OTTAWA KITCHEN RENOS

Opening Kitchen Walls

Removing or opening a kitchen wall: the City's permit wording, engineered drawings, wiring in the wall and published prices

5 Expert Answers from Kitchen Reno IQ

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Q1

Will Ottawa want engineered drawings for removing a kitchen wall?

Removing a kitchen wall falls under the City of Ottawa's permit list: "Interior and exterior structural alterations, such as: adding or removing walls, i.e., creating different room sizes and/or uses." A building permit is required before the work starts. Whether the City asks for engineered drawings depends on whether the wall is load-bearing, and that is where the drawings question lives.

For a load-bearing wall, a beam or header carries the load the wall was holding, and the City may ask for engineered drawings to confirm the beam size and the post or column connections. Your designer or engineer confirms what the City will require for your specific situation before you submit. For a wall that carries no load, the City's submission requirements may be simpler, but the permit is still needed either way because the wall removal changes room sizes.

The City's FAQ is plain on responsibility: "It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that a Building Permit is obtained when required." Both the owner and the contractor are equally liable under the Building Code Act if work proceeds without one.

A few things to sort out before the work starts:

- Ask the City's Building Code Services what drawings they need for your wall, given its location and what it supports.
- Have a contractor, designer or engineer check whether the wall is load-bearing. This site does not make that call, and neither should anyone who has not seen the structure.
- Get the permit issued before demolition begins. The Building Code Act, s.8(1), says no person shall construct unless a permit has been issued.
- Framing and beam detail questions point to ottawacarpenters.ca.

Published 2025-2026 Ottawa guides put removing a load-bearing wall, including the beam, permit and patching, at about $8,000 to $15,000 or more, with steel beams or longer spans pushing the number higher. We did not find two independent published prices for a non-load-bearing wall removal on its own.
When you have two written quotes in front of you, line them up component by component: what demolition covers, whether the beam and posts are included or priced separately, who pulls the building permit and whose name goes on it, what patching and finishing are in scope, and whether any plumbing, electrical or gas work displaced by the wall removal is included or excluded.

Q2

Is a short kitchen partition removal on Ottawa's permit list?

The City of Ottawa's permit list covers "adding or removing walls, i.e., creating different room sizes and/or uses." A short partition that does not change room sizes or uses is not named on either the City's permit list or its exempt list, so the answer is not clear-cut from the published lists alone.

The key phrase is "creating different room sizes and/or uses." We did not find a City statement either way for a partition that leaves the room sizes unchanged, and the City says "It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that a Building Permit is obtained when required."

Ask the City's Building Code Services whether your specific partition, given its location and what it separates, triggers the walls line.

A few things worth confirming before the work begins:

- Whether the partition carries any load, which a contractor, designer or engineer checks. If it does, the City's "structural alterations" line on the permit list applies separately.
- Whether any wiring runs through the wall. Electrical work in the kitchen is an ESA notification, not a City permit, filed before the work starts.
- Whether the wall contains any plumbing. "Plumbing - alterations, additions or extensions to a plumbing system" is on the City's permit list.

Get the scope of the partition removal in writing, including who is responsible for confirming the permit question with the City, what happens if the wall turns out to be load-bearing, and how the patching and finishing are handled. Before you agree to anything, ask the contractor to put the payment schedule in writing so you know exactly when each amount is due and what triggers it.

Q3

Does opening my kitchen to the dining room need an Ottawa permit?

Whether you need a permit depends on what the wall between your kitchen and dining room is, and what happens to it. The City of Ottawa's permit list includes "interior and exterior structural alterations, such as: adding or removing walls, i.e., creating different room sizes and/or uses." If opening the kitchen to the dining room creates different room sizes, that is the City's line, and "Structural repairs or alterations" is on the list too.

Where the work is on that list, the building permit is issued before construction starts. A short partition that does not change room sizes is not named on either City list, so ask the City's Building Code Services. The Building Code Act says no person shall construct unless a permit has been issued.

A few things shape what the City asks for when you apply:

- Whether the wall is load-bearing. If it is, the City may ask for engineered drawings. A contractor, designer or engineer confirms whether the wall carries load; this site does not assess that remotely.
- Heritage status. If your home is a designated heritage building or sits in a Heritage District Overlay, the City says those properties are not subject to exemptions and you contact the City first.

If the sink moves as part of the same job, that is the City's plumbing line: "Plumbing - alterations, additions or extensions to a plumbing system (except replacing existing fixtures)".
One thing worth checking before the contractor quotes: the City's permit fee for alterations and renovations is $12.75 per $1,000 of assessed construction value, with a minimum of $117.00. Construction value includes materials, labour, overhead and professional fees. Ask the City's Building Code Services how they assess the value for your specific scope, because the permit cost follows from that number.

Published 2025-2026 Ottawa guides put removing a load-bearing wall, including the beam, permit and patching, at about $8,000 to $15,000 or more, with steel beams or longer spans costing more. If the wall is not load-bearing, we did not find two independent published prices for that scope alone; ask contractors to quote the wall removal and the structural work as separate line items so you can compare.

Start with the City's Building Code Services before the contractor begins, because the permit has to be in hand first, and for a load-bearing wall the City may ask for engineered drawings.

Q4

Opening a kitchen wall in a 1950s Alta Vista bungalow: test first?

Health Canada says to hire a professional to test for asbestos before renovating or remodelling a home of that era, and to hire a qualified asbestos removal specialist if any is found. A 1950s bungalow is also old enough that Health Canada considers lead-based paint probable if the home was built before 1960. Health Canada frames both as advice to follow before renovating.

Older materials Health Canada lists include "cement and plaster" and "floor and ceiling tiles". Health Canada does not say which specific materials in your wall contain asbestos; a professional tests what is there. For lead, Health Canada's guidance is not to use sanders, heat guns or blowlamps to remove lead-based paint. Testing and removal procedures are ottawaabatement.com's topic.

On the permit side, the City of Ottawa lists "adding or removing walls, i.e., creating different room sizes and/or uses" as a building permit project. If the wall you are opening changes room sizes or uses, a permit is required before construction starts, under the Building Code Act. If the wall is load-bearing, the City may ask for engineered drawings; your designer or engineer confirms. A short partition that does not change room sizes is not named on either the City's permit or exempt list, so ask the City's Building Code Services before that work starts.

What to have in order before the first hammer swing

In an older home, the sequence the sources give is: test for asbestos before demolition, get the building permit issued before construction where one is needed, and file any ESA notification before electrical work starts. Ask your contractor for a written schedule that shows when each of those steps happens.

For the contract itself, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 says a direct agreement negotiated at your home over $50 must be in writing, signed by both parties and delivered to you, and that the supplier shall not charge an amount that exceeds the estimate by more than 10 per cent. Make sure the written contract names the scope by component, the total price, the payment schedule and the project dates, and that it is in your hands before any work begins.

Before you commit to a price, ask the contractor to put in writing exactly which materials will be tested, who pulls the building permit, and what happens to the schedule and the price if the test results require abatement.

Q5

Permit fee for a kitchen wall removal: how does Ottawa calculate it?

Alterations and renovations are charged "$12.75 per $1,000 or part thereof of the assessed valuation of the work, with a minimum fee of $117.00" on the City of Ottawa's 2026 fee schedule. The City says construction valuation "is based on the total value of all materials, labour, overhead and professional fees for the project." Whether the City values the whole kitchen or only the wall work is a question to ask the City.

Whether the wall work needs a permit comes from the City's list: "Interior and exterior structural alterations, such as: adding or removing walls, i.e., creating different room sizes and/or uses" and "Structural repairs or alterations" are both on it. A short partition that does not change room sizes is not named on either list, so ask the City's Building Code Services.

For a load-bearing wall, the City may ask for engineered drawings; your designer or engineer confirms. Professional fees are part of the value the City's definition counts. The City's plumbing-only permit, $117 per application, is for jobs where the work is plumbing only.

Published 2025–2026 Ottawa guides put removing a load-bearing wall, including the beam, permit and patching, at about $8,000 to $15,000 or more, with steel or long spans costing more. We did not find two independent published prices for a non-load-bearing wall.

The City says "It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that a Building Permit is obtained when required", and both the owner and the builder or contractor are equally liable under the Ontario Building Code Act. Wiring in the wall is a separate Electrical Safety Authority notification, not part of the City permit.

Ask your contractor, before you sign, to state in writing who applies for the permit and what value they will put on the application.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Kitchen Renos. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before starting any kitchen renovation. Some of this work needs a City building permit, electrical work is filed with the Electrical Safety Authority, and gas work is regulated by TSSA. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawakitchenrenos.ca** for the latest answers.