



# CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF CODE ADMINISTRATION

301 King Street , Suite 4200

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Phone: 703.746.4200 Fax: 703.838.3880

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### CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY PROCEDURES

The Certificate of Occupancy (CO) 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 2006 Virginia Uniform Building Code (USBC) states that: "A certificate of occupancy, indicating completion of the work for which a permit was issued, shall be obtained prior to any occupancy of any building or structure, except as provided for in this section generally and as specifically provided for in Section 113.8 for additions or alterations."

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 permits 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 CO process for the City of Alexandria, the responsibility of the applicant, and the responsibility of each City agency in recommending approval of the CO to the Building Official.

In Alexandria, the CO process begins and ends with the Department of Code Administration (called Code Admin in rest of document). It is recommended that the CO be applied for at the same time that the initial construction permits and plans are submitted for review. This usually speeds up the CO process as the project nears completion and settlement or move-in dates are being decided.

While Code Admin administers the CO 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), Site Plans (when applicable)
3. Health Department (when applicable); and
4. Code Administration

Separate inspections are conducted by each agency to ensure that the items under their jurisdiction 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 CO 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.);
- Doctor or dental offices;
- Public swimming pools and spas;
- Health or massage therapy establishments;
- Nail and hair salons; and
- Any business that involves food or health related matters.

It is recommended that a two week "cushion" be allowed between the completion of construction and the intended settlement date, "move-in" date, or grand opening event requiring an issued CO. This two-week period will allow for any noted deficiencies to be corrected in time for the scheduled settlement/opening without delaying the CO. While Code Admin usually conducts CO inspections on the date requested, Transportation & Environmental Services, Planning & Zoning, BAR, and the Health Department require three to five days (additional time may be required if items have not been fulfilled) for their inspections. It is important to have

one site person designated to coordinate the inspection process, communicate with the inspection agencies to resolve any inspection disapprovals, and then follow up with Code Administration to obtain the issued CO. For disapproved inspections, the specific inspection agency should be contacted to reschedule the inspection once the issue is resolved.

Planning and Zoning \ BAR	703-746-4666
Transportation & Environmental Services	703-746-4035
Health Department	703-746-4400
Code Administration	703-746-4200

Planning and coordination by site personnel is essential as it is usually not possible to obtain the CO 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 on a form available from Code Administration, 703-746-4200. Before the request will be considered, installed fire alarm and/or sprinkler systems must have passed field acceptance tests. For residential requests, it is important to advise prospective homeowners that their household goods may not be covered by insurance (damage or theft) when the house has not yet gone to settlement. They may wish to check with their insurance company for advice on interim coverage. It is important to remember that an approved stocking permit is for goods only; it is not authorization for people to occupy or sleep in the structure.

While generally discouraged, it is sometimes possible for the Building Official and Zoning Administrator to approve the temporary occupancy of a structure in accordance with section 116.1.1 of the USBC. In order for a temporary CO to be considered, the portion or portions of the structure to be occupied must not pose a danger to life or public welfare. This means that required fire alarm systems, suppression systems and/or sprinkler systems must be installed and have passed field acceptance tests; common area issues are completed, pertinent accessibility requirements are complete; DSUP / SUP conditions tied to occupancy are complete (when applicable) and, that there are no access/egress issues which would endanger the building occupants. Usually, a temporary CO is considered when the building components have been approved, but there are outstanding site issues (i.e.: required landscaping or plants not installed; parking lot striping not completed, etc.) which prohibit the approval of a permanent CO by all review agencies. When requesting a temporary CO, appropriate time frames must still be considered as all review agencies must provide recommendations before the building official and zoning administrator may approve the temporary CO.

To eliminate confusion about what a Certificate of Occupancy looks like, a sample copy is attached. The CO should not be confused with final inspection tickets for issued building and trade permits. If you have any questions about when a CO is required, applying for a CO, or the status of a CO in the inspection process, please call Code Administration at 703-746-4200.

**Remember:**  
**No Issued CO = No Settlement/Grand Opening/Occupancy of the Building!**

# CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY CHECKLIST

In order to be ready for the CO inspection, 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 or will be inspecting for, please contact them on the telephone number provided. For disapproved inspections, please contact the disapproving agency to reschedule the inspection.

Planning & Zoning (requires 3-5 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 3-5 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 submitted and approved.

Transportation & Environmental Services (requires 3 - 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 3-5 day inspection period for DSPs and DSUPs does not begin until the Survey is submitted.
- Completion of the Transportation Management Plan requirements, if applicable.
- Conditions of the approved SUP are met
- Compliance with the approved plan
- 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 are met
- Base pavement installed in roadways
- Storm and sanitary sewers are clean and functional (not blocked)
- Sanitary sewers must be tv'd and accepted
- Roof drains, sumps pumps and foundation drains tied to storm sewer
- Emergency Vehicle Easement signs are installed
- Fire Hydrants are installed and painted by Maintenance Division (703 746-4488)

- 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

Code Administration (requires 1-3 inspection days) 703 838-4360

- All trade permits have received final approval (electrical, plumbing and mechanical)
- Fire Protection Systems
  - Installed Fire Alarm and/or Sprinkler system is operable
  - Knox Boxes are Installed
- Building permit has received final approval
- Emergency Vehicle Signs (EVE) are posted
- Fire Prevention Code Permits are applied for where needed for places of assembly (ie: Restaurants, Dining Areas; Party Rooms; Meeting Rooms; etc.), storage of hazardous materials, etc.
- Accessibility requirements are met

Health Department (requires 3-5 inspection days) 703 838-4400

- Food Establishments
  - 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)
- Personal Hygiene Establishments
  - Requirements of City Code Title 11, Chap. 7 are met
- Swimming Pools
  - Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chap. 20-6 are met
- Massage Establishments
  - Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chap. 4.1 are met
- Dry Cleaning or Coin Operated Laundry
  - Requirements of City Code, Title 9, Chap. 4 or 5 are met

Housing (internal process; no field inspections conducted) 703 838-4990

- Money obligated to Housing Trust Fund is paid

Office of Historic Alexandria / Alexandria Archaeology 703-746-4399

- Approval of final archaeological site report by City Archaeologist, if applicable
- Completion of interpretive elements in the open space, including placement of interpretive markers, if applicable.

Attachments - Sample CO, Sample Temporary CO

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

**CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**

CASE NUMBER: OCC2008-01234      DATE ISSUED: 12/27/2008      MAX. OCCUPANCY 8

SITE ADDRESS		PARCEL NO: 50181000
MAP: 058.2	LOT: 01	BLOCK: 04
ZONING: CDD#9	Other Zoning:	TRACT: ?
PROPOSED USE: Residential USBC 2006		
OWNER:		
PROPOSED OCCUPANT:	NA	
USE GROUP:	R-3	
CONSTRUCTION TYPE:	5A	
Sprinklered: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Modification: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Signed _____		
Building Official		Zoning Administrator

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**Department of Code Administration**  
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**TEMPORARY CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**

CASE NUMBER: OCC2008-01234      DATE ISSUED:      MAX. OCCUPANCY 7

SITE ADDRESS		PARCEL NO: 50181000
MAP: 058.2	LOT: 01	BLOCK: 04
ZONING: CDD#9	Other Zoning:	TRACT: ?
PROPOSED USE: Residential		
USBC 2006 Thirty day temporary C.O. Issued pending final approval from Planning and Zoning.		
TEMP C.O. EXPIRES MARCH 4, 2009.		
OWNER:		
PROPOSED OCCUPANT:	NA	
USE GROUP:	R-3	
CONSTRUCTION TYPE:	5A	
Sprinklered: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Modification: YES [ ]	NO [ ]	
Signed _____		_____
Building Official		Zoning Administrator

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Mailing Address: