



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CODE ADMINISTRATION

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CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY PROCEDURES

The Certificate of Occupancy (CO), indicating completion of the work for which a permit was issued, is the final construction document issued by the Building Official to authorize occupancy of a structure upon completion of all building issues. Section 116.1 of the 2018 Virginia Uniform Building Code (USBC) states that: "Prior to occupancy or change of occupancy of a building or structure, a certificate of occupancy shall be obtained in accordance with this section."

The Certificate of Occupancy follows the final approval of all issued trade and building permits, the completion of required grading or site plan items and compliance with all applicable Board of Architectural Review (BAR), Special Use Permit (SUP), Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), Development Site Plan (DSP) or Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) conditions. The purpose of this handout is to explain the Certificate of Occupancy process for the City of Alexandria, the responsibility of the applicant, and the responsibility of each city agency in recommending approval of the Certificate of Occupancy to the Building Official.

It is recommended that the Certificate of Occupancy is applied for prior to scheduling final inspections. This usually speeds up the process as the project nears completion and settlement or move-in dates are being decided.

While Code Administration manages the Certificate of Occupancy process, inspections **must** be coordinated with, and approvals obtained from the following agencies:

1. Planning and Zoning: Board of Architectural Review, Development, Zoning and/or Special Use Permits
2. Transportation and Environmental Services; Construction and Inspection (required), Development and Site Plans (when applicable)
3. Health Department (when applicable)
4. Code Administration
5. Fire Department (Commercial, industrial, and common and public areas of multifamily dwelling only)
6. Housing (when applicable)

Separate inspections are conducted by each agency to ensure that the items under their authority have been completed by the applicant. For projects obligated to pay into the Housing Trust Fund, the approval of Housing is also needed before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Health Department approval is required for projects that involve:

- Food (restaurants, hotel or school kitchens, quick marts, stores, etc.)
- Child or adult care (day care centers, retirement homes, schools, etc.)
- Hotels and daycares
- Interactive water features and fountains accessible to the public
- Public swimming pools and spas
- Any business that involves food or health related matters.

While Code Administration can usually conduct Certificate of Occupancy inspections on the date requested, Transportation & Environmental Services, Planning & Zoning, Fire, and the Health Department require up to five (5) days for their inspections and may require additional time for items that have not been fulfilled. Failed inspections require that the specific agency in authority be contacted to reschedule inspections. It is important to have one site designee to coordinate the inspection process, communicate with the appropriate inspection agency to resolve irregularities, and finally follow-up with the Permit Center to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) upon completion of all building issues.

Fire Department	(703)746-5227
Planning and Zoning \ BAR	(703)746-4666
Transportation & Environmental Services	(703)746-4035
Health Department	(703)746-4400
Code Administration	(703)746-4200
Office of Housing	(703)746-4990

Planning and coordination by site personnel is essential as it is usually not possible to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy on the same day that the inspections are conducted. Even with the best planning and communications, it is sometimes necessary to request to move furniture in or stock goods prior to the CO being approved and issued. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and require the approval of the Building Official or designee. A Stocking Permit may be issued for this purpose upon receipt of a completed application and approved inspections. Applications are located at the following link or by contacting the Permit Center at permit.center@alexandriava.gov or by phone at (703)746-4200.

[Stocking Permit Application](#)

Before the request will be considered, installed fire alarm and/or sprinkler systems must have passed field acceptance tests.

While generally discouraged, it is sometimes possible for the Building Official to approve the temporary occupancy of a structure in accordance with section 116.1.1 of the USBC. A temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) will be considered for a portion or portions of the structure to be occupied when all life and/or public welfare issues have been approved by the appropriate city agency. Until the Core and Shell building components have been approved all other components of the building (i.e., floors, retail spaces, common areas, etc.) will be prohibited from receiving final approval of occupancy. When requesting a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy, appropriate time frames must still be considered as all review agencies must provide recommendations before the building official may approve the TCO.

Final inspection tickets for issued building and trade permits should not be confused with the Certificate of Occupancy (CO). If you have any questions about when a CO is required, applying for a CO, or the status of a CO inspection, please contact the Department of Code Administration Permit Center at permit.center@alexandriava.gov or by phone at (703)746-4200.

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY CHECKLIST

To a ready a project for CO inspections, please use the following agency checklist to make sure that the project is ready for CO approval. If you have any questions about what each city agency requires, please contact them on the telephone number provided. For disapproved inspections, please contact the disapproving agency to reschedule the inspection.

Planning & Zoning (requires up to 5 inspection days)**(703)746-4666**

Planning & Zoning approval will require compliance with the following items for most cases. Please contact the Department of Planning & Zoning to determine applicability.

Board of Architectural Review

- For BAR cases, compliance with BAR Certificate of Appropriateness and design guidelines.

Development Site Plan and Development Special Use Permit

- The applicant shall comply with all conditions of the DSP or the DSUP approval.
- For Development Site Plan and Development Special Use Permit cases, complete the Occupancy section of the As-built Development Site Plan Checklist and submit three (3) copies of the Survey and checklist to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. The up to 5-day inspection period for DSPs and DSUPs does not begin until the Survey is submitted.

Special Use Permits

- For special use permit cases, the applicant shall comply with all conditions of SUP permit approval.

Zoning

- Conditions of BZA and Grading Plans are met; may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - All landscaping and plantings installed.
 - All parking requirements are met, and lot is striped, if applicable.
 - Exterior HVAC equipment and required screening is in place.
 - All conditions of approval have been met to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning & Zoning.
- Wall check, height survey and FAR certifications have been approved.

Transportation & Environmental Services (requires up to 5 inspection days)**(703)746-4035****Development Site Plan and Development Special Use Permit**

- The applicant shall comply with all conditions of the DSP or the DSUP approval.
- For Development Site Plan and Development Special Use Permit cases, complete the Occupancy section of the As-built Development Site Plan Checklist and submit three (3) copies of the Survey and checklist to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. The up to 5-day inspection period for DSPs and DSUPs does not begin until the Survey is submitted.
- There is free access to the building to be occupied
- If applicable, fence area off to separate it from construction area
- Building/House numbers are posted
- Erosion and sediment control conditions of site plan is met
- Base pavement installed in roadways
- Storm and sanitary sewers are clean and functional (not blocked)
- Sanitary sewers must be video recorded and accepted
- Roof drains, sumps pumps and foundation drains tied to storm sewer
- Accessible Parking Spaces are properly located, signed, sized, and marked
- Street names signs are installed
- Site lights are installed and working
- Street and site area are clean and free of mud and construction debris

Floodplains**(703)746-4064**

- If any development is within the floodplain, an Elevation Certificate for the structure shall be submitted, reviewed, and approved prior to the issuance of the CO.
- Call Development Services for information and confirmation regarding the submittal process for the Elevation Certificate.

Code Administration**(703)746-4200**

- All building and trade permits have received final approval
- Fire Protection Systems
 - Installed Fire Alarm and/or Sprinkler system is operable
 - Knox Boxes are Installed

- Accessibility requirements are met

Health Department (requires 3-5 inspection days)

(703)746-4400

- Food Establishments/Food Permits
 - Installed kitchen, food preparation/storage/display equipment is installed & functional
 - Hood system/s is/are installed and tested
 - Requirements of City Code Title 11, Chap. 2, and the adopted FDA Food Code are met
 - Adequate Lighting
 - Plumbing fixtures installed properly (i.e., garbage disposal, grease interceptors, air gaps and backflow prevention where required)
- Swimming Pools/Aquatic Facilities
 - Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chap. 20-6 are met
- Requirements of the Code of Virginia Title 35.1 are met and constructed in accordance to approved plans

Housing (internal process; no field inspections conducted)

(703)746-4990

- Money obligated to Housing Trust Fund is paid

Fire Department (requires up to 5 inspection days)

(703)746-5227

- Emergency Vehicle Signs (EVE) are posted
- Fire Prevention Code Permits are applied for where needed for places of assembly (i.e., Restaurants, Dining Areas; Party Rooms; Meeting Rooms), storage of hazardous materials, etc.
- Knox Box keys assembled and labeled
- Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans posted
- Stairway identification signs installed

Certificates of Occupancy for large projects and building

Certificates of Occupancy will follow the same breakout method for large projects except for condominiums where individual certificates of occupancies will be issued per unit. Please see attached Breakout Permit Policy.

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 26, 2020

TO: CODE ADMINISTRATION CUSTOMERS AND STAFF

FROM: CHRIS EVANS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR *CE*
DEPARTMENT OF CODE ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT: BREAKOUT PERMITS FOR LARGE PROJECTS AND BUILDINGS

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidelines for creating breakout permits for large buildings and projects. The purpose of breakout permits is to provide an easier method for both customers and our team to track inspection activities for these larger projects. The breakout permits will be created by the permit center team at no additional costs.

These breakout permits will be created for the building permit and all associated trade permits. Certificates of Occupancy will follow the same breakout method for large projects except for condominiums, where individual certificates of occupancies will be issued per unit.

Typical breakout permits would consist of the following:

- Per floor (G1, G2, First Floor, Second Floor, Rooftop, etc.)
 - Common areas will be inspected on the primary permit for each trade
- Retail Spaces
- Additional permit for special inspection activities and documents

These large projects and buildings will be identified by Code Administration staff. Typical large projects or buildings would be high-rise and mid-rise construction.