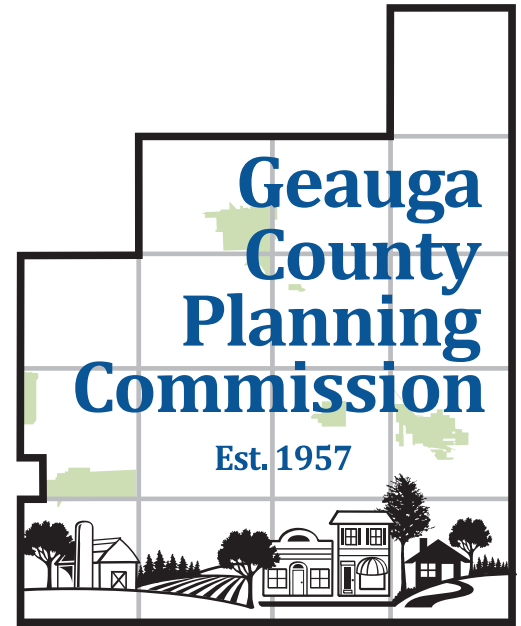


What Approvals Do I Need for a New Home?



This Info Sheet relates to townships only.

Four (4) local county and township government offices are primarily involved in the review and approval to construct a new home. Each office is a piece of a puzzle, as depicted below, having a specific purpose in the review process and **all four pieces** are required for construction.*

Contractors often obtain permits on behalf of a property owner, but the owner is ultimately responsible to ensure ALL required approvals have been obtained BEFORE construction begins and that the work performed complies with the permit. You may work simultaneously to obtain the required permits but **be aware that the township will not issue the Zoning Certificate until you have the sewage permit and Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District approval (when applicable)**. A building permit alone is not sufficient to begin construction as it is just one piece of the puzzle, as more fully described on the following pages.



*The Geauga County Engineer's Office is also involved to issue an address number and for a culvert pipe permit, if required. Other projects may require fewer or other approvals, including state and federal. Check with each office to determine if approval of your project is required.

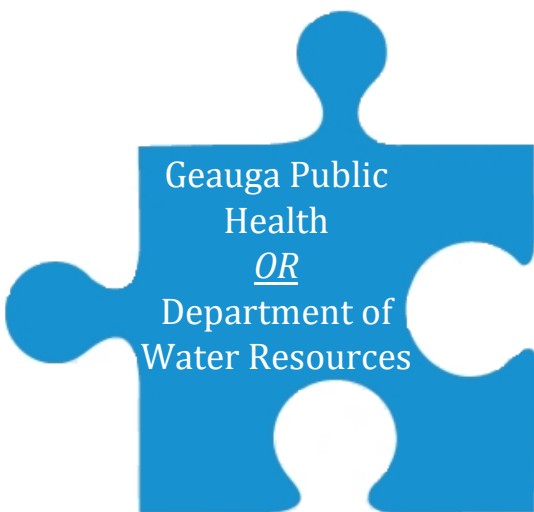
Zoning is the most important approval you must obtain prior to construction of your new home. Why?

Zoning regulations, adopted by your local township, specify requirements for your new home, such as minimum floor area, distance it must be located from property lines (referred to as "setbacks"), maximum height, and others. Contact your local zoning inspector regarding minimum lot size and width requirements as well questions related to accessory structures, agricultural uses, and any other use subject to zoning.

The zoning approval for your project, typically referred to as a "Zoning Certificate" is issued by a township zoning inspector based upon a review of plans that you submit to the township.

It is important to understand the difference between a Zoning Certificate and a Building Permit. ***The Zoning Certificate is your legal, written approval that the proposed building, structure, or use is allowed and complies with zoning.*** The Building Permit, issued by the Geauga County Building Department, is approval for how the building or structure must be ***physically*** constructed.

All townships, cities, and villages in Geauga County require zoning approval (except Middlefield Township) and you must contact your local zoning inspector to be advised of how to apply for the Zoning Certificate.



Homes Served by a Private Septic System & Water Well

Homes located within the townships of Geauga County are *primarily* served by household sewage treatment systems, AKA a "septic system" and private water wells, both of which require review and approval by Geauga Public Health ("GPH") based upon regulations adopted by the Ohio Department of Health.

You must have a *lot evaluation* performed, which is a review to determine whether it is feasible to install a septic system on your lot. You must hire a soil scientist and a septic designer to prepare a soil report, calculations, and plans related to the proposed septic system, the capacity of which is based upon the number of bedrooms proposed in your new home. Contact GPH for more details about applying for the septic and water well permits *as well as the Plumbing Permit for your new home.*

Homes Served by Public Sanitary Sewer/Water:

Access to public sanitary sewer or public drinking water is limited within the townships but where it is provided, the system is owned by the County and operated and maintained by the Geauga County Department of Water Resources (GCDWR). In these instances, construction plans must be submitted to the County Sanitary Engineer for review and approval prior to issuance of a sewer permit. (Note: some subdivisions maintain a private sanitary sewer system and/or drinking water system, which are not affiliated with the County's system. Also, municipalities maintain their own sanitary/water infrastructure.)

The Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District ensures water quality in Geauga County is maintained as construction sites contribute to soil erosion, the sedimentation of which leads to water quality problems. The District reviews the site plan for your proposed new home to ensure proper measures are in place, such as silt fencing, to reduce sediment run-off from the site. If the project contains soil disturbing activities of over one acre, the District also reviews the site plan to ensure that appropriate and proper storm water management practices are implemented for compliance with the Ohio EPA General Construction Permit as well.



One week or less is the typical review period for residential projects but it could be up to 30 days depending on the complexity.

A Water Management and Sediment Control Plan (or abbreviated version, when applicable) is required when one of the following *soil disturbing activities* is proposed:

- A) disturbance of one (1) acre or more (including septic systems)
- B) disturbance of any acreage (including septic systems) on a subplot located within a platted subdivision.
- C) disturbance of over 300 square feet (including septic systems) in Auburn, Bainbridge, Claridon, Hambden, Newbury, Munson, Russell, Thompson, and Troy townships.

A complete copy of the Geauga County Water Management and Sediment Control requirements can be found at www.geugaswcd.com



The Geauga County Building Department is responsible for enforcement of the Residential Code of Ohio and the National Electric Code. A "Building Permit" is approval of the actual *physical* construction of your project, which includes *structural (foundation and framing) mechanical and electrical**. Many site inspections by certified inspectors occur during construction. (*See the "Gauga Public Health" puzzle piece regarding the plumbing permit.)

The Building Dept., in general, will require you to provide all other approvals (zoning, septic, etc.) before issuing the Building Permit. However, be aware that if the home meets the requirements of the Building Dept., they can issue the Building Permit for the project regardless of whether or not you have secured the other approvals. ***This does not relieve you of the requirement to obtain the Zoning Certificate or any of the other approvals.***

Example #1: Your proposed new home requires a variance from township zoning because you want to build closer to the side lot line than permitted. The variance process can often take one or more months to complete. If you submit an application to the Building Department and it complies with their requirements, the staff is obligated to issue the Building Permit regardless of the status of your variance request with the township. *You still cannot commence construction until all four pieces of the the puzzle are obtained.*

Example #2: You propose to build a single family dwelling within a commerical zoning district. As long as it complies with the structural, mechanical, and electrical requirements, the Building Department can issue the Building Permit. *However*, that does not mean a single family home is actually permitted by township zoning in the commercial district. *See the "Township Zoning" puzzle piece, difference between zoning and building.*

Note: South Russell Village has their own Building Department.

Additional Information

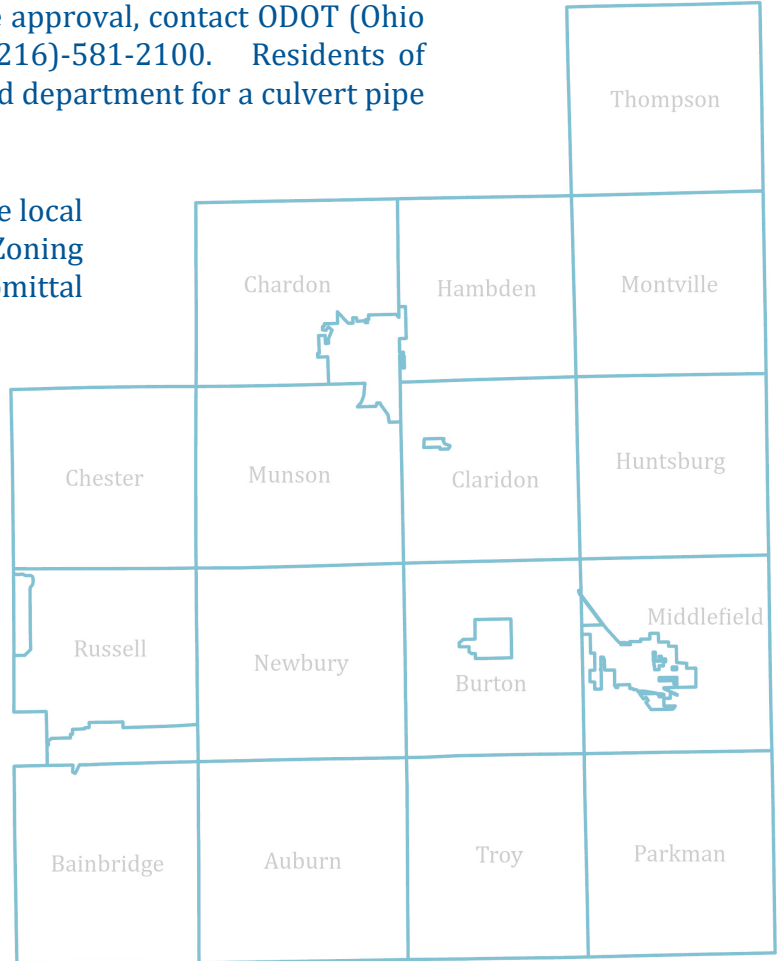
Remember to first contact the Geauga County Engineer's Office to submit a Drive Permit Application to obtain your new address number and culvert pipe approval (if required). You will need the address number to apply for the other permits.

If your lot fronts on a state road, for culvert pipe approval, contact ODOT (Ohio Department of Transportation) District 12 at (216)-581-2100. Residents of Huntsburg Township only must contact their road department for a culvert pipe permit and not the County Engineer.

In addition to new homes, always inquire with the local zoning inspector if your project requires a Zoning Certificate and for their application submittal requirements.

Visit the "Links" page at the Planning Commission's webpage listed below to access your community's website as well as a list of zoning inspectors.

Disclaimer: This Info Sheet is a general guide. Because every situation is unique, not every scenario or issue is addressed. This Info Sheet was prepared by the Geauga County Planning Commission but the Planning Commission and its staff are not involved in the permit process to construct a new home.



Contacts

Geauga Soil & Water Conservation District

12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite #240
Chardon, Ohio 44024
(440) 834-1122
<http://geaugaswcd.com/>

Geauga County Building Department

12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite #360
Chardon, Ohio 44024
(440) 279-1780
<https://co.geauga.oh.us/Departments/Building-Department>

Geauga County Engineer's Office

12665 Merritt Rd.
Chardon, Ohio 44024
(440) 279-1800
Email: gce.geauga.oh.gov

Geauga County Dept. of Water Resources

12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite #390
Chardon, Ohio 44024
(440) 279-1970
<https://www.gcdwr.org/>

Geauga Public Health

12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite #300
Chardon, Ohio 44024
(440) 279-1914
<http://gphohio.org/>

Scan the QR code for the Planning Commission's contact info or visit:
<https://bocc.geauga.oh.gov/departments/planning-commission>

