



Town of Charlton

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DEPARTMENT of BUILDING
INSPECTIONAL SERVICES

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Additions	Reroofing
Remodeling	Replacement Windows
Pools	Chimney repairs
Decks	Porches
Sun rooms	Three Season rooms
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When is a Building Permit Required?

A building permit is required for any of the activities listed below;

New construction	Siding
Additions	Reroofing
Remodeling	Replacement Windows
Pools	Chimney repairs
Decks	Porches
Sun rooms	Three Season rooms

The Massachusetts State Building Code §105.1 (780 CMR) states “It shall be unlawful to construct, reconstruct, alter, repair, remove or demolish a *building* or *structure*; or to change the use or *occupancy* of a *building* or *structure*; or to install or alter any equipment...and obtaining the required permit therefor.”

The following require a Building permit if the item exceeds the **Exceptions** in the right hand column.

Item	Exception
Retaining walls	Less than four (4) feet in total height
Fences	Less than seven (7) feet in height
Signs	For Home occupations (zoning)
Pools	Less than twenty-four (24) inches of water

Also you can refer to the Board of Building Regulations and Standards; [When do you need a CSL, HIC or Building Permit?](#)

Who should obtain the Building Permit?

The contractor doing the work should be responsible for the building permit and sign on the bottom of the application.

If there is a contractor doing the work and the customer obtains the permit and signs the application under the homeowner exemption, **you will not have access** to the Home Improvement Contractor Law, Guaranty Fund or any of the protections provided under MGL c 142A. For additional information on the Home Improvement Contractor Law, go to [Home Improvement Contractor](#).

How is a building Permit obtained?

Applications and instructions are available on line at the [Building Commissioners](#) web page or office in the Municipal Office Building 37 Main Street.

Information on the general permit procedures is available from the Building Commissioner's Office in the hand out titled; [Information and Permitting Procedures](#).

How long does it take to obtain a Building Permit?

From the time a complete application and supporting documentation is submitted to the Building Commissioner's office, the permit or question(s) raised from the application review takes two to three weeks. When the permit is ready we will call you with the fee amount and let you know to pick up the permit.

If the application package is incomplete, additional information is needed or there are question(s) that need to be answered we will call you. The applicant will then have to provide the required information and the review process continues.

When are inspections required?

For new homes or major construction projects there is a list; [*Schedule of Building Inspections*](#), attached to the permit card when you pick it up. Also on front and back of the permit card there are a number of signature places and check off boxes that the inspector looks for.

For pools there is a list; [*Inspections for Swimming Pools*](#), attached to the permit card when you pick it up. Also on front and back of the permit card there are a number of signature places and check off boxes that the inspector looks for.

For other projects we will let you know when inspections are required when the permit card is picked up.

Do I need to hire a General Contractor to supervise the work?

No, the Massachusetts Building Code allows a homeowner defined in 780 CMR §110.R5.1.2 to supervise the project and take on the responsibility of ensuring the project is complete in accordance with all the applicable sections of the building code for residential structures up to two families.

When taking on the roll of General Contractor or Supervisor consider this;

Building projects are a major undertaking, there are a multitude of details to consider, while this office is willing to help you, our time is limited, by law and regulation we can not design the building or supervise your subcontractors for you.

The functions of the inspectors are to ensure safe building through plan review and inspections. Nothing is more frustrating for both you (if you are unfamiliar with the code requirements) and the inspector to come out to the job site for an inspection and have to cite a deficiency that needs to be corrected.

Do I need to have professional plans drawn for my home?

For one and two family homes or accessory structures **no**.

The plans need to be sufficiently detailed so we can understand and evaluate how the building is going to be constructed. The plans should include a foundation plan, floor plans for each floor, and section drawings for each different portion of the building.

At a minimum, construction documents shall include the following:

1. Site plan;
2. Foundation plan and details (as necessary)
3. Floor plans (including basement and attic levels, if applicable);
floor plans shall include location of all required fire protection systems and heating systems storage areas.
4. Exterior building elevations;
5. Framing plans and/or building section(s) adequately depicting structural systems;
6. Schedules, legends and/or details adequately depicting doors, windows and related material installations; and
7. Energy conservation information.
For new construction the proposed construction has to be modeled by a HERs rater or other qualified professional.

If there is structural steel in the building a Registered Licensed Massachusetts Engineer will have to provide stamped calculations for the steel.

If you are using engineered lumber products, manufacturer's calculations and specifications sheets will have to be provided.

Note:

The more complex the project, the availability of good professionally drawn plans will aid in the bidding, coordination of subcontractors and eventual bringing of the project to a successful conclusion.

When are the services of an Architect or Engineer required?

If the building is not a one or two family home and is over thirty-five thousand (35,000) cubic feet in size, the services of a design professional are required by the 780 CMR§ 107.1 & 107.6.1, this applies to most commercial type work.

Or if the work is in a residential building that requires the practice of engineering such as designing steel beams, special loads or unusual circumstances not specifically cover by the tables or other areas of the code.

What do I need for a _____ ?

New Wood, Pellet or Coal Stove
An existing Wood, Pellet or Coal Stove
Propane or natural gas stove for heating

For wood, pellet or coal stove and/or boilers, you must first obtain a permit [click here](#) through the Building Commissioners office. The fee is fifty (50.00) per appliance.

Install the appliance in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The installation instructions must be available at time of inspection. If the manufacturer's instruction are not available, the stove must be installed in accordance with CMR §13.

Once the stove is completely installed; call the Building Commissioner's Office for and inspection at 508-248-2241.

For propane and natural gas heating stoves that are vented outside of the dwelling a permit from the gas inspector is required. For unvented gas heating appliance a permit is required from both the Gas Inspector and the Fire Department.

What licenses or registrations are required for contractors working on my home?

Plumbers, gas fitters and electricians are required to be licensed by separate state boards for each trade, the [Division of Professional Licensure](#) at 1000 Washington Street, Suite 710, Boston, MA 02118, 617-727-3074 is the supervising agency for the [Board of Plumbers and Gas Fitters](#) and [Electricians](#) respectively.

If the owner of the one or two family structure is not doing the work themselves under the homeowner exception then the person doing structural work needs to have a Construction Supervisors License (CSL).

If the work whether structural or not being done is on an existing one or two family home, the company or person doing the work will need to have a Home Improvement Contractor Registration (HIC).

Additional information on [Construction Supervisor License](#) can be obtained from the [Board of Building Regulation and Standards](#) (BBRS) 1000 Washington Street, Suite 710, Boston, MA 02118. Tel: 617-727-3200. For information on [Home Improvement Contractor Registration](#) issued by the [Office of consumer Affairs and Business Regulation](#), 501 Boylston Street, Suite 5100, Boston, MA 02116 Tel. 617-973-8787

Can a business be operated from my home?

Town of Charlton zoning allows business that are considered Home Occupations to be operated from a residence. The definition of Home Occupations is;

An accessory use which is carried on by the permanent resident of a dwelling unit, with not more than two (2) non-resident employees, and only inside the dwelling with only customary home equipment used therein; further subject to the provisions that all materials and products of the occupation be stored only within the dwelling and accessory structures, no external alterations or structural changes not customary to a residential building are required; the home occupation is clearly incidental and secondary to the residential use, no products may be sold that are not incidental to the home occupation, and the occupation does not result in the production of offensive noise, vibration, heat, dust or other objectionable conditions such as on-street parking.

If what you propose to do fits easily within the above definition, you will need to register with the Town Clerk for Doing Business As (DBA) certificate, or if you are incorporated with the state you should be all set.

What can I do at this address?

Due to the factual nature of Zoning questions, it is not possible for the Zoning Enforcement Officer to answer speculative inquirers such as; where is it permissible to do ??? activity, or what can a person do on a certain parcel or the like in Charlton.

The Zoning Enforcement Officer, if provided with a specific business description, on a specific parcel, when asked by the land owner or authorized representative, may offer some guidance on the proposed project.

We suggest that you consult with the [Town of Charlton Zoning Bylaw](#), it's use table in section 200-3.1 and the [Zoning Map](#), for guidance in determining; allowed uses, dimensional requirements, zone boundaries and other land use regulations.

Additionally other municipal departments may have information or regulations that can impact a project, [linked here](#) is the department list for the Town of Charlton.

Can I have an In-law Apartment in my home?

The [Town of Charlton Zoning Bylaw](#) allows Accessory Apartments with some restrictions, Section 2 Definitions sets for the following;

Accessory Apartment: An accessory apartment is a dwelling unit constructed within and/or added onto an existing, One Family Dwelling or attached garage. An accessory apartment contains a full bathroom, kitchen, living room, and bedroom. An accessory apartment shall not have more than one (1) bedroom. Only one (1) accessory apartment will be allowed within or added onto a One-Family Dwelling or its attached garage. The owner(s) of the residence in which or for which the accessory apartment is created shall occupy at least one of the dwelling units on the premises, except for bona fide, temporary absences. The owner's dwelling unit shall not be rented during any such temporary absence.

An accessory apartment shall be designed to maintain the appearance of a single-family residence as to the One Family Dwelling of which it is a part, and shall be clearly subordinate to the One-Family Dwelling. Any exterior entrance to the apartment shall be located on the side or rear of the One Family Dwelling, or of its garage, and any additions containing the apartment, in whole or in part, shall not increase the square footage of the original structure of the One Family Dwelling by more than 1250 square feet. Accessory apartments may not be added to or expanded, and must be complete, separate housekeeping units that can be isolated from the original unit of the One Family Dwelling. No more than two (2) persons may occupy an accessory apartment. For dwellings to be served by an on-site septic system, the owner must obtain written approval from the Board of Health before a building permit can be obtained for construction of the accessory apartment. This is to ensure that the existing sewage disposal system and water supply are adequate for the proposed accessory apartment.

In addition all the requirements of the State Building Code must be met including but not limited to; egress, room size, room heights, winds, light and ventilation.

How can I get a copy of the Charlton Zoning Bylaw?

The Town of Charlton Zoning Bylaw is available for purchase from the Town Clerk or the Planning Board in the Municipal building, during their office hours. The [Zoning Bylaw](#) is also available on line.

How far does a structure need to be from the property line?

What are the lot size requirements for a property located at___?

Answers to these question depends on in which zoning district you are located in and what type of structure you intend to construct. There are modifications to the distances for; water front property and certain types of accessory structures to residential buildings.

Zoning District	Min. Lot Area Sq. Ft.	Min. Lot Width & Contiguous Street Frontage Feet	Min. Front Yard Feet	Min. Side Yard Feet	Min. Rear Yard Feet
Agricultural A	60,000	175	30	15	30
Low Density Residential R-40	40,000	150	30	15	15
Residential Small Enterprise R-SE	40,000	150	30	15	15
Neighborhood Business NB	20,000	100	40	15	15
Village V	10,000	75	10	10	10
Community Business CB	40,000	150	40	15	15
Business Enterprise Park BEP*	80,000	260	50	50	50
Industrial General IG**	40,000	150	40	35	35

The maximum height of a primary structure in all districts is 36 feet.

*BEP: Max Building Coverage is 33%. Max Building Height is 36 feet.

**IG: Max Building Coverage is 40%. Max Building Height is 36 feet.

Please note that there are some exceptions to the table above. For example, different standards apply to multi-family developments, some development in Industrial districts and in areas with sewer in the R-SE district. Please contact the Planning Board Office for details.