



## **Architecture: How to obtain New York City Department of Buildings work permit to have construction work done**

January 26, 2015 - Spotlights

Dealing with all of the New York City agencies can be overwhelming especially when one wants to have construction work done. The following is a step by step guide to this process:

1. Decide what you need done. You need to look at your budget and priorities. You might try to find neighbors, family members or a local business that might help you decide.
2. Find an architect who can determine what could actually be done. The end result would be drawing of architectural plans that would be needed to proceed with the work. An architect can help with a proposed budget for the work as well. Prepare a detailed contract with the architect so there are no questions or concerns later on. ([www.architecturestudio.com](http://www.architecturestudio.com))
3. Get your plans filed and approved. The architectural plans have to be approved by the Department of Buildings. This can be a timely process so plan accordingly. The architect will be able to help in this process. Your architect will play a substantial role in your construction depending upon the size of a job. They are also required to do controlled inspections and must be registered with the Building Department to do special inspections. The architect can also recommend a reliable contractor he has had experience with since they work with many builders.
4. Find a contractor to work with. Make sure the contractor is licensed and insured with the NYC Department of Buildings as well as NYC Department of Consumer Affairs. A contractor can also help you find other trades such as electricians and/or plumbers. Sometimes contractors will have their own sub-contractors that they work closely with on their projects. Talk to the contractor about this. It sometimes helps the project proceed smoother if a contractor has control over the subs since they are used to working together.
5. Hire a contractor. A contract should be signed by all parties involved and insurance certificates should be shared. Once this is squared away, the permits can be processed.
6. Get your work permits. Obtaining work permits sometimes involves expeditors (these are the people in the field that work in the Department of Buildings to obtain permits). There are filing fees for permits and these fees should be spelled out to you beforehand.
7. Start your work. Once permits are obtained the work can begin. Work should not commence prior to the permits being issued. Make sure enough time is allowed for the permitting process. Contact your architect prior to starting the work because they have to inspect the excavation and footing.
8. Work with the contractor and architect to monitor the work progress.
9. Be ready for the inspection. Once the work is completed there will be an inspection required for the sign-off of the work by the Department of Buildings. This also should be discussed with either the architect or contractor beforehand.
10. You need to obtain the sign-offs for plumbing, electrical and general construction in order to get a Certificate of Occupancy or Letter of Completion. You can go to [www.nyc.gov/bis](http://www.nyc.gov/bis) to see what still

has to be done in the Required Items screen.

#### TIPS

- \* Have discussions about your concerns prior to the start of work to ensure you have a good experience all around;
- \* Make sure you know exactly what work you want or need done before you start because it can be very costly to change later on;
- \* Find competent people by talking to neighbors or others that might recommend architects and contractors. Use Google to search for local architects. You can also go to <http://www.aia.org> or the Better Business Bureau. Make sure the architect you are hiring is registered, insured and has all the requirements to do controlled inspections. Do not talk to or engage the services of anyone other than a registered architect or professional engineer to do design and filing in New York City; and
- \* Make sure whoever you hire is licensed and insured to perform the work. If not, you run the risk of total liability if something goes wrong and your own insurance company will drop you if they find out such.

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