

SOUND OFF *Steven Lorenz*

When do I need to get a permit for house improvements?

As a Realtor, I'm often asked if a permit is needed for numerous home improvements. The answer is it depends. There are several occasions where a permit isn't needed, but homeowners are more surprised by the improvements that require a permit. In general, if you are changing the floor plan of the property, you need a permit.

This would include things like increasing or decreasing the number of bedrooms or bathrooms as well as adding, moving, removing or replacing walls, floors, ceilings, windows and doors. Additionally,

any work involving plumbing and electric will require a permit. This is often overlooked when a homeowner wants to add a garbage disposal, but there isn't an outlet nearby or replacing their old refrigerator with one that has an icemaker and having to install a water line.

Although many renovations are interior in nature, there are several common ones outside your home that will require a permit. The most common are adding a garage, shed, deck, patio, pool or fence. Likewise, generators, solar panels, heating and cooling systems all

require permits. Obtaining a permit isn't difficult, although depending on the complexity of your design you may have to visit more than one office at your local Town Hall. Most projects will require a visit to your building department and zoning. Others might also include the environmental protection board and health department.

While some view obtaining a permit as a negative, the truth is they are there for your protection. Permits ensure that the work being done is being done correctly and up to code. Additionally, it helps to protect your investment.

Homeowners sometimes don't fully understand the ramifications that can follow if the proper permits aren't pulled or pulled but not properly closed. All open permits must be inspected and signed off on during construction. Then once the work is complete you obtain your certificate of occupancy (CO). The CO is the final step that ensures the permit was fully executed. Without a CO, the homeowner is jeopardizing their investment.

*Steven Lorenz, William Pitt Sotheby's
International Realty,
(203) 940-2149, Slorenz@wpsir.com.*

