



# **Guide to Building in Bloomington**

*Economic & Community  
Development*

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# Guide to Building in Bloomington

The City of Bloomington is ready to assist you in building in Bloomington. Through a team approach of staff from multiple departments, we are here to help you from concept to construction all the way to project completion.

This guide provides an overview of the steps and resources available to help you succeed in building new or expanding your footprint in the City of Bloomington.

## **Step 1: Ensure your property's zoning is appropriate for your intended use:**

Knowing how a property is zoned is critical to choosing a location for your new building or for expanding your existing building. Zoning classifications are the local laws that define how property can be used. Typically, zoning ordinances govern:

- The types of uses that are allowed in a commercial area.
- Limitation to the size of building on a parcel / lot.
- Distances from adjacent properties (setback requirements).
- Lighting requirements.
- Parking requirements (minimum number of spaces).
- Signage allowances and restrictions.
- Landscaping requirements.
- Stormwater management.

The City's zoning professionals can help you understand all applicable regulations before you secure permits or licenses. Before you buy a property or sign a new lease, or install new signs, be sure to contact the Planning Division in the City's Economic and Community Development Department at 309-434-2226.

## **Step 2: Understand your Property's Unique Possibilities and Constraints**

Whether buying or leasing, if the property you have selected is undeveloped, an expansion of an existing building or parking lot, or if you are constructing an additional building on the property, it is important to understand the unique possibilities and constraints of your property. The physical characteristics unique to your property may present additional zoning and engineering considerations. Proactive investments during your due diligence of a property can save time and money in the long run. Representatives of the City's Economic and Community Development Department, Operations & Engineering Services, and Water Divisions, Fire Department, and Parks Department are available to meet with you and your architect/engineer and contractor to review your property's possibilities and constraints early in your development planning. Topics of discussion may include requirements for setbacks, signage, allowable uses, landscaping, public utility availability and locations, land subdivision, stormwater detention and drainage, driveway access, and parking. To schedule a time to meet with the City's Project Review Group, please submit a PRG [Meeting Request Form](#).

### **Best Practices:**

To ensure the most timely and cost-effective process, the following steps are recommended.

- Hire a professional, state-licensed architect and engineer to prepare your plans.
- Make sure your contractors are registered with the City, have proper insurance, and possess the appropriate experience to assist you with your project. If your contractors are not registered with the City, you may be held liable for any defects or non-compliance with City Codes.
- Verify that any and all subcontractors working on your project have the appropriate licenses before the work occurs.

### **Step 3: Understand Building Safety Requirements**

The financial investment required to build new or expand an existing building can be significant. It is important to fully understand the current physical conditions of your selected building or space and determine the costs to bring your building or space into code compliance. Code compliance creates a safe environment for you, your employees, and your customers.

It is recommended to contract with an architect and/or an engineer to assess the condition of your selected property prior to lease or purchase. An architect can provide you with an assessment of an existing building or space as it pertains to the City's building codes and any specific State or Federal requirements. A qualified contractor can then use your architect's assessment to provide you with an estimate to correct any identified code deficiencies. The City's Building Inspectors are available to meet with you, your architect, your engineer, and your contractor to provide additional assessment and advice prior to applying for any required building permits.

A preliminary property assessment provided by your architect would typically focus on the following:

- Condition of walkways and stairs, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, heating, and air conditioning equipment (HVAC), electrical components, windows, doors, and exterior walls.
- All means of ingress/egress including aisles, stairs, exit doors, ramps, and accessibility.
- Fire safety (emergency exits, lighting, alarms, sprinkler systems).
- Public health safety for food establishments (hand washing sinks, grease traps, proper licensing).
- A review of the site's private utilities, including the sewer service lateral.
- Stormwater detention requirements. Projects that disturb or reconstruct more than 1,400 square feet of area may also require additional stormwater detention or drainage modifications. The City prefers on-site detention, but developers should contact the Operations & Engineering Services for specifics.

To schedule an appointment to meet with one of the City's Building Inspectors please call the City's Economic and Community Development Department at 309-434-2226. To schedule an appointment with a City Engineer, call the City's Department of Operations & Engineering Services at 309-434-2225.

### **Step 4: Assess your Project's Impact on Non-City Infrastructure and the Community**

If new plumbing is involved in your project, the Bloomington Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD) will need to review your plans to determine any fees BNWRD may assess for impacts on its system. Please contact BNWRD at 309-827-4396.

Your proposed project may have positive or negative impacts on a range of community stakeholders including neighbors, schools, churches, and other units of local government. Additionally, your project may require the review and approval of one or more city boards and commissions such as the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Liquor Commission, Historic Preservation, and the City Council. A full listing of [City Boards and Commissions](#) is available on the City's website.

### **Step 5: Plan Submission, Review, and Permitting**

Once your plans are finalized for new construction or renovation, your design professional (who is registered to work in the State of Illinois) will need to submit two (2) sets of sealed and signed drawings, as well as an electronic copy, detailing the improvements proposed to the City. Plans should detail all existing and proposed building, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC, as well as sprinkler and alarm plans if the project requires this type of work due to its size or construction type. Additional engineering items may apply to your project and may be required as part of

your plan review process. *Please refer to the [Engineering Plan Review Checklist](#) to assist you with site plan requirements.*

- Total site area, total disturbed area, and total proposed impervious area for the site.
- Federal Aviation Administration Obstruction evaluation.
- FEMA Flood Map modification documents (LOMA/CLOMA/etc.).
- IEPA watermain/sanitary sewer extension permit applications.
- Stormwater detention calculations.
- A copy of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and NPDES Permit and/or NOI Form, if the site is over one acre.
- Final plat / easement dedication / etc. documents (if submission to council is needed).
- Fixture counts/meter sizing info (see form on the back of the City's Building Permit Application).
- Request for fee in lieu of stormwater detention (please contact City staff prior to submitting this request).
- For sites in a flood plain: Bloomington Flood Plain Permit.
- For sites in a floodway: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Permit.
- For sites on state routes: Illinois Department of Transportation Permits.
- For sites with public improvements: Engineer's estimate of cost for public improvements.

Certified plans examiners from the City's Building Safety Division and Operations & Engineering Services will review your drawings and provide a written report detailing any items that will need to be addressed. The Department of Operations & Engineering Services will review your site plan and determine the impact on your property and neighboring properties concerning the proposed elevations and water runoff from all impervious surfaces. Once all necessary corrections to your plans and applications have been made, appropriate permits will be issued (after payment of permit fees) following a final review.

A permit is required to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, or demolish a building or structure. Erecting, installing, enlarging, altering, repairing, removing, converting, or replacing any electrical, gas, mechanical, plumbing, or fire safety systems also requires a permit. An application is also required for a Change of Use/ New Tenant.

A detailed [list of work that requires a permit](#) is available on the City's website.

## **Step 6: Inspecting the Work and Completing Your Project**

Depending on the project, a number of professional inspections may be required, such as for plumbing, electrical, building, mechanical equipment, fire suppression, grading, erosion, and public health. Be sure your contractors are aware of all inspections that will be required. Once your project has passed all of its final inspections, the City will provide a Certificate of Occupancy verifying that all requirements needed to open for business have been met by you or your contractors.

# Helpful Tips

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- ❖ **Local Taxes:** If you are starting a new business in Bloomington, you may need to register with the State for State Taxes, as well as with the City for Local Taxes. [Local Tax Information](#) is available on the City's website.
- ❖ **Health Department:** If you are starting a new business in Bloomington that deals with food or beverages, you will need to pass a Health Department inspection. More information on [Health Department Inspections](#) can be found on their website.
- ❖ **Historic Preservation Façade Grant Program:** If you are working on a historical property, you may be eligible for the Eugene D. Funk Grant Program or the Harriet Fuller Rust Grant Program. [Historic Preservation Façade Grant information](#) can be found on the City's website
- ❖ **Non-Construction Permits and Licenses:** If you are starting a new business in Bloomington, you may need to apply for a Non-Construction related permit or license. A [list of Non-Construction permits and licenses](#) is available on the City's website.

## Questions? Contact us:

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### **Economic and Community Development Department**

Phone: (309) 434-2226

Email: [comdev@cityblm.org](mailto:comdev@cityblm.org)

### **Operations & Engineering Services**

Phone: (309) 434-2225

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