Zoning vs Building Permit Decision Matrix

Acadia Drafting Ontario 2026

Quick reference

1 **Building a new structure under 10 sq m?**

Often exempt from a building permit but still subject to zoning rules for setbacks.

2 **Adding a deck over 60 cm high?**

Both a zoning check and a building permit are required.

3 **Finishing a basement?**

Building permit required. Zoning compliance applies if adding a second unit.

4 **Removing an interior wall?**

Zoning is not triggered, but a building permit is required for any load-bearing work.

5 **Adding a second-storey?**

Both a zoning compliance check and a building permit. Floor area, height, and lot coverage all apply.

6 **Building a garden or laneway suite?**

Both, plus pre-application consultation. Most ARU projects also need an arborist report.

7 **Changing only finishes?**

Neither required. Cosmetic upgrades are exempt.

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