

Obtaining a Building Permit

1 When is a building permit required?

A building permit is a document that grants legal permission to start construction of a building project. It is required for all new buildings as well as for all alterations, repairs and extensions to existing buildings.

Alterations include changes to the exterior of a building including windows, doors, stairs, balconies, roofing materials on a sloping roof, awnings and signs as well as certain changes to the interior such as removing or adding floors, ceilings, partitions and stairs.

A permit is not required for interior or exterior painting, repointing masonry or minor replacement of decayed wood or masonry, provided that the replacement is identical to the original work. Nor is a permit required for resurfacing a built-up asphalt flat roof.

With respect to landscaping, a permit is required for fences, hedges, retaining walls, decks and modifications to existing parking aprons and any other structure on foundations or footings.

A demolition permit is required before any building, garage, shed or a major portion of a building may be demolished.

Obviously, you should obtain your permit before signing any contract, ordering materials or starting work so that you are not left with supplies that cannot be used or work that must be redone. The City, which has a vigorous building inspection system, may order unapproved work to be stopped or demolished and property owners fined.

The staff of the Urban Planning Department can give you general advice about the best way to proceed.

Consult and follow the Guidelines

The high quality of Westmount's physical environment is one of its most valued assets. Maintaining the aesthetic quality of Westmount's streetscapes by ensuring harmonious design and good construction helps maintain the city's distinct character as well as protect everyone's property values. Therefore, applications for building permits in Westmount are carefully reviewed not only with respect to construction and safety requirements but also with respect to design.

Designed to assist property owners plan their construction projects well and to obtain their building permits as quickly as possible, the guidelines for Renovating and Building in Westmount consist of a series of seven leaflets as well as a series of specific information sheets on different parts of Westmount. The Planning Advisory Committee uses these guidelines as criteria to evaluate proposals.

Following the guidelines should serve as a good basis for renovating or designing new buildings in Westmount. However, since good design is achieved only through expertise and sensitivity, simply applying the guidelines will not automatically result in project approval.

See the next page of this booklet for a list of the titles of the seven guideline booklets.

List of Guidelines

0. Obtaining a Building Permit

1. Introduction to Guidelines

- 1.1 Preservation
- 1.2 Alterations, additions and new construction
- 1.3 Unified treatment

2. Exterior Walls

- 2.1 Preservation
- 2.2 Modifications and new construction

3. Roofs

- 3.1 Repair of existing roofs
- 3.2 Roofing materials
- 3.3 Roof-top additions, dormers, skylights and roof windows
- 3.4 Structures on roofs
- 3.5 Roofs on additions and new buildings

4. Windows and Doors

- 4.1 Windows and doors in existing buildings
- 4.2 Additions and new buildings
- 4.3 Design considerations
- 4.4 Shutters and awnings

5. New Buildings, Additions and Major Modifications

- 5.1 Additions to category I*, I and II buildings
- 5.2 Design harmony
- 5.3 Impact on setting
- 5.4 Exterior wall materials
- 5.5 Construction process
- 5.6 Building at the limit of another borough
- 5.7 Mount Royal Heritage Site
- 5.8 Ecoterritories
- 5.9 Areas of archeological interest
- 5.10 Universal accessibility
- 5.11 Land adjacent to a railway

6. Landscape Design

- 6.1 Streetscape and site
- 6.2 Fences and hedges
- 6.3 Grading
- 6.4 Planting
- 6.5 Parking and Driveways
- 6.6 Garden Structures
- 6.7 Environmental Considerations

7. Storefronts and Signs

- 7.1 Sign location
- 7.2 Sign design
- 7.3 Storefront design
- 7.4 Existing storefronts and signs
- 7.5 Multiple occupancies

2 The permit application process, step by step

Step 1: Consult the relevant by-laws

Determine which by-laws apply to your particular situation. These include, but are not limited to, zoning, subdivision, building, and demolition by-laws as well as the plumbing and fire codes.

Step 2: Consult the design guidelines

New buildings and alterations which affect the exterior of a building must also respect the *Guidelines for Renovating and Building in Westmount*. The guideline booklet in the series called "Introduction to Guidelines" should be consulted first. It outlines how to proceed and assists in determining what kind of work is suitable for your building or property.

The Westmount Urban Planning Department can advise on the legality and advisability of planned renovations at the earliest stages. A copy of the Character Area Information Sheet for your area can be obtained as well as specific Guideline Booklets (that are also available on the internet at www.westmount.org). See section 1.8 of booklet 1 for more information about where to get help.

Step 3: Prepare your proposal

Based on your needs and budget as well as what is permitted in the by-laws and guidelines, determine the scope and nature of your project and have drawings prepared.

Step 4: Submit application

Submit an application including the documents and information listed in Submittal Requirements on the last page of this booklet.

A fee is charged for the permit. It is based on the total cost of the construction project. A member of the staff at the Urban Planning Department can inform you of the present rates.

In order to avoid unnecessary cost for the preparation of detailed plans that may not be approved, in the case of all but the simplest project, you should submit a preliminary proposal for *approval in principle*, before proceeding with the detailed working drawings.

Step 5: Plans reviewed by City

All applications for building permits are examined by the Board of Inspections to ensure compliance with the applicable by-laws. Applications submitted before the end of day on Tuesdays will generally be reviewed at the Board's weekly meeting on Thursday morning.

Where the proposed changes affect the exterior of the building, the application is referred to the Planning Advisory Committee. The Committee meets every second Tuesday and applications approved by the Board of Inspections at the previous meetings, will generally be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting. The Committee may require changes or deny approval of a project for reasons of planning and aesthetics.

You can call the Urban Planning Department the day following the meetings to obtain the unofficial results of the review of your submission. Official minutes of both meetings are generally confirmed within one to two weeks and are sent to the applicant immediately thereafter.

If the proposal was refused, you can make the necessary corrections and submit the revised proposal.

The recommendations of the Planning Advisory Committee are finally presented to the Council meeting for approval.

Step 6: Obtain permit

The building permit must be posted in a window or other prominent place at the construction site. A copy of the approved plans associated with the issuance of the permit must be kept on the site. Any changes from the plans must be brought to the attention of the Urban Planning Department immediately and requires review and approval in the same manner as the original application.

A building permit expires after six months if no work was undertaken at all or was started and then suspended for four consecutive months. A new request must be submitted to renew an expired permit, which must comply with any new by-laws or guidelines. Work on the exterior of a building must be completed within 12 months; work on the interior within 18 months. Refer to by-law 1300 concerning permits and certificates.

List of Guidelines (cont'd)

8. Glen Yards

- 8.1 General Approach
- 8.2 A residential neighbourhood
- 8.3 Street grid, streetscapes and views
- 8.4 Traffic
- 8.5 Buildings
- 8.6 Pedestrian-oriented community
- 8.7 Escarpment Park
- 8.8 Westmount Station
- 8.9 Sustainable Development
- 8.10 Master Plan

9. Large Sites of Institutional Character and Places of Worship of Heritage Interest

- 9.1 Large sites of institutional character
- 9.2 Places of worship of heritage interest

Consult an architect

The City encourages owners to obtain the advice of an architect, even for small projects and particularly when a project requires design judgements, by-law interpretation and construction knowledge. For public buildings and for all projects with a construction cost above a proscribed amount, provincial law requires that plans be signed and sealed by a member of the Order of Architects of Quebec.

For new buildings or complex projects, the architect may be invited to discuss the project with the Planning Advisory Committee.

3 Submittal requirements

Based on the type of intervention you are planning (headings to the right), read down the column to see what must be submitted (X) and what may be required in certain circumstances (O).

The Urban Planning Department may also request other additional information based on the nature of the proposal. One complete set of plans must be submitted, folded to 8-1/2" x 14". (A second set will be needed when the permit is issued.)

	New construction major additions ¹	Alterations Minor additions	Landscaping ²	Windows and doors	Storefronts and Signs	Demolition
Application and fee: Application for plan review signed by the building owner or accompanied by a letter of authorization signed by the owner together with the application fee.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Photos: Legible photographs of all sides of the existing building. For landscaping changes, photos of site conditions.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Certificate of location: A copy of the certificate of location is required for the siting of projects.	X	X	X		O	O
Existing and proposed site plans: Plan showing property lines, setbacks, existing buildings, retaining walls, steps and major trees. For sloping sites: a topographical survey showing existing land profile.	X	O	X			
Preliminary plans: Preliminary architectural plans (floor and roof plans, elevations and sections) clearly and completely describing all proposals, including materials and colours as well as all mechanical and electrical equipment visible from the exterior. (At the preliminary approval stage.)	X	X	O			
Final plans: Complete set of architectural, structural, mechanical and landscaping drawings. Samples of proposed exterior materials and colours.	X	X	X			
Street elevations: Existing and proposed street elevations including neighbouring buildings.	X	O				
Proposed site elevations: For retaining walls, landfill, fences or building extensions near the property line: proposed elevation drawings along the property line as seen from the neighbours' sides.	O	O	O			
Model: Form model (eg. cardboard) of the building and/or site, including adjacent topography and buildings, to illustrate volumetric relationships of complex building or roof forms or of sloping sites. In some cases, axonometric or perspective drawings might suffice.	X	O	O			
Window or door brochure: Brochure from the manufacturer with a clear description of the type and colour. For custom-made windows or doors: shop drawings.	X	O		X		
Elevations: For changes to the window or door style or to the size of openings: an accurate drawing of each affected façade showing the final appearance.				X		
Signage: Scaled drawings of each proposed sign showing size, lettering, colours, materials, method of lighting and location on the building façade.					X	
Overall storefront and signage plan: In the case of multiple stores in a building, a letter from the owner indicating that the proposal conforms to the overall storefront and signage plan for the building.					X	
Replacement program: Complete set of plans for the building or landscaping proposed to replace the demolished building.						X
Building background: Documentation including age, history, evolution and architectural evaluation of the building to be demolished.						X

¹"New construction and major additions" includes major transformations to existing buildings.

²"Landscaping" includes decks, fences, retaining walls, driveways and modifications to existing parking aprons.