



City of Suffolk, VA

Department of Planning and Community Development

Main Phone Number: (757) 514-4150

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442 W. Washington Street

Commercial Certificate of Occupancy for New Construction(CO) Guide & Checklist:

The purpose of this document is to provide a *guide* and explain the Certificate of Occupancy/Use (CO) process for the City of Suffolk, the responsibility of the applicant, and the responsibility of each City agency in recommending approval of the CO to the Building Official. The CO is the final construction document issued by the Building Official to authorize the occupancy of a structure upon completion of all building components, per Section 116.1 of the 2015 Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). The Certificate of Occupancy ensures the final approval of all newly issued building and associated trade permits, the completion of required grading or other site plan items required by engineering, and compliance with all applicable certificates of appropriateness, rezoning conditions, and conditional use permits (if applicable).

It is highly recommended that at least a one 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 one week period aims to allow for any noted deficiencies to be corrected in time for the scheduled settlement/opening without delay. It is important to designate one person to coordinate the inspection process, communicate with the inspection agencies to resolve any disapproval, and then follow up with Building Inspections to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy.

Even with the best planning and communication, 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.

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. In order for a temporary CO to be considered, all portions of the structure to be occupied must not endanger life or public safety. This means that required fire alarms and fire suppression/sprinkler systems must be completely installed and pass field acceptance tests. Common areas, accessibility, and access/egress components including emergency and egress lighting are installed, inspected, and approved. If a temporary occupancy will be issued, and outstanding site development items remain per the approved site plan, a bond may be required by Planning. Elevator acceptance is required for a TCO.

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY CHECKLIST

In order to be ready for issuance of the final CO, please use the following agency checklist *guide* to make sure that the project is ready for CO approval. Please contact each agency by the number provided if you have any questions about what they require or will be inspecting. If item(s) are identified by City Staff for correction, once the item(s) are corrected please contact the disapproving agency to reschedule your inspection.

The following checklist is intended to assist developers, business operators, property owners, and contractors in understanding the *overall process* of obtaining a CO. We recognize that every project is unique; thus, the requirements outlined in this checklist are not guaranteed to be suitable and/or accurate for all situations.

I. **Building Inspections** - (757) 514-4150 - 442 W. Washington Street

1. All trade permits have received final inspection (electrical, plumbing, gas, fire alarm, fire suppression and mechanical (air balance report)). Submittal of 3rd Party Elevator Inspection report.
2. Fire Alarm Systems – Acceptance testing must have been accomplished on installed systems. The alarm company technician(s) must be present during this test that is witnessed by the inspector. Fire Alarm Systems must be monitored by an approved service. The systems must be fully operational with any other systems such as HVAC, HVLS fans, elevator functions, generators, access control, fire shutters, fire doors, etc.
3. Fire Protection Systems – Acceptance testing must have been accomplished on installed systems such as fire sprinkler, hood extinguishing systems, etc. The installing company technician(s) must be present during these tests that are witnessed by the inspector. Fire Protection Systems alarms must be interfaced with the Fire Alarm System.
4. All Third Party and Special Inspection Reports have been submitted indicating any outstanding issues are satisfied including the ‘Final Statement of Inspections’ from RDP & SER. Suffolk requires: Signed and sealed Final Statement of SI with completed Schedule of SI, and all field reports from Agents 1 & 2.
5. Building permit has received final inspection. Special inspections should be submitted and approved prior to Building Final Inspection.
6. Accessibility requirements are met as delineated on approved plans.
7. All required exterior signage is installed.
8. Ancillary construction shown on site plan such as monument signs, dumpster enclosures, retaining walls, and site lighting are typically permitted independently and should have approved final inspections.
9. Building numbers are posted.
10. Conditional Use Permit conditions, if applicable, has been fulfilled.
11. Flood plain elevation certification, if applicable.
12. Final building location survey/as-built submitted, if required.

II. **Fire Marshal’s Office** - (757) 514-4540 - 300 Kings Fork Road Suffolk, VA 23434

1. Fire Extinguishers located and installed per NFPA 10 and/or approved plans. Signs shall be provided identifying extinguisher if not readily visible in area they protect.
2. Fire Lanes need to be marked with signs and pavement/curb markings per City Ordinance. If gates are installed acceptance testing must be accomplished and witnessed by the Fire Marshal.
3. Fire Hydrants – Hydrants and FDC(s) not protected by curbs must have bollards installed to protect them from vehicle damage and be located as approved on the site plan.
4. Fire Department Key Safe – The “Knox Box” key safe(s) shall be mounted near the main entrance or other approved location at approximately 60 inches above the walking surface. Specific location shall be coordinated with a Fire Marshal’s Office inspector prior to mounting. Keys or other entry devices need to be provided for placement in the Knox Box.
5. FDC Locking caps/plugs to be installed.
6. Submittal and approval of the NFPA 24 Testing Certification form for the underground fire lines.
7. If applicable, submittal and acceptance of testing documentation of Underground and Above ground Storage tanks.

III. **Zoning Division** – (757) 514-4150 – 442 W. Washington Street

Contact (757) 514-4150 with your zoning permit number (EX. GZN2021-xxxxx) to request a “Zoning Site Final Inspection”. Zoning will perform the “Zoning Site Final Inspection” upon request to verify the site plan requirements below.

1. All landscaping, screening and plantings installed, living in place, at specified height and species.
2. All parking requirements are met and lot is striped.
3. The applicant shall demonstrate compliance with the approved plan or have a revised as-built plan filed with the City for approval.
4. There is free access to the building to be occupied safely. This also applies to ingress/egress from the site.
5. If applicable, temporary fencing installed to separate remaining construction from area to be occupied.
6. Accessible parking spaces are properly located, signed, sized and marked.
7. Site lights (driveways and parking areas) are installed, operational and are at proper minimum distance from curb.
8. Rezoning conditions, Proffers, and Conditional Use Permit requirements, if applicable, tied to the occupancy of the property have been fulfilled.
9. Exterior features are compliant with Certificates of Appropriateness for properties located in a Historic District.
10. Fencing and screenings walls (dumpster enclosures, etc.) are in place.
11. If required, submittal and acceptance of a Landscape Maintenance Surety to the Planning Division to be held for 1 year after issuance of Final CO. Zoning will have to approve the Site Final Inspection prior to acceptance of the surety. The amount of the surety will be located in the Approval Letter associated with the approved site plan.
 - The Landscape Maintenance Surety can be provided in the form of a check, letter of credit, or bond. If submitting a letter of credit or bond, please submit your draft for review as to form via email to the Planner who issued the Approval Letter for the site plan.
 - Templates for the letter of credit and bond can be found here: <http://www.suffolkva.us/651/Forms-Formats>
 - Please contact the Planning Division at (757) 514-4060 for more information.

Thank you,

Michael Robinson, CBO
Building Official

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Planning and Community Development
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