



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

October 28, 2013 - Spotlights

In New York City dealing with departments and agencies can be overwhelming, especially when one wants to have renovation or new construction work done. Here is a step by step guide to this process. Hopefully this will help clarify some of this process for the building owner. If you want to get a list of companies who offer this service then please go to <http://www.aia.org>. This will help you get a primary idea of these services. I suggest <http://www.architecturestudio.com> since they offer good services.

### Steps

1. Decide what you need done. This alone could be a brainstorming process and sometimes talking to others may help you make this decision. You might try to find neighbors, family members or local businesses that might help you decide.
2. Find an architect or engineer that 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 sometimes help with a proposed budget for the work as well.
3. Search for a contractor. Finding a contractor to work with would be the next step. Make sure the contractor is licensed and insured with the NYC Dept. of Buildings as well as NYC Dept. of Consumer Affairs. A contractor can also help you possibly 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.
4. Get your plans approved. The architectural plans have to be approved by the Dept. of Buildings. This can be a timely process so plan accordingly. The architect should be able to help in this process. Your architect can 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.
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 directly with the Dept. of Buildings to obtain permits). There are filing fees for permits and these fees should be spelled out to you beforehand. If your house is in Breezy Point, filing fees are waived for red flagged houses. Architecture Studio in Kew Gardens can assist you in this process.
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 along the way to monitor the work progression.

9. Be ready for the inspection. Once the work is completed there may be an inspection required for sign off of the work by the Dept. 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. 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, engineers and contractors to you. 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 NYC.

\* 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. Prepare a detailed contract with the architect so there are no questions or concerns later on.

#### Warnings

\* Never hire an expeditor directly for any architectural work because they are not licensed to seal plans and do not have the training and experience to design structures.

\* Hire a competent architect who does not have complaints filed with NYS DOE or BBB or NYC DOB

\* Do not hire a contractor directly because you need the architect first to come up with a design and get competitive bids.

\* Never do complicated work yourself unless you have lots of experience in construction. Watching home improvement shows or reading books does not really count.

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