



Building Your City Deck Construction Guide

Building permits regulate types of construction permitted in the community, and ensure the safety of the homeowner and community at large. Approved plans must comply with the current, amended version of the Ontario Building Code (OBC), local zoning by-laws, and other applicable laws and regulations.

If any of the following information is unclear or you have further questions, our Building Services Department is here to help. Whether it's about zoning, outside agency approvals, legal requirements, deck design and materials, construction safety or anything that helps your project turn out successfully, we're here to lend a hand.

Step 1: Check the zoning on the property.

Municipal Zoning by-laws regulate where the deck can be placed, including how close to the lot line you can build the deck and in some cases, how much of the property can be covered by a deck. A Building Permit cannot be issued if the proposed construction does not comply with the Zoning By-law for your property. **Contact the City of Pickering Zoning Examiner** and find out what the zoning by-law for your property says, before you finalize the design of your deck.

If the deck design does not comply with the property's zoning by-law, you may choose to change the design, or, you have the opportunity to apply for a variance to the By-law. The zoning examiner can talk to you about this.

Step 2: Is your property environmentally protected?

Within the City of Pickering, there are two Conservation Authorities that have jurisdiction to regulate construction in the vicinity of natural features and environmentally sensitive lands, such as wooded areas, lakes, creeks, and natural heritage routes providing protection for wildlife.

If your property contains a natural feature, before you apply to the City for a Building Permit, find out if the local Conservation Authority has any concerns. For most of Pickering, you should contact the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) at 416.661.6600 (trca.ca). For areas of north/east Pickering, contact the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) at 905.579.0411 (cloca.com).

Step 3: Find out if you need a Building Permit.

In most cases it is against the law to begin construction or demolition of a building or structure, without having a valid permit. Building Services staff is available throughout the permit process to assist you with your application and answer any questions you may have.

To find out if you need a Building Permit, contact the Building Services Department at 905.420.4631, or answer the following questions:

Is the size of the proposed deck greater than 10m ² (108 ft ²)?	Yes or No?
Is the floor of the proposed deck higher than 600mm (or 24") from grade (the ground)?	Yes or No?
Is the proposed deck attached to a building?	Yes or No?

If you answered 'yes' to either of the above questions, then you likely need a Building Permit.

Step 4: Prepare a Site Plan drawing.

Prepare a site plan, showing the location and size of the proposed deck and all other structures on the property. (Refer to sample Site Plan drawing DK01). Bear in mind the setback requirements and lot coverage restrictions detailed in the zoning by-law for your property. You can use a survey or previous site plan drawing of the property as the base drawing to draw on the outline of the proposed deck. This can be drawn by hand (with a ruler and permanent ink) or by computer software. You must show:

- all dimensions of the deck including length, width, height and area
- the distance from the edges of the deck to the lot lines
- the location and size of any other existing buildings on the property

If a survey is required, contact the Building Services Department, to see if we have one on file.

Note: The City of Pickering is not required to retain copies of surveys. This is the job of the Ontario Land Registry Office. If the City is not able to provide a copy, it is your responsibility to get one from the Land Registry Office, or to hire a surveyor to have a survey prepared for you, at your cost.

Step 5: Prepare the construction drawings.

Prepare construction drawings for the deck, bearing in mind the requirements of the OBC. Sample, code compliant drawings of typical construction are available from the Building Services Department and can be attached to a Building Permit application (See drawings DK02, DK03, DK04 and DK05). These sample drawings will form part of the permit, therefore the deck construction must meet the minimum requirements noted on these drawings. If you're not familiar with OBC requirements, consider hiring a professional to help design your deck.

As a minimum, construction drawings must include:

- framing plan (DK02)
- Stair and bracing details (DK05) – optional if your deck includes a stair plan

To assist you with sizing your project, we have also prepared a Footing Sizing Table (DK03) and a Beam and Joist Sizing Table (DK04) for your reference.

Step 6: Assemble the drawings and apply for a permit.

A Building Permit is issued to the owner of the property, or the authorized agent of the owner, i.e., the contractor. Your designer or contractor can also apply for the permit on your behalf. However, it is the property owner's responsibility to ensure compliance with all Ontario Building Code requirements.

All applications for Building Permits must be submitted electronically. Please contact a Building Clerk at 905.420.4631 to receive direction on how to apply, and a link to upload required documents. **The fee for a deck permit is \$219.00, taxes included.**

If our property records do not show you as the owner of the property, (perhaps you just recently moved to this property?) you, or your contractor, will be asked to provide a copy of the deed to the property, and some personal ID to confirm the ownership.

You will be called if we have any further questions, or, as soon as the Building Permit has been issued. You will be contacted by Building Services staff when the permit is issued and given directions on how to download the permit and approved drawings. Construction should never begin until you have the issued Building Permit and approved drawings.

The Building Permit must be printed and displayed somewhere on the property, where it can easily be seen by the general public, like a window, front door, attached to a post in the yard. The approved drawings must be available on site at all times during construction of the deck.

Step 7: Book your Building Permit inspections.

Certain inspections are required on site, once construction has begun. Building Services staff will advise you of all required inspections and how to book them. The Building Permit process is not considered 'closed', until all inspections have been signed off by a City of Pickering Building Inspector. Typically, inspections for a deck include:

- Inspecting the footings, or piers, **prior to pouring the concrete**, to ensure they are the right depth and located correctly, as per the approved drawings.
- Inspection of the deck framing for the platform(s) and stair systems (if applicable), **before the deck boards are installed**.
- Final decking and finishes.

Step 8: Enjoy the deck!

Decks can be a big investment of your time and money, and if built well, can add value to your home. Choosing to follow the requirements set out by the Municipal Zoning By-law and Ontario Building Code go a long way to ensure your deck is legal, your contractor builds according to your plans, and your deck is designed to keep you and your guests safe.

FAQs

Who is allowed to design a residential deck?

The homeowner or person who owns the property is allowed to design the deck. If the home/property owner is not preparing the deck design, it must be designed by a qualified designer with a minimum qualification of BCIN House. This requirement is set out by The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A form called 'Schedule 1: Designer Information', must be completed and submitted along with the permit application.

Who is allowed to construct a residential deck?

Anyone is allowed to construct the deck once a building permit has been issued to the home/property owner.

It is, however, the responsibility of the home/property owner to ensure that:

- a building permit has been obtained
- the work complies with the Ontario Building Code (OBC)
- the required building inspections have been scheduled
- the building permit has been closed once the construction is deemed complete by the City building inspector.

Do I need a building permit to reconstruct or repair exactly the same size and style of deck I already have?

Yes. Even if you are reconstructing or repairing the same size deck, a building permit may be required. If the deck you are repairing or replacing was constructed prior to the current, amended version of the OBC, there may be new requirements for the construction that must be met.

Constructing, repairing or reconstructing without the authority of a building permit may result in extra fees for Building Code Act Orders or extra fees for the building permit application. It may also result in extra costs for additional materials, or for a professional engineer's design (P.Eng. review) being required in order to bring the deck in to compliance with the current OBC.

What size of deck can I construct on my property?

See **Step 1** of the City of Pickering, Deck Construction Guide. The City Zoning Examiner will review the Zoning By-law for your property and advise you of the required distances from lot lines, permitted height of deck and lot coverage maximums.

What building materials and construction methods do I want to use to build my deck?

It's important, early in the process, to consider the building materials and construction methods you intend to use when constructing your deck. The type of material you choose may have different requirements for construction under the OBC. Knowing how your materials work and perform may help to eliminate delays in getting your approved Building Permit. It can also help to reduce frustration on site during construction.

If you are considering any new or innovative building materials or construction practices, our Building Services staff can help you determine how to choose both materials and methods that comply with the OBC.

What should I consider before designing the deck?

- How high off the finished ground is the deck?
- What type of foundation system will be used?
- Will it be connected to the house and if so, is it connected to the foundation or rim board?
- What type of decking will be used?
- What type and style of guard will be used?
- Will the deck have stairs?

Can I install a hot tub on my deck?

Adding a hot tub to the deck, means designing to carry the extra load. **A building permit is required to retrofit an existing deck to accommodate a new hot tub.** You'll also need to involve a few outside agencies, such as:

- A Professional Engineer to review the proposed construction, due to the increased weight introduced by the hot tub.
- The Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) will be needed to review and approve installation of the electrical service for the hot tub. The ESA can be contacted at: **1.877.372.7233**.
- A hot tub may all also need a pool enclosure permit. Contact our City of Pickering Engineering Services Department at **905.420.4624** for more information on swimming pool enclosures, or check our [website](#) on the 'Pool Enclosure Package' page.

Why should I go to the trouble of getting a Building Permit for my deck?

While decks are simple structures they share many of the same structural requirements as buildings like your house or garage, they are also subjected to wind, rain and snow loads, and variations in temperature.

Decks can fail slowly over time, resulting in damage, not only the deck, but often the house as well. Occasionally deck structures experience catastrophic failure which may lead to injury, loss of life, or personal liability, if the deck was constructed improperly or without a Building Permit.

What drawings are required as part of the building permit application?

See **Steps 5 and 6** of the City of Pickering Deck Guide. At a minimum, two (2) copies of the following drawings are required when applying for a Building Permit to construct a deck:

What can I do to make sure my construction site is safe before I build my deck?

- **Before you dig...** Call **Ontario One Call** and make an appointment to locate underground utilities such as natural gas, hydro, water/sewer lines. If you're on septic, be sure you know where the septic tank is located. Visit ontarioonecall.ca or call toll free at 1.800.400.2255.
- Be aware of any existing overhead wires or hydro lines
- Check if any windows or doors will be obstructed by the new construction
- Make sure all your construction equipment is in good order
- Wear personal protective gear such as gloves, safety goggles, sturdy closed toe footwear (or safety boots)
- Reduce confusion on the job site by setting out a simple construction plan and organizing your construction materials accordingly.
- Stay hydrated, but save the party beverages for after the deck is built.
- For more Health and Safety Regulations, visit the Ministry of Labour website at ontario.ca/page/ministry-labour.

Do I have to let my neighbours know that I'm building a deck?

- There are no requirements to advise your neighbours of the construction, unless you have applied for a variance to your Zoning By-law.
- Remember that City of Pickering noise By-law 6834/08 restricts construction noise to the hours of 7 am to 9 pm.
- Be a good neighbour and let the adjoining property know about the impending noise and construction activity on your property. You never know; they may ask if they can lend a hand!