



# CITY OF THREE RIVERS

333 West Michigan Ave.  
Three Rivers, MI 49093

Phone: 269-273-1075  
[www.threeriversmi.org](http://www.threeriversmi.org)



## Starting or Relocating a Business (in a new or existing building)? ~ How to Obtain a Certificate of Occupancy ~

SOURCE: [www.threeriversmi.org/GTR](http://www.threeriversmi.org/GTR)

Check [here](#) if you've already completed this step!

- 1 Initial Zoning Review, Floodplain & Address Confirmation - FREE!**

---

Before you commit to a building for your business type or use (or 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 Address Ordinance Administrator. **Do not assume the address used by a former tenant was correct.** This step 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.

This first step will also **check that the business type or use legally conforms to the Zoning District** in which the building is located – see [threeriversmi.org/zoningmap](http://threeriversmi.org/zoningmap) and Steps 2 & 5 for more info!

**Contact:** John Beebe, *Address Ordinance Admin.* at 269-273-1845 or [jbeebe@threeriversmi.org](mailto:jbeebe@threeriversmi.org)  
**Office Hours:** 8:00am - 3:30pm.  
**Form:** New Business Zoning Review Application  
**Cost:** None
- 2 Obtain Official Zoning Approval (for use) from Zoning Administrator**

---

**If your new business type or use does not conform to the zoning district in which the building is located, you must contact the Zoning Administrator at SAFEbuilt** ~ see contact info below. The Zoning Administrator will guide you through the zoning application process. You should also seek legal advice regarding title restrictions and environmental issues. Also note that this step is *separate from* the zoning permits needed for projects (e.g., bldg./construction, signage, fencing, etc.) in Step 5...

**Contact:** SAFEbuilt® (formerly Cornerstone) at 269-729-9244 or [athensmi@safebuilt.com](mailto:athensmi@safebuilt.com)  
**Form:** Zoning Permit Application for a *New use* or *Change of Use* (<https://goo.gl/JvbPjL>)\*  
**Cost:** Refer to Fee Schedule at [www.threeriversmi.org/feeschedule](http://www.threeriversmi.org/feeschedule)
- 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, which is the same process that leads to a Certificate of Occupancy, which is required by city ordinance whenever there is a change in use or occupancy.

**Contact:** SAFEbuilt® at 269-729-9244 or [athensmi@safebuilt.com](mailto:athensmi@safebuilt.com)  
**Form:** Building Permit Application (Check 'Special Inspection' under 'Type of Improvement')  
**Cost:** Refer to Fee Schedule at [www.threeriversmi.org/feeschedule](http://www.threeriversmi.org/feeschedule)

\* Forms can be picked up at City Hall Finance or downloaded from the following websites:  
SAFEbuilt Local: [www.cornerstonemi.net](http://www.cornerstonemi.net) > Permit Applications > Municipality Apps  
[www.threeriversmi.org](http://www.threeriversmi.org) > Downloads > Forms and Ordinances > Building Dept Forms

#### 4 Obtain Permits for 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 downtown Historic District, 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, SAFEbuilt® (formerly Cornerstone Inspection Services) has jurisdiction over Building, Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing Permits.

**Contact:** Call 269-278-8193 for HDC's *Certificate of Appropriateness*, or download application for certificate at [www.threeriversmi.org/historic-district](http://www.threeriversmi.org/historic-district)

SAFEbuilt® at 269-729-9244 for Building, Electrical and other Trade Permits\*

**Form:** Building Permit Applications ([threeriversmi.org/building-permit](http://threeriversmi.org/building-permit))

**Cost:** Contact SAFEbuilt® at 269-729-9244 or [athensmi@safebuilt.com](mailto:athensmi@safebuilt.com)

#### 5 Obtain Zoning Approval + Building Permits for Project, Signage, Fencing... (as needed)

---

**Note:** *This step is separate from the Zoning Approval for a use or business type in Step 2!*

- All signs require zoning approval and a building permit; i.e., a Sign Permit Package\*
- All fences require zoning approval
- Fences over 6 feet tall require zoning approval and a building permit

**Contact:** SAFEbuilt® at 269-729-9244

**Form:** Zoning Permit Application for projects/signage/fencing, etc. (<https://goo.gl/JvbPjL>)\*

**Cost:** Refer to Fee Schedule at [www.threeriversmi.org/feeschedule](http://www.threeriversmi.org/feeschedule)

#### 6 Install or Update Knox-Box (for Fire Department)

---

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 event of a fire, fire alarm or smoke-scare investigation. It is highly 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 (TRFD) at 269-278-3755 or [jeffb@threeriversmi.org](mailto:jeffb@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 city Fire Chief**

**Cost:** \$185 and up; depending 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:** SAFEbuilt® at: 269-729-9244 or [athensmi@safebuilt.com](mailto:athensmi@safebuilt.com)

**Form:** None

**Cost:** None, unless additional re-inspections are necessary

\* Forms can be picked up at City Hall Finance or downloaded from the following websites:  
SAFEbuilt Local: [www.cornerstonemi.net](http://www.cornerstonemi.net) > Permit Applications > Municipality Apps  
[www.threeriversmi.org](http://www.threeriversmi.org) > Downloads > Forms and Ordinances > Building Dept Forms