

Building permit requirements for housing

On February 26, 2026, City Council adopted amendments to the [Winnipeg Building By-law \(WBB\) 4555/87](#) that pertain to building permits for housing.

“Housing” includes single-family dwellings, duplexes, and row houses.

Subsection 3.3 of the WBB has been amended by adding the following definition:

“finished level” in regards to a level of a building, means a level that has been completed with drywall or other wall coverings, insulation, flooring, and other finishes, resulting in additional living space for occupants added 27/2026

Subsection 14.2.1 (1) of the WBB pertains to when a building permit is required, and has been amended by adding the following:

*(k) the alteration of building envelope, or portion thereof;
added 27/2026*

*(l) the finishing a previously undeveloped level or unfinished space, including a lower level, within an existing single-family dwelling, duplex, triplex, or row house,
added 27/2026*

*(m) the creation of a new bedroom within an existing single-family dwelling, duplex, triplex, or row house; and
added 27/2026*

*(n) the installation of a permanent pool structure capable of holding more than 600mm in height of water including pools, spas, swim spas, and hot tubs.
added 27/2026*

The following table provides *examples* of when a building permit is required and when a building permit is not required. Refer to the WBB for a complete list of building permit requirements.

Building permit requirements for housing			
Application/scenario	Example	Building permit required	Notes
Creating a finished level in an undeveloped <i>basement</i> .	Adding frost walls, insulation, drywall, etc.	✓ Yes	New construction forming a finished level requires a permit.
A house has a previously developed lower level, and a homeowner is upgrading finishes.	Cosmetic upgrades to include new doors, trim, flooring, and painting.	✗ No	A permit is not required when work is limited to cosmetic upgrades.
A new house was purchased from a home builder with the <i>basement</i> unfinished, including white poly insulated frost walls.	The new owner wants to develop the lower level to include a bedroom, bathroom and rec. room.	✓ Yes	A permit is required including a mandatory pre-board inspection of the exterior frost walls prior to covering.
Replacing insulation and <i>vapour barrier</i> in a small area of a finished level as part renovations e.g.: kitchen, bath, etc.	Existing stud walls to remain but replacing the batt insulation and poly.	✗ No	Considered “like-for-like” replacement, no change to the wall assembly or the <i>building</i> envelope performance.
The <i>alterations</i> of a <i>building</i> envelope, or a portion thereof.	Adding rigid foam insulation to exterior/ interior wall assembly.	✓ Yes	A permit is required when the performance of <i>building</i> envelope will change.
Partial fire-damage repair or restoration affecting less than 50% of a <i>dwelling unit</i> .	Replacing drywall, insulation, and finishes after minor fire/smoke damage, with no structural <i>alterations</i> .	✗ No	Considered “like-for-like” replacement, no change to the wall assembly or the <i>building</i> envelope performance.
Installation of a permanent <i>swimming pool</i> , hot tub, spa, or swim spa capable of holding more than 600 mm of water.	Placing a built-in hot tub on a deck, installing an in-ground or semi-permanent above-ground pool, or adding a permanent backyard swim spa.	✓ Yes	A permanent pool requires a building permit while a seasonal pool that is fully removable does not require a building permit. Both permanent and seasonal pools must follow the code .
Change to exterior cladding.	Replacing stucco with vinyl siding.	✓ Yes	Replacing non-combustible with combustible materials changes the performance of the assembly.

Notes:

- *Italicized terms* are defined in the Manitoba Building Code.
- ***Bold italicized terms*** are defined in the Winnipeg Building By-law.
- Many building projects also require separate trade permits for electrical and plumbing work.