

# The Township of Moorestown Construction Department / Inspections

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## Finished Basement Projects

A homeowner's guide to applying for a permit

Converting an unfinished basement in a single-family home into additional living area is a popular home improvement project. Applying for a permit from the construction department can be confusing and intimidating, especially for those who have never done so before. This information packet has been designed to assist homeowners in preparing their permit application when undertaking a finished basement project. Whether you are planning on doing the work yourself or hiring a contractor, this guide will assist you, so that you understand the application process and ensure that all aspects of the project have been accounted for during your planning phase.

This guide will cover items like:

- Permit application
- Zoning
- Rehabilitation code in New Jersey
- Plans
- Additional comments concerning basement plans
- Completing your permit application
- Plan review, inspections, and closing your permit



### **Permit Application Getting started!**

When applying for a construction permit, the first step is to get a permit application jacket along with permit “technicals” and any other forms that may be required. All necessary permits and forms are available at the construction office at the municipal building, the township construction webpage [Construction Office \(Building Inspections\) | Moorestown Township, NJ - Official Website](#), or The New Jersey Codes and Standards website [New Jersey Department of Community Affairs](#). Most forms have both printable and fillable versions on the Codes and Standards website. Construction work in New Jersey is governed by the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code, or NJAC 5:23, otherwise known as just the ‘UCC’. These are the laws that govern construction in New Jersey and the permitting process throughout the state. Finishing a basement requires zoning approval and the submission of plans, both of which are shown a little further down in this handout. If you are installing any appliances or specialized equipment, submit the specifications sheet from the manufacturer with your permit application. The more explanatory information you provide, the less questions we may have during review of the application.

### **Zoning**

Finishing a basement requires approval from the Zoning Department. Zoning approval is a prior approval to the construction permit review and issuance. Although this guide does not provide detail on completing the zoning application, it is important to be aware of any zoning requirements since zoning is a prerequisite to our plan reviews. If zoning help is needed please contact the zoning official.

## **Rehabilitation Codes in New Jersey Additional Information**

For most homeowners and some professional contractors alike, the rehabilitation subcode in New Jersey can be confusing. However, with a basic knowledge of how the rehab subcode works, you can better understand how it relates to your project.

### **What is it?**

The rehabilitation subcode is a section (chapter 6) of the uniform construction code. This is cited as NJAC 5:23-6. This chapter establishes the guidelines when work is performed to an existing building or structure. Since building codes change over time, the rehabilitation subcode intent is to prevent existing buildings from being treated as new construction. This would be burdensome to update the entire building to a current code, even for small projects. The rehabilitation subcode takes a new approach. The requirements that apply to a project are based upon the type of work that is being done.

### **Types of rehabilitation work:**

The rehabilitation subcode classifies work into distinctly different categories. This is important as each category has specific requirements. The requirements can be found in the code section after each type.

**Ordinary maintenance (NJAC 5:23-2.7):** "Ordinary maintenance" means restoration or improvement of a routine or usual nature which is done by replacing a part of, or putting together, something that is worn or broken in a building. A complete list is found in NJAC 5:23-2.7. A permit is not required for work that is classified as ordinary maintenance.

**Repair (NJAC 5:23-6.4):** "Repair" means the restoration to a good or sound condition of materials, systems and/or components that are worn, deteriorated or broken using materials or components identical to or closely similar to the existing and does not include items considered ordinary maintenance. When repairs require a permit they generally will not require plans to be submitted.

**Renovation (NJAC 5:23-6.5):** "Renovation" means the removal and replacement or covering of existing interior or exterior finish, trim, doors, windows, or other materials with new materials that serve the same purpose and do not change the configuration of space. Renovation shall include the replacement of equipment or fixtures. A permit is typically required.

**Alteration (NJAC 5:23-6.6):** "Alteration" means the rearrangement of any space by the construction of walls or partitions, the addition or elimination of any door or window, the extension or rearrangement of any system, the installation of any additional equipment or fixtures and any work which affects a primary structural component. A permit and plans are typically required.

**Reconstruction (NJAC 5:2306.7):** "Reconstruction" means any project where the extent and nature of the work is such that the work area cannot be occupied while the work is in progress and where a new certificate of

occupancy is required before the work area can be reoccupied. Reconstruction may include repair, renovation, alteration or any combination thereof. A permit and plans are typically required.

**Addition (NJAC 5:23-6.32):** Any addition to a building or structure shall comply with the requirements of the Uniform Construction Code applicable to new construction. An addition will need to comply with the current codes. A permit and plans are required.

## Building Plans

A finished basement project will require plans as it is typically classified as an alteration. Plans are in the simplest form, drawn pictures of what your project will look like when completed and how to build it. It needs to be drawn to scale and contain enough information and details so that we can ascertain code compliance. Plans may include plan views, elevations, ductwork, and section, electric, and plumbing plans. Two separate sets of plans are required to be submitted to the construction department.

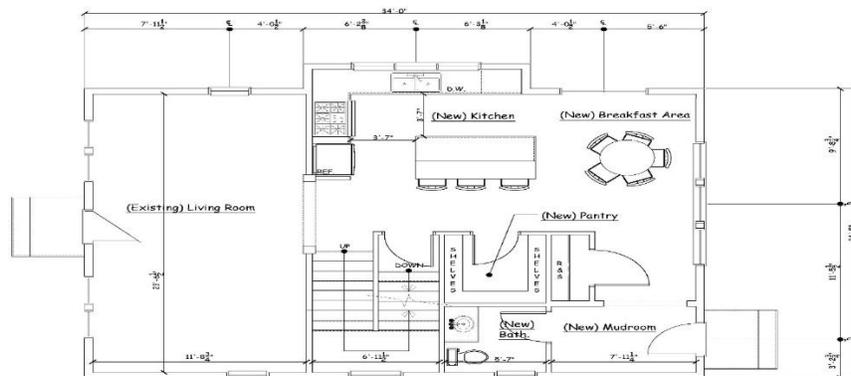


**According to New Jersey law, owners of single family detached homes using the home exclusively as their private residence may prepare their own plans. Home improvement contractors, unless licensed by law, cannot prepare plans.**

**The following examples of plans are NOT to be used for any design purposes. They are strictly illustrative and informative in nature. It is merely meant to show concepts and some of the different types of plans that may be required. Each project is unique and if plans are required, must be prepared for that specific project.**

### Plan view

A plan view is an overhead look at the project work area or space. Locations of walls, doors, stairs, mechanical, and plumbing shall be identified on the drawing.



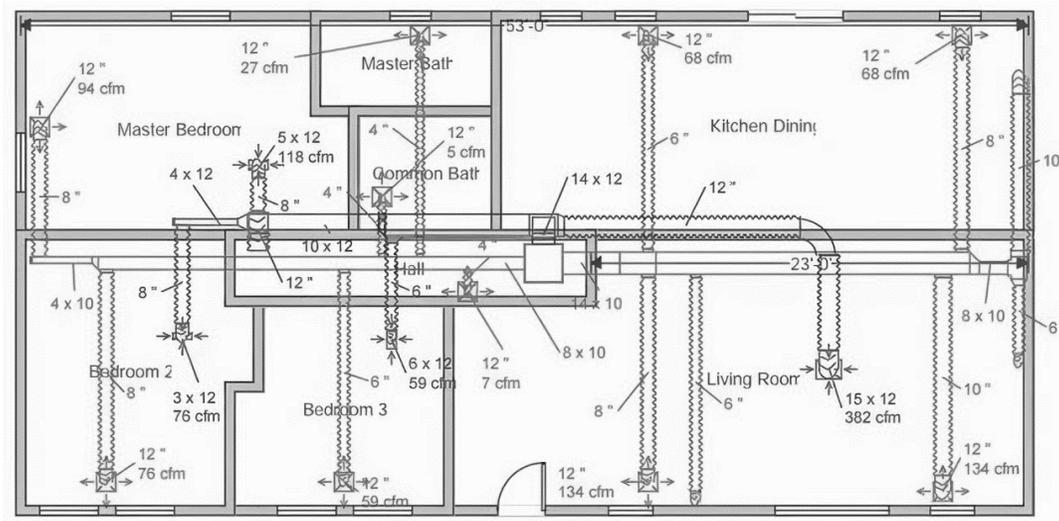
### Elevation view

An elevation view is a flat representation of an exterior side of the building or interior wall.



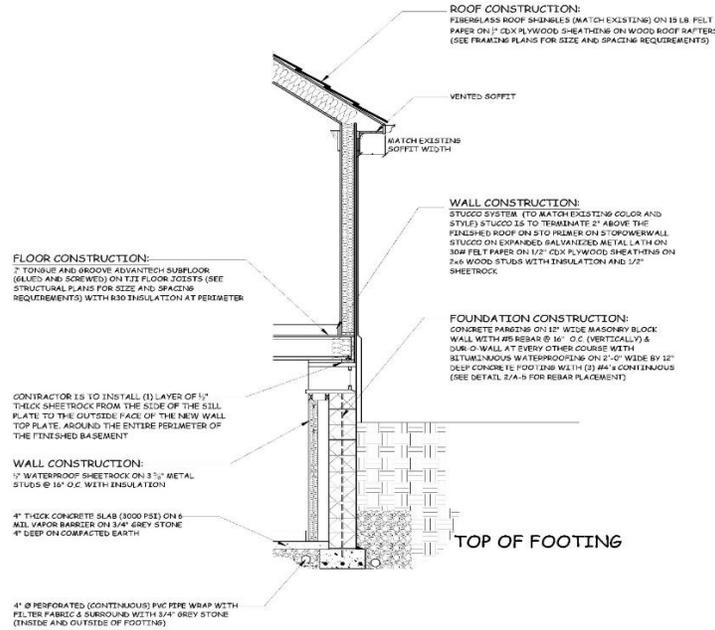
### Ductwork plans

A ductwork plan illustrates how heating and cooling will be dispersed through the structure. It will show heating, ventilation, air conditioning elements such as supply ducts, return ducts, grill and register locations.



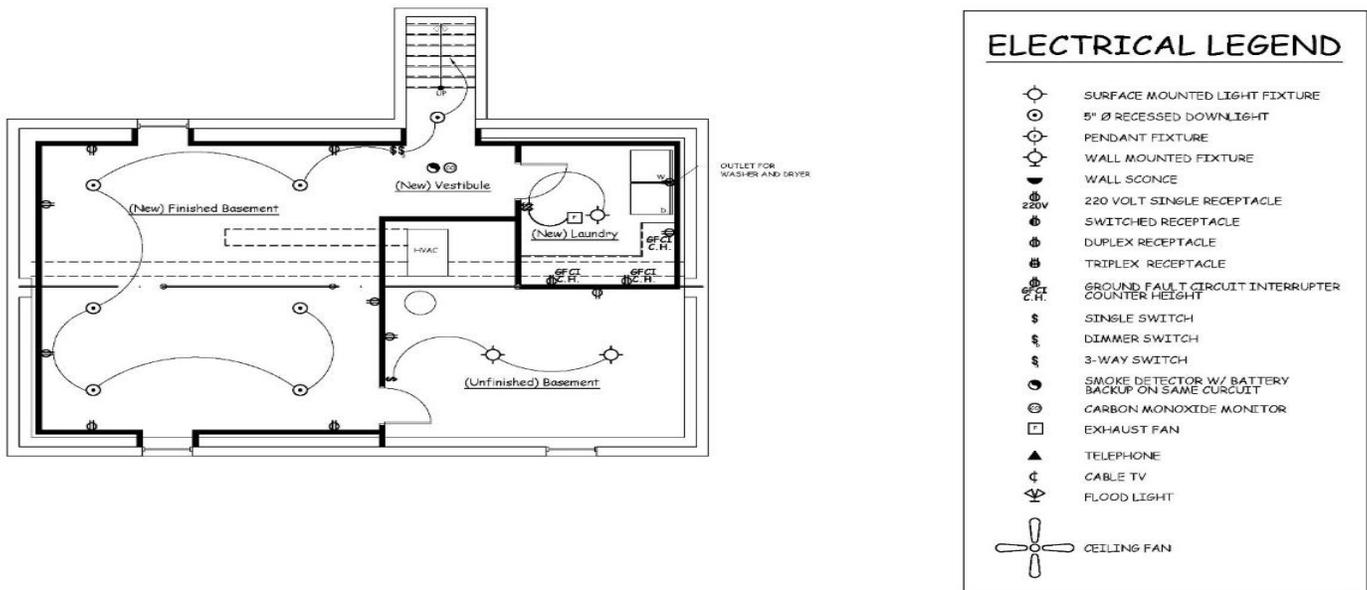
[Cross] Section plan

A section plan shows a side view of wall or building element. This drawing shows important details pertaining to the construction of the wall including materials, insulation, siding, roofing, footing and foundation, interior finishes, etc.



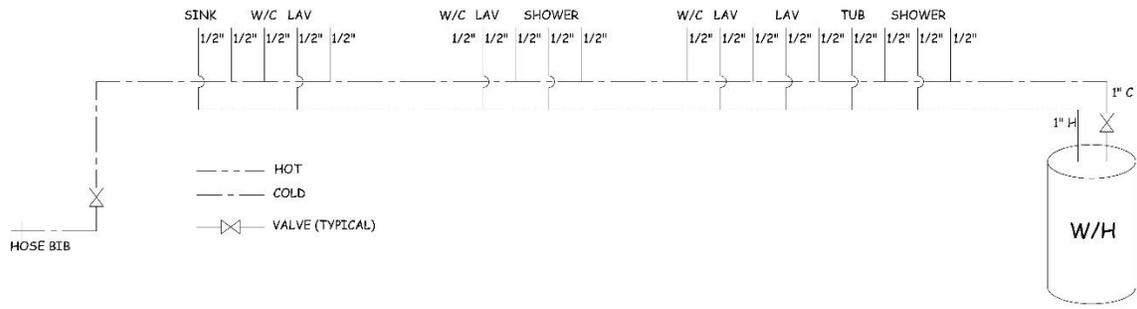
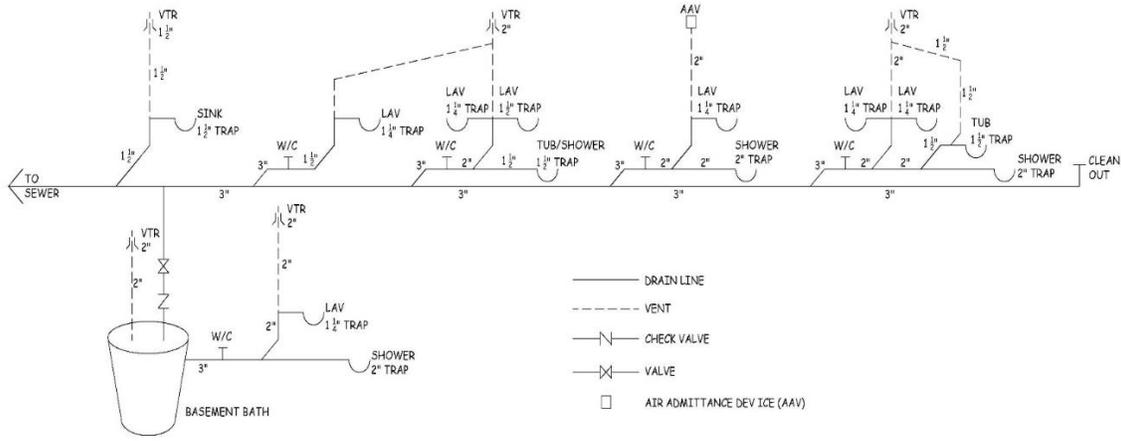
### Electric plans

Electric plans convey fixture location, switches, outlets, smoke/carbon monoxide alarms, and any other electric based devices. A plan view is the most simplistic way to do this. In addition to an owner or a NJ Design Professional, a NJ licensed electrical contractor is permitted to prepare electric plans for single family homes.



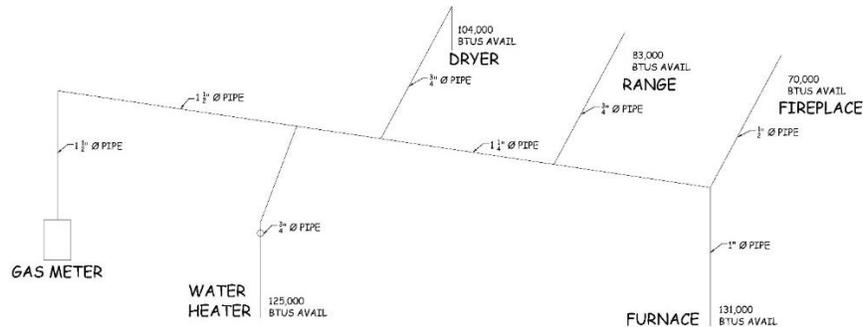
### Plumbing plans

Plumbing plans convey the location for plumbing fixtures such as toilets, sinks, showers, tubs, hose connections, water heaters, etc. Just like electric plans, a plan view is the most simplistic way to do this, however, in addition there may be additional plans needed depending on the type of project. These additional plans are called riser diagrams. There are separate riser diagrams for water supply and drain/waste/venting systems. In addition to an owner or a NJ Design Professional, a NJ licensed plumbing contractor is permitted to prepare plumbing plans for single family dwelling units. The following two sample plans show a water supply riser diagram and a drain/waste/vent riser diagram.



### Mechanical plans

Common mechanical plans for existing single-family homes are for gas pipe systems, although it can include other plans such as ductwork plans. A gas pipe system plan is also called a gas riser diagram. It shows the type and size of the gas piping throughout the system, location of the appliances along with BTU ratings, and all pipe lengths in the gas piping system. In addition to an owner or a NJ Design Professional, a NJ licensed plumbing contractor or NJ licensed HVACR contractor is permitted to prepare gas piping plans for single family dwelling units.



## Additional Comments Concerning Basement Plans

### Fireblocking

Fireblocking is a commonly misunderstood framing detail. The installation of fireblocking slows the progression of fire and combustion by products through the house in areas such as behind walls and ceilings. It is required in combustible construction to cut off both vertical and horizontal concealed draft openings. The International Residential Code defines fireblocking as materials that are “installed to resist the free passage of flame to other areas of the building through concealed spaces”. Some examples of fireblocking material are 2x lumber, minimum 1/2” thick drywall, mineral wool fire-retardant insulation, or fire caulking.

In a finished basement, some of the common areas that fireblocking is to be provided:

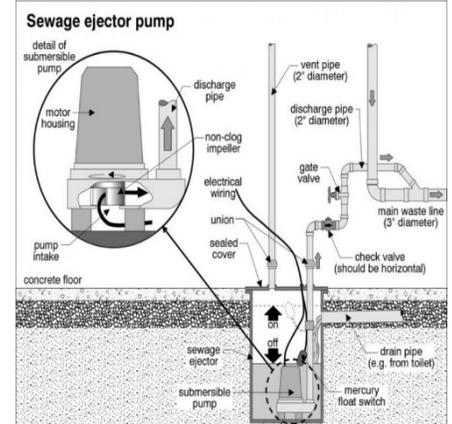
- At the interconnection between concealed vertical and horizontal spaces such as where the perimeter walls meet the ceiling joists.
- At openings around vents, pipes, ducts, cables, and wires at the top of the wall.
- At least every ten feet behind walls when there is a space between the wall framing and the basement foundation wall.

### Adding a Bedroom to a Basement

Every room in a basement that will be used as a sleeping room must have an emergency escape and rescue opening, unless the home has a compliant fire sprinkler system, in which case the requirements are slightly different. An emergency escape and rescue window, if below grade, must also have an exterior area well. Section R310 of the 2021 International Residential Code has further information on these openings and goes into great detail on the minimum code requirements. In addition, any home that has a private septic will need Burlington County Board of Health approval prior to issuance of the permit.

### Adding a bathroom or plumbing fixtures to a basement

Including a bathroom or plumbing fixtures in your project is a very popular option. In most cases, however, the main sewer drain is located above the basement floor, which will require the installation of a sewer ejection pump. Installation of a sewer ejection pump shall be included in both your plumbing and electric permit application. Plans shall also show the installation, including piping and wiring. The National Standard Plumbing Code requires a high-level alarm to be installed in most cases. Section 11.7 of the 2021 National Standard Plumbing Code has further information on the code requirements for sewage pumps. In addition, any home that has a private septic will need Burlington County Board of Health approval prior to issuance of the permit.



## Completing your construction permit application

### Permit jacket

The first form is the construction permit application which resembles a manila folder (if you have an original). Make sure boxes I, IIa, IIb are completed as fully as possible. Sections VI and VII should be completed to the best of your knowledge, but are not essential. If you are preparing your own plans and/or you are performing the work yourself, simply put 'self' as the principal contractor and/or architect/engineer. Next, inside the folder you will find the 'certification in lieu of oath'. Section I pertains to the owner when acting as the contractor and/or preparing the plans. Check all that apply and sign. Section II pertains to any agent that is representing the owner such as a contractor, architect, or project manager. Section II will be completed and signed by the agent as applicable. The last page is for our use. There is a link to the permit jacket on our webpage.

BLOCK \_\_\_\_\_ LOT \_\_\_\_\_ QUALIFICATION CODE \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS (SITE) \_\_\_\_\_ PERMIT NO. \_\_\_\_\_

### CONSTRUCTION PERMIT APPLICATION

Applicant Completes: Sections I, II, III (optional), IV, VI, and VII

**I. IDENTIFICATION**  
 1. Proposed Work Site at: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Name of Owner in Fee: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. Ownership in Fee: Public \_\_\_\_\_ Private \_\_\_\_\_ University \_\_\_\_\_ or other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 License No. OR, if new home, Builder Reg. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Improvement Contractor Registration No. or Exemption Reason \_\_\_\_\_  
 Federal Emp. ID No. \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. Architect or Engineer \_\_\_\_\_ Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. Responsible Person in Charge once Work has Begun \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. PROPOSED WORK**  
 Minor Work  New Building  Addition  Demolition  
 Repair  Alteration  Renovation  Reconstruction  
 Asbestos Abat. -Subch. 8  Lead Hazard Abatement  Radon Remediation  Annual Permit

**III. PLAN REVIEW (optional)**  
 1.  Building  Electrical  Plumbing  Fire Protection  Elevator

**IV. DOES OR WILL YOUR BUILDING CONTAIN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?**  
 1.  Elevators/Escalators/Lifts/Dumbwaiters/Moving Walks  
 2.  High Pressure Boilers  
 3.  Pressure Vessels  
 4.  Refrigeration Systems  
 5.  Cross-Connections/Backflow Preventers  
 6.  Hazardous Uses/Spaces of Assembly  
 7.  Sprinklers/Standpipes  
 8.  Smoke Control Systems in Open Wells  
 9.  Underground Storage Tanks  
 10.  Swimming Pools, Spas and Hot Tubs  
 11.  LP Gas Tanks  
 12.  Fire Alarm  
 13.  Responder Comm System

**V. FEE SUMMARY (for office use only)**

1. Building		Update	Update
2. Electrical			
3. Plumbing			
4. Fire Protection			
5. Elevator Devices			
6. Subtotal			
7. Leaks 20% for State Plan Review			
8. Subtotal			
9. State Permit Surcharge Fee			
10. Subtotal			
11. Cert. of Occupancy			
12. Other			
13. TOTAL			

**VI. BUILDING/SITE CHARACTERISTICS (office use only)**

1. Number of Stories		
2. Height of Structure	ft.	
3. Area - Largest Floor	sq. ft.	
4. New Building Area	sq. ft.	
5. Volume of New Structure	cu. ft.	
6. Max. Live Load		
7. Max. Occupancy Load		
8. If Industrialized Building: State Approved	HUD	
9. Total Land Area Disturbed	sq. ft.	
10. Flood Hazard Zone		
11. Base Flood Elevation	ft.	
12. Wetlands	yes	no

**VII. DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING USE**  
 A. RESIDENTIAL (primary use)  
 1. State Specific Use: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Use Group, Proposed: Select Group \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. Change in Use Group, Indicate Present: Select Group \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. No. of dwelling units: Total/Units to come on line  
 Gained, Sale \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gained, Rental \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lost, Sale \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lost, Rental \_\_\_\_\_  
 B. NON-RESIDENTIAL (primary use)  
 1. State Specific Use: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Use Group, Proposed: Select Group \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. Change in Use Group, Indicate Present: Select Group \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. MIXED USE - Last secondary use(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 D. Construct. Classification: Present \_\_\_\_\_ Proposed \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU WANT:**  
 1.  Partial Releases  
 2.  Prototype Processing

**TOTAL COST \$0**

UCC-F300-1 (rev. 6/22)

### Permit technical

There are multiple disciplines represented within a permit application. Each discipline has a separate technical that needs to be completed and included in your permit application. The most common disciplines are building, electric, plumbing, mechanical, and fire. The scope of your project will determine which technical(s) need to be included. For instance, a water heater replacement will typically only be a mechanical technical, unless its an electric water heater, in which case you would also need an electric technical. A basement remodel typically has a building, electric, and fire, but if installing a basement bathroom, plumbing would also be needed. If any gas piping will be installed you will also need a mechanical technical. If you have any questions on which technical(s) need to be included, please contact us, and we'll guide you through the application. When completing a technical, fill in all applicant information. If you are not using a contractor, put 'self' as the contractor. Always include the cost of work and the description of work. The price should reflect a current market value or labor and materials. Even if you plan on performing the work yourself and are getting materials for little or no cost, your estimated cost of work is what a professional would charge as if they were doing the work and purchasing all the materials. There are links to each permit technical on our webpage.

**Plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning work shall not be undertaken except by persons licensed to perform such work pursuant to law, except in the case of a single-family homeowner on his or her own dwelling! Due to inherent risks involved with performing your own work, it is advisable to hire a licensed professional unless you are comfortable with your knowledge and experience.**



### **Other documents**

There are numerous other documents that may need to be submitted with your application. These could include chimney certifications, HVAC design documents such as manual J and S, manufacturers specifications (cut sheets) on gas fired appliances. Complete your zoning application if applicable and include the zoning fee. If unsure of what you may need to submit with your permit application, please contact us and we will assist you. Remember – every application is different and has different requirements on what may need to be submitted!

### **Plan Review**

When you drop off your application we will perform a cursory review to insure the application is complete before accepting. If it is apparent that items are missing or incomplete, we may ask for you to complete and bring back. This will help to keep the application moving through our review process. The application will first go to zoning, which could take up to ten business days to complete. There may also be other agencies that will have to look at your application depending on the scope of work, such as the County Board of Health, and flood plain administrator. This could add additional time to the review process. According to NJAC 5:23-2.16(a) the construction office has twenty business days to review your application. If we need clarification or find any deficiencies in code compliance you will be notified in writing of the comments. If the permit application is approved, you will receive notification of the approval and the fee amount.

Application rejected? First, don't get upset or be too hard on yourself! The majority of applications get rejected during the first review, even from experienced contractors and builders. Go through all the comments. Address each comment directly. Look up any code citations that are given. Make any plan revisions and correct any other deficiencies. Although not mandatory, resubmit the application with a short narrative addressing how you addressed each comment. This will help the application move quicker through the re-review. If you are unsure of what the plans' examiner is asking for, by all means, call our office and ask to speak with the plans' examiner about the comment. We are here to help get your application through the review process!



## Permit issuance

After plan review is complete and your permit has been fully approved, you will be notified by the construction office that the permit is ready for pick up and the fee amount. Permit fees are calculated in accordance with the most recently adopted fee schedule by town council. Click on the following link to view our fee schedule or visit our webpage. <https://www.moorestown.nj.us/DocumentCenter/View/516/Municipal-Construction-Permit-Fee-Schedule> After payment, you will receive a set of plans back that must be onsite for all inspections (if plans were submitted), permit documents, and a placard that should be placed in a window or on site in a conspicuous location. **If you have a contractor handling your permit application on your behalf, it is still the owners responsibility to verify that the permit has been released prior to commencement of work.**

## Inspections

After your permit has been issued and construction begins, you now will need inspections performed.

Click on the following link to view a list of inspections <https://www.moorestown.nj.us/DocumentCenter/View/6691/Required-Inspections>. Not all inspections on this list are applicable to a finished basement. Again, if there are any questions you may have regarding the required inspections please reach out to us for clarification. The required inspections will also provide guidance on scheduling your inspections. Once the project is complete it is important to have all final inspections conducted and approved. This is the responsibility of the applicant or applicant's contractor/agent to schedule these final inspections. **If you are using a professional contractor final payment should not be made until you are provided with a certificate. This is your evidence that the permit has been found to be in compliance with all codes and regulations.** This is the final step and shows that you have closed the permit in accordance with the law. Permits will remain 'open' until a certificate is issued. It is also a local ordinance that all 'open' permits must be closed before the sale of a home.



**Now – enjoy the fruits of your labor and hard work!**