towers and antennas.*

Temporary testing systems: *A permit shall not be required for the installation of any temporary system required for the testing or servicing of electrical equipment or apparatus.*

Gas:

- 1. Portable heating appliance.*
- 2. Replacement of any minor part that does not alter approval of equipment or make such equipment unsafe.*

Mechanical:

1. Portable heating appliance.
2. Portable ventilation equipment.
3. Portable cooling unit.
4. Steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.
5. Replacement of any part that does not alter its approval or make it unsafe.
6. Portable evaporative cooler.
7. Self--contained refrigeration system containing 10 pounds (5 kg) or less of refrigerant and actuated by motors of 1 horsepower (746 W) or less.

Plumbing:

1. The stopping of leaks in drains, water, soil, waste or vent pipe, provided, however, that if any concealed trap, drain pipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the same with new material, such work shall be considered as new work and a permit shall be obtained and inspection made as provided in this code.
2. The clearing of stoppages or the repairing of leaks in pipes, valves or fixtures and the removal and reinstallation of water closets, provided such repairs do not involve or require the replacement or rearrangement of valves, pipes or fixtures.

If you are not sure if you need a permit, contact the Building Department. We will let you know if one is required.

Why do I have to pay a fee for a permit?

The revenue generated by the fees from permits is used to offset the budget of the Building Department.

What happens if I do not get a permit?

Any person who commences any work on a building, structure, electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing system before obtaining the necessary permits shall be subject to a fee established by the building official that shall be in addition to the required permit fees.

Why do I have to have to get a contractor to do the work?

There are two reasons that a contractor has to do the work:

1. *Georgia Statutes and Codes(O.C.G.A. 43-41-17 (2010)) states:*

“No person, whether an individual or a business organization, shall have the right to engage in the business of residential contracting or general contracting without a current, valid residential contractor license or general contractor license, respectively, issued by the division under this chapter or, in the case of a business organization, unless such business organization shall have a qualifying agent as provided in this chapter holding such a current, valid residential contractor or general contractor license on behalf of such organization issued to such qualifying agent as provided in this chapter.”
2. *A contractor is insured. If something happens to your house while the construction is going on, the insurance company will pay to have it fixed. If after the work is completed and something happens to the house, your insurance company will pay for it. If you have*

a “handyman” install new water supply piping to your sink, for example, and it ends up leaking and flooding your house, the insurance company will not pay because the “handyman” was not licensed and insured.

Can I do construction on my own house?

Yes, it is called a Homeowner’s Permit, but there are stipulations. The house has to be your primary place of residence, it cannot be for sale or lease. If you had used a Homeowner’s Permit on another residence within the last 24 months, you are not allowed to have another one.

If your property is in the Old Town National Register Historic District, any work that affects the exterior appearance of the building or the property – including the construction of fences, sheds, driveways, etc. require a Certificate of Appropriateness and approval of the Brunswick Historic Preservation Board before work begins.

What is the Old Town Historic District and what does that mean for me?

The Old Town National Register Historic District was designated by the National Park Service. The northern boundary is G Street, the eastern boundary is Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd., the southern boundary is 1st Avenue, and the western boundary is the East River. If your property is located within this area, changes to your property require a Certificate of Appropriateness and approval by the Historic Preservation Board. COA’s are required for additions, demolition, roof material changes, fences, sheds/outbuildings, pools, window and door replacement, and changes that affect the exterior appearance of the property. COA’s are not required for general maintenance such as painting, wood repair, or roof repairs. For more information, contact the Planning Department.