

A Guide to Residential Decks and Porches



When planning to construct a porch or a deck, this guide will assist you the homeowner, when a permit is required and what is required for the building permit application and any zoning regulations governing the construction of these structures.

When and Why a Permit is Required

In general, a building permit is required for decks and porches regardless of size. However, uncovered decks, less than 0.6 m (24") above grade, do not require a building permit but must still comply with the City of St. Catharines Zoning By-laws. Covered decks and porches always require a building permit.

Building permits are necessary to ensure compliance with zoning requirements, compliance with the Ontario Building Code for structural, safety and other standards and compliance with any other applicable Provincial and Municipal regulations.

It is the responsibility of the homeowner to ensure a permit is obtained prior to any construction of these structures.

Constructing or altering a structure without a permit can result in numerous problems including:

- **Complaints from neighbours**
- **Not conforming with the Building Code**
- **Difficulty selling the property**
- **Incurring liability should an injury occur to someone (visiting your property) as a result of a structure not conforming to the Building Code**
- **Extra cost in having to reconstruct the structure in accordance with the Zoning By-law and Building Code**
- **Possible demolition of structure**
- **Possible variance for lot coverage or setbacks may be required.**

Building By-Law 2011-334

A copy of the Building By-law 2011-334 is available at the City of St. Catharines, Legal and Clerks Services, or downloaded at the City of St. Catharines website under By-laws. www.stcatharines.ca (->Building and Renovating/Building Permits/

Building By-law) **Applying For a Permit**

Applications for a building permit are available at the City of St. Catharines Planning and Building Services (PBS) Department or downloaded at the City of St. Catharines website www.stcatharines.ca (->Building and Renovating/Building Permits/Applying for a Building Permit).

With the submission of an application, you will be required to submit two (2) copies of detailed construction drawings and site plan and the required building permit fees and damage deposits if applicable. If you require assistance to develop these drawings sample and standard drawings are available for your use along with the current fee schedules at the City of St. Catharines, PBS Department.

Building permits may be applied for by a property owner, or by an agent on behalf of the owner, such as the contractor or designer. The schedule 1 portion of the application must be filled out with every submission not involving an architect or engineer. The owner of a single dwelling may produce the drawings, otherwise a qualified designer must prepare and take responsibility for the designs.

Required Drawings

Two (2) complete copies of detailed drawings are required with the submission of an application.

A complete detailed site plan showing the following:

- **North arrow**
- **Scale**
- **Legal description -lot and plan numbers**
- **Easements**
- **Street names**
- **Lot dimensions**
- **Setbacks to all property lines for the existing dwelling and the proposed deck or porch**
- **Information for all existing buildings and structure such as size and location**

Detailed construction drawings showing:

- Size and height dimensions
- Material used along with size and spacing of beams and posts
- Concrete piers size, depth and spacing
- Roof framing (if applicable) -trusses or rafter size and spacing
- Construction of stairs and guards (railings)
- Anchoring and fastening details
- Concrete slab or footing details –size, thickness and reinforcement
- Normally construction drawings for decks and porches will include (as a minimum), a floor framing plan, a roof framing plan (if covered) and at least one cross section.

Guards & Railings:

- Required for any deck or platform 24" from grade or higher to prevent falling
- Special construction requirements for strength
- Restrictions on openings –maximum 4" space
- Restrictions on ability to climb -ornate or horizontal components are not permitted between 4" and 2'-11" above walking surface.

New Materials/Systems: Additional information such as manufacturer's drawings, specifications or engineering details may be required for materials/systems which are not specifically described in the Ontario Building Code for normal review.

The original drawings must be submitted to scale and fully dimensioned in either metric or imperial units with the appropriate information shown as noted above.

Standard Drawings

City of St. Catharines Sample Drawings entitled "Site Plan", "Typical Wood Deck Cross Section", & "Typical Section – Patio" are available as an example. The drawings are available at the P.B.S. Department. Please note you must prepare your own drawings, as these drawings are for reference only.

What to Do When Waiting For the Permit to Be Issued

Once you have submitted your application, we will review your submission as quickly as we can. We are aware of the importance to you in obtaining the permit quickly. Please make yourself available at the telephone number you provided at the time of application to ensure we can contact you should we require any clarification of your submission.

What to do When the Permit Has Been Issued

Once you receive your permit, please read the approved permit plans and documents thoroughly before commencing construction. The construction must be in accordance with the approved plans and documents issued with your permit. Any changes made before or during construction must be submitted to the building section for approval and additional fees may be applicable.

Inspections by the Building Section are also required during construction to ensure that all work is done in accordance with the approved plan. Some key inspections include:

- Prior to pouring any concrete for piers or footings
- Framing inspection
- Final inspection

The Building Permit must be posted on the property in a conspicuous location and the approved permit documents must be kept on site and available during inspections.

Note: It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that either you or the contractor contact the City of St. Catharines, PBS Department to request an inspection before proceeding to the next phase of construction. All required inspections are listed on the permit.

Failure to schedule will result in not being allowed to occupy or use the deck or porch and may also result in uncovering the work.

To schedule your inspections, call 905-688-5601, ext. 1660. Please have your permit number ready when scheduling an inspection.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the City of St. Catharines PBS Department between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at 905-688-5601, ext. 1660.