

Don't Forget to get Permission Before Starting Those Home Remodeling Projects

Are you thinking about doing some home improvements this year? If you are, don't just head into the project without first doing your some homework.

You probably will need to protect yourself – and the success of your project – in a couple of ways. Depending on the work that you have planned, you may need a building permit from your local government and/or approval from your homeowners association.

Individual homeowners associations have varying requirements, so you'll need to check directly with your neighborhood association.

As for building permits, most local governments require them for major projects, such as finishing your basement, or building decks and patios. Not only are they required by law, they also protect you, the homeowner. Building permits provide third-party verification that you or the contractor you hired did the work according to minimum code requirements. Willingness to get a permit also will tell you a lot about the integrity of the contractors you are interviewing to do the work for you.

In Parker, Colo., where my real estate business is based, the town requires permits for most major home remodel projects, including kitchen or bathroom remodels, new or replacement windows, any plumbing or electrical work, installation of new or replacement furnaces and air conditioners, basement finishes, decks, patios, gazebos, shade structures, pools, hot tubs, garden sheds, and construction of large accessory structures and re-roofing projects.

You can get started by calling the building division of your local government to discuss the need for a permit. In Parker, that phone number is 303.841.1970.

I don't know if other towns and cities do this, but Parker also offers free homeowner building classes, at which building staff walk you through the permitting process, and explain fees and the required inspections. Those classes are held on select Thursdays at 6 p.m. at Town Hall, 20120 E. Mainstreet. For 2013, classes are scheduled for March 21, June 20, Sept. 19 and Dec. 19.

Building permit applications, plan review requirements, permit fees and building guidelines can be found online at www.parkeronline.org/building. If you aren't in Parker, check with your local building division to see what services the staff provides to help you through the process.