

## Permits are required for some home improvement projects

As the weather gets warmer, many homeowners and renters may be thinking about sprucing up their properties. There are many options - painting, fencing and even residing the property.
But did you know there are construction projects that may require permits? The City of Harlan requires permits to be drawn for several projects.
There are permits for both building and electrical. Electrical permits go through the State of Iowa. To find out if your project requires a permit, go to the City of Harlan website permits tab.
Someone painting or putting up drywall, siding, roofing, painting, carpeting and insulation doesn't need a permit.
If someone needs to repair or replace existing doors, windows, driveways, sidewalks and fences there is no need for a permit.
Other projects that don't require permits include replacement or repair of worn valves, faucets, broken pipes and drains, lavatories, tubs and toilets, switches, receptacles, light fixtures or fans.

One project that does need a permit in certain instances is repairing or replacing furnaces, water heaters and central air conditioning.
If someone is planning to change from gas to electric or vice versa, a permit is required.
Roger Bissen, building inspector, said any type of maintenance on your house is considered maintenance and there's no permit needed.
"The only time is when people have to pull a permit then I have to come and do an inspection," Bissen said.
If you're going to do any type of additions, new plumbing or electrical work a permit would be needed for that.
"To replace something in your house, like for like - such as replace outlets and faucets, furnace, water heater no permit is required," Bissen said.
If you have a gas water heater and decide you are going to change it to electric water heater then a permit is required.
"It's because you have a gas line that you're going to
be eliminating and are doing electric wiring going to the water heater," Bissen said. "If a gas line has to be installed or rerouted, I look to make sure it's installed properly and make sure it doesn't leak before they apply gas to it. The purpose is to reduce the risk of fire."
If someone is planning on trimming trees, it doesn't require a permit, but if new trees are being planted they need to be behind city sidewalks, not in the right-of-way.
These guidelines apply to both do-it-yourselfers and contractors.
"Both fall under the same guidelines," Bissen said.
People will install new windows and it doesn't require a permit because it's considered maintenance.
"But if you're going to make a bedroom in the basement and you're going to put an egress window in, then that requires a permit because there are guidelines on how that egress window needs to be installed," he said.
People could be subject to a fine if they continue to work without a required permit.


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## Signs a home exterior needs updating

Renovations are a great way for homeowners to reshape their homes. Some may aspire to renovate so their home is more reflective of their personal taste, while others may do so in an effort to make their homes better align with modern styles and sensibilities. Regardless of why a homeowner chooses to renovate, the need to do so is often evident to the naked eye, especially when the time comes to update home exteriors.
Curb appeal is often discussed in regard to the effects it can have when selling a home. But curb appeal is equally important for homeowners who aren't putting their homes on the market. A well-maintained, aesthetically appealing home is a source of pride, while a home with fading curb appeal can make homeowners feel a little sheepish. Homeowners who want their homes to maintain their curb appeal can look for signs that it's time to update their home exteriors.

- Curling shingles: The roof may not be the first thing people think of when pondering curb appeal, but a damaged roof can contribute to problems that ultimately affect the exterior and interior of the home. Multiple curling shingles indicate it's time to replace the roof. The sight of curling shingles is not pretty, but the larger issue in such instances is the potential for costly water damage when water gets in through the affected shingles.
- Dated entry door: Many home improvement experts insist they can determine when a home was built or most recently renovated simply by looking at the front door. Steel and glass doors are popular in modern homes, so homeowners with front doors with ornate designs and oval glass inserts can likely benefit from an upgrade to their entryway. A modern front door can make a statement and real estate experts note how popular updated front doors are among buyers.
- Unsightly landscaping: It's not only the physical components of the home that may suggest an update is necessary. Homeowners without a green thumb may have exterior landscaping that has seen better days. If a spring or summer day spent tending to your landscaping is not your ideal weekend pastime, then consider replacing unsightly landscaping with low-maintenance plants or hardscaping. These alternatives to more needy plants can create curb appeal without requiring any extra work for homeowners.
- Cracked driveways/walkways: If the driveway looks like a busy road at the end of snow plowing season, chances are that's adversely affecting the impression people have of your home. In addition, cracked walkways indicate a need for renovations, as these areas are front and center when welcoming guests.
Updating a home's exterior can restore curb appeal and help homeowners feel better about their properties.


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- Install an energy efficient furnace or boiler - Conduct annual furnace tune-ups and inspections.
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## Top 10 spring outdoor projects

Spring is the perfect time to get started on some outdoor projects to beautify your lawn and garden. Here are the top 10 spring lawn and garden projects that you can consider.

1. Clean up: Start by cleaning up the yard and garden. Rake up leaves, debris, and any other dead vegetation that accumulated over the winter.
2. Lawn care: Get your lawn ready for the growing season by mowing it to the correct height, aerating the soil, fertilizing, and removing any weeds.
3. Mulching: Mulching helps to conserve soil moisture, suppress weeds, and improve soil fertility. Spread a layer of organic mulch around trees, shrubs, and plants.
4. Planting: Spring is the perfect time to plant new trees, shrubs, and flowers. Choose the right plants for your soil type and climate zone.
5. Composting: Start composting your yard waste and kitchen scraps. Compost makes a great fertilizer for your garden.
6. Edging: Define the edges of your lawn and garden beds with an edger. This creates a neat and tidy appearance and prevents grass from growing into the garden beds.
7. Pruning: Prune back trees and shrubs to remove any damaged or dead branches. This will help promote healthy growth and flowering.
8. Garden beds: Prepare your garden beds by removing any weeds, adding compost or organic matter, and loosening the soil. This will help your plants grow strong and healthy.
9. Irrigation: Check your irrigation system to make sure it is working properly. Replace any broken or damaged parts.
10. Decorate: Add some decorative touches to your lawn and garden. Install a bird bath, bird feeder, or fountain to attract wildlife. Hang some colorful wind chimes or install some outdoor lighting to create a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere.

These top 10 spring lawn and garden projects will help you create a beautiful and healthy outdoor space that you can enjoy all season long. Start planning and get to work!

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There's a collective "how can we help?" mindset that runs to the core of everyone you meet here. From county supervisors to city council members, politicians to street shopkeepers, school principals to museum curators, those who live and work in Shelby County share the kind of optimism and "arm-linking" that seems of another time. Here, however, that kind of mindset is the makeup of our DNA. The idea of "can-do" is still fresh in our minds, not something obsolete.

## IS THIS RIGHT FOR YOU?

It's a simple yet critical question to consider: are the people and communities of Shelby County right for you and your business? Is it the right place to find those that will help you prosper and keep your dreams alive? Ultimately, that'll come down to a first-hand visit, but for starters we'd like to share some of what you can come to expect:

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Top 10 spring home improvement projects
Spring is the perfect time to tackle some home improvement projects that you may have been putting off during the winter. Here are the top 10 spring home improvement projects that you can consider.


1. Fresh Coat of

Paint: A fresh coat of paint can transform the look of any room. Choose a color that complements your décor and gives your home a fresh new look.
2. Deep Cleaning: Spring cleaning is an essential home improvement project that everyone should consider. Start by cleaning your carpets, windows, and upholstery to get rid of any accumulated dirt and dust.
3. Window Treatments: Replace your old window treatments with new curtains or blinds. This can add a pop of color to your room and enhance its overall style.
4. Kitchen Updates: Update your kitchen by replacing old hardware, adding new cabinets, or upgrading your appliances. This will give your kitchen a fresh new look and improve its functionality.
5. Bathroom Renovations: Renovate your bathroom by replacing old fixtures, updating your shower or tub, and adding new tiles. This can enhance your bathroom's style and make it more comfortable.
6. Landscaping: Enhance your home's curb appeal by sprucing up your landscaping. This includes planting new flowers, trimming your shrubs, and adding new mulch.
7. Energy Efficiency Upgrades: Upgrade your home's energy efficiency by replacing old windows, adding insulation, or installing a programmable thermostat. This can save you money on your energy bills and increase your home's value.
8. Flooring Upgrades: Replace your old flooring with new hardwood, tile, or carpeting. This can improve the look and comfort of your home.
9. Storage Solutions: Maximize your storage space by adding new shelves, installing a closet organization system, or building a new storage shed in your backyard.
10. Outdoor Living Spaces: Create a beautiful outdoor living space by adding a new patio,

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