



A Certificate of Occupancy is a document that establishes classification of a structure or portion of a structure with respect to its occupancy and use.

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1. Final Building Permit Certificates of Occupancy (CO)

Per the Virginia Construction Code, establishing or changing the use of a structure or portion thereof requires a Building Permit. At the end of the inspection process on that permit, a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

Most commonly a Final Building Permit CO is used for new buildings, tenant upfits, and change of use.

There is no separate fee to obtain this CO.

Request Form

Navigate to the form:

Go to <https://rva.gov/planning-development-review/forms>

Click on “Construction, Demolition and Occupancy

Choose “Final Building Permit CO Request”

Information Required:

- Online Permit Portal account email of the Requestor
- Permit address
- Permit number
- Projected occupancy date
- Requestor name
- Requestor phone number

How to submit the Request for a Final Building Permit CO

Complete the [Final Building Permit CO Request](#) and email it to PDR.Permits@rva.gov.

Items required to receive a Final Building Permit CO

For a new building, you need:

- Passed final inspections on all associated Trade Permits
- On the Building Permit, passed final inspections from:
 - Building
 - Zoning
 - Land Disturbing
 - Works

The request form gives specific instructions for each of those final types.

In addition:

- You may need a passed final for Special Inspections
- You may need a passed final for Audit

For a tenant fitup, you need:

- Passed final inspections on all associated Trade Permits
- On the Building Permit, passed final inspections from:
 - Building
 - Zoning

The request form gives specific instructions for each of those final types.

In addition:

- You may need a passed final for Special Inspections
- You may need a passed final for Audit

CO Issuance

A Final Building CO request is considered an expedited request.

A Permit Technician will review the permits associated with the project.

If all required Final Inspections have been passed, the Permit Technician will issue the CO.

The CO will be posted as a publicly available document on the Permit in the Online Permit Portal. It will also be emailed to the Requestor.

2. Partial, Temporary, Owner/Tenant/dba Change COs (HCOs)

Types of HCOs

There are types of CO requests/requirements that are handled by an “HCO” application process.

These requests can only be made when the USE of the building or space is unchanged.

Per the Virginia Construction Code, a CHANGE OF USE requires a Building Permit. At the end of the inspection process on that permit, a Certificate of Occupancy is issued. See Section 1 of this document.

HCOs are usually only applicable for Commercial projects. We have rare exceptions in the Residential world, but these are done on an exception basis and will not be addressed here.

Here are the Types of HCOs:

Partial Certificate of Occupancy

These are typically requested when a large building is under construction and part of the building can be occupied.

Temporary Certificate of Occupancy

Usually these are requested for an event or when a large project is complete, but a Final CO cannot be issued yet for non-construction reasons (audits, site work, etc.)

Owner or Tenant Changes requiring a Certificate of Occupancy

These may be requested when a Business has to present a CO.

Often for Business or Retail Use this can be done with a Certificate of Zoning Compliance (CZC). A CZC can be applied for in the Online Permit Portal.

However, for Assembly, Education, and Institutional Uses, the CO must be obtained via the HCO process, outlined here.

The Process

Application

You can apply for a Partial/Temporary/Change of Owner CO in our Online Permit Portal. In addition, the Portal is used for invoicing and paying. The Applicant will be able to view information about the Application and retrieve a copy of their issued CO.

You can access the Online Permit Port here:

https://energov.richmondgov.com/energov_prod/selfservice#/home

There is a User Guide available under “Supporting Documentation.”

Information Required:

- Address of the Business
- Property Owner per the Assessor’s Record
- Business Owner
 - This should be the legal name of the business – this will be needed for their Business License and potentially other legal documents.
 - For Partial and Temporary HCOs, this is often the GC or Owner
 - If the record for the Business Owner does not exist, use your own Contact information and add the Business Owner information in the Description.
- What kind of CO you are requesting
 - Partial or Temporary
 - What is the governing Building Permit number?
 - Include this in the description
 - Include where in the building/what parts of the building the CO covers.
 - Floor plans should be provided.
 - Owner or Tenant Change
 - Verify legal name of the Business so it prints correctly on the CO. You can state this information in the Description.

Application Intake

A Permit Technician will review it for completeness and contact you with any questions.

Once everything is in order, they will invoice you for the fees in the Online Permit Portal.

Fees

The application fee for an HCO is \$263. It requires a building and zoning inspection. The Building Inspector or Manager normally issues the CO for these.

Inspections

Once the fees are paid, the Permit Technician will route the application for review. At the time of this writing, you should contact the following people to schedule your inspections:

Building: Rick.Paul@rva.gov
Zoning: PDRZoningAdministration@rva.gov

Here are some items the Building Inspector/Manager will be looking at:

1. EXIT lights – operational under test
2. Egress lights – operational under test
3. Fire extinguisher service dates (tags indicating less than 12 months since last service)
4. Fire suppression hood equipment service dates. (tags indicating less than 6 months since last service)
5. All Smoke/Carbon monoxide detectors operational
6. Make sure all means of egress are clear of all obstacles/debris – If it has an EXIT sign above the door it must be operational/clear.
7. Check to make sure any fire alarm panels indicate “SAFE” or “CLEAR.”
8. Bathroom signage installed and with Braille components, 5 feet to the top of the signs.
9. No extension cords used. Extension cords are for temporary use.
10. No gross building code violations.

CO Issuance

Once Zoning and Building have approved the application, the Building Inspector Supervisor or Manager will issue the CO.