

BUILDING A STRUCTURE OR OPENING A BUSINESS

The following is a quick guide to the City of Altoona's regulations governing the building of a structure or the opening of a business. Not all of these regulations will apply to every business or project, and this page is only a general guide. The Department of Planning and Community Development is your one stop shop for beginning a building or business project, and our staff looks forward to answering your more detailed questions. Please call us at (814) 949-2470 or e-mail us at planning@altoonapa.gov.

Building Codes: All new construction, additions or renovations in Pennsylvania are subject to the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code and the attached International Code Council regulations. Thus, a building permit and inspections are required for any significant construction or renovation project. In Altoona, only simple repairs, painting, floor coverings, wallpaper, suspended ceilings, cabinets, countertops, sidewalk repairs accessory structures less than 100 sqft. in size or replacing less than three windows are exempt.

The building permit application is available [here](#) . Electrical, plumbing and mechanical permit applications are only available in our offices, and may only be pulled by a licensed master tradesman. Projects on commercial buildings require the submittal of three sets of blueprints stamped by a design professional. See this [page](#) for more information .

Questions regarding building permits should be directed to the Department of Planning and Community Development at (814) 949-2470 or planning@altoonapa.gov. Questions regarding plumbing, mechanical and electrical permits should be directed to the Middle Department Inspection Agency at 1-800-982-6342.

Business Licenses: Each business that operates in the City must have an annual business license. An initial business license can be attained at the Department of Planning and Community Development. The fee is \$100.

Floodplain Regulations: These regulations address development, construction and buildings in "Special Flood Hazard Areas" as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Our floodplain regulations may be found at Sections 535-108 through 535-117 of the [Code of the City of Altoona](#) . More information and maps may be found [here](#) . Questions about our floodplain regulations should be directed to the Department of Public Works at (814) 949-2446.

Land Development Regulations: Land development regulations address how a new business is designed. Land development attempts to minimize neighborhood conflicts and maximize the impact of private and public investment. Land development review,

which is handled by staff and the Altoona City Planning Commission, is only triggered when a building permit is pulled for a business that could have a significant impact on a neighborhood. Land development regulations address lot layout, traffic generation, parking, pedestrian infrastructure, landscaping, lighting, and noise. Our land development regulations may be found in Sections 535-176 through 535-211 of the [Code of the City of Altoona](#) . Questions about land development should be directed to the Department of Planning and Community Development at (814) 949-2470 or planning@altoonapa.gov.

Tree Regulations: Chapter 679 of the [Code of the City of Altoona](#) assigns the primary responsibility for the maintenance of trees in the public right of way to the adjacent property owner. It requires the licensing of private arborists and addresses street tree care. On a few specified streets, the permission of the Shade Tree Commission is required before a tree in the public right-of-way may be trimmed or removed. However, Chapter 679 does not address trees on private property – such as those in backyards. Questions about the City’s tree regulations or the City Shade Tree Commission should be directed to the Department of Planning and Community Development at (814) 949-2470 or planning@altoonapa.gov.

Stormwater Regulations: These regulations address how water may drain from new construction. Our stormwater regulations may be found at Sections 535-103 through 535-107 of the [Code of the City of Altoona](#) . More information about our stormwater regulations and contacts in the Department of Public Works may be found [here](#) .

Subdivision Regulations: Subdivision regulations address how parcels of land may be broken into pieces or merged together. A lot plan, prepared by a licensed surveyor, is often necessary. Our subdivision regulations can be found in Sections 535-137 through 535-170 of the [Code of the City of Altoona](#) . City Staff and the City Planning Commission administer these regulations. Questions about subdivision should be directed to the Department of Planning and Community Development at (814) 949-2470 or planning@altoonapa.gov.

Zoning: Zoning establishes districts and limits what activities are permitted in each. Zoning provides setbacks and other dimensional regulations for each zoning district. Zoning also governs **signs, fences, and home based businesses**. Our zoning map may be viewed [here](#) . Our zoning regulations can be found in Sections 535-27 through 535-89 of the [Code of the City of Altoona](#) . Although our zoning was designed with some flexibility to reflect Altoona’s mixed use heritage, applications for variances from our zoning may be filed at our offices, and are decided by the City Zoning Hearing Board. The zoning appeal application and fence permit form may be downloaded [here](#) . Questions about zoning should be directed to the Department of Planning and Community Development at (814) 949-2470 or planning@altoonapa.gov.