



333 West Michigan Avenue • Three Rivers, Michigan 49093  
269.273.1075 • [www.threeriversmi.org](http://www.threeriversmi.org)  
Fax: 269.273.3132

---

## Starting a New Business in an Existing Building - How to Obtain a Certificate of Occupancy -

- 1 Zoning Review, Confirm Address with Address Ordinance and Floodplain Administrator**
- Before you commit to a building for your business-type (or commit to a business-type for your building), fill out any business applications, order business cards & letterhead, or contact the post office, you should confirm the address with the City Address Administrator. Do not assume that the address used by a former tenant was correct. This call will also identify property located within designated floodway or floodplain areas. Any work done in designated flood zones also requires DEQ permits. You can avoid costly fines by ruling out the need for DEQ permits.
- The City Address Administrator will also verify that the business-type legally conforms to the zoning district in which the building is located.
- Contact:** Alex Ebenstein, GIS Technician, at (269) 273-1845 or [aebenstein@threeriversmi.org](mailto:aebenstein@threeriversmi.org)  
**Office Hours:** 7:00am – 3:30pm.  
**Form:** New Business Zoning Review Application  
**Cost:** None
- 2 Obtain Zoning Approval from Zoning Administrator**
- If your new business-type does NOT conform to the zoning district in which the building is located you must contact the Zoning Administrator. The Zoning Administrator will guide you through the zoning application process. You should also seek legal advice regarding title restrictions and environmental issues.
- Contact:** Cornerstone Inspection Services at (269) 729-9244  
**Form:** Zoning Permit Application  
**Cost:** \$67.10
- 3 Request a Building Inspection**
- Before you commit to a building, request a building inspection so that a building inspector(s) can evaluate the status of the building and identify any repairs or other requirements that would be necessary before you alter or occupy the building. It is this process that leads to a Certificate of Occupancy, which is required by city ordinance whenever there is a change in use or occupancy.
- Contact:** Cornerstone Inspection Services at (269) 729-9244  
**Form:** Building Permit Application (Check ‘Special Inspection’ under ‘Type of Improvement’)  
**Cost:** \$78.10

**4 Obtain Permits for Any Building, Electrical, Mechanical, and Plumbing Work**

---

Do not alter or repair a building without obtaining the proper permit(s). A building owner, or a business owner leasing space, can apply for a building permit. **Only licensed contractors can apply for electrical, mechanical, and plumbing permits.** Do not allow a contractor to begin work in your building without a permit. Inspectors cannot hold a contractor accountable for work completed outside of the permit process. If work is not done to code and a permit was not issued, it is the **building owner** that assumes all liability and expense of correcting the violations.

- Note:** If the new business is located within the Historic District area you must obtain approval from the Historic District Commission (HDC) for signage and exterior work prior to receiving approval from the Building Inspector.  
In the City of Three Rivers, Cornerstone Inspection Services has jurisdiction over Building, Mechanical and Plumbing Permits. Electrical permits and inspections fall under the jurisdiction of the State of Michigan.
- Contact:** HDC at (269) 278-8193 for Certificate of Appropriateness  
Cornerstone Inspection Services at (269) 729-9244 for Building Permits  
State of Michigan at (517) 241-9320 for Electrical Permit Information  
Form: Building Permit Applications
- Cost:** Call Cornerstone Inspection Services at (269) 729-9244

**5 Obtain Zoning Approval and Building Permits for Signs and Fencing**

---

- All signs require zoning approval and a building permit
- All fences require zoning approval
- Fences over 6 feet tall require zoning approval and a building permit

- Contact:** Cornerstone Inspection Services at (269) 729-9244  
**Form:** Zoning Application  
**Cost:** Zoning – \$67.10 Building Permits for Signs – See Fee Schedule

**6 Install or Update Knox- Box (Fire Department Key Vault)**

---

The City of Three Rivers participates in the Knox-Box system. A Knox-Box is a key vault that only the fire department can access. Building keys are kept in the key vault eliminating the need for the fire department to force entry in the case of a fire, fire alarm or smoke-scare investigation. It is recommended that new businesses install a Knox-Box if one is not already present. If building has an alarm system, a box is required. Existing boxes must be updated with current keys.

- Contact:** Three Rivers Fire Department at (269) 278-3755 or [cholcomb@threeriversmi.org](mailto:cholcomb@threeriversmi.org)  
Knox-Box at [www.knoxbox.com](http://www.knoxbox.com) for product list and pricing
- Form:** Order forms available at the TRFD. (Must be signed by Fire Chief)
- Cost:** \$185 and Up - Depends on style and size

**7 Request Certificate of Occupancy**

---

When you have met all of the requirements communicated to you by the Building Inspector, you can request a Certificate of Occupancy.

- Contact:** Cornerstone Inspection Services at (269) 729-9244  
**Form:** None  
**Cost:** None (Unless Additional Re-Inspections are Necessary)