



Commercial Building Plan Review Requirements

Department of Planning & Development Review, Bureau of Permits and Inspections
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2021 Code Cycle

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Commercial Building Plan Submittal and Plan Review Process for the City of Richmond, Virginia

The City of Richmond, Bureau of Permits and Inspections is responsible for the enforcement of all codes concerning new construction, additions, alterations, repairs, removal, demolition, occupancy and maintenance of buildings and structures located within the City of Richmond.

This guide is designed to assist professionals and citizens in preparing complete submittals and understanding the City of Richmond’s permit process. It provides valuable information on code requirements, plan requirements, fees, and other resources to help you navigate the construction of a new commercial project.

If you have any questions not addressed in this guide, please do not hesitate to contact us. The City of Richmond’s Bureau of Permits and Inspections staff is here to help you understand the rules and regulations applicable to your project. We look forward to serving you.

Adopted Building Codes:

The 2021 Virginia Building Code took effect on January 18, 2024. The Commonwealth of Virginia adopted and the City Of Richmond enforces the 2021 Virginia Construction Code, 2021 Virginia Existing Building Code, 2021 Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2021 Virginia Energy Conservation Code, 2017 ICC A117.1 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities, 2021 Virginia Mechanical Code, 2020 National Electrical Code, 2021 Virginia Plumbing Code, and 2021 Virginia Fuel Gas Code. These codes are available on The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development website.

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Building Permit Exemptions

Below is a list of building projects that can be completed without a permit. Please note the exception for projects within a historic district.

Virginia Commercial Code Section 108—Application for Permit

108.2 Exemptions from application for permit.

Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 108.1, application for a permit and any related inspections shall not be required for the following; however, this section shall not be construed to exempt such activities from other applicable requirements of this code. In addition, when an *owner* or an *owner's* agent requests that a permit be issued for any of the following, then a permit shall be issued and any related inspections shall be required.

1. Installation of wiring and equipment that (i) operates at less than 50 volts, (ii) is for broadband communications systems, (iii) is exempt under or , or (iv) is for monitoring or automation systems in dwelling units, except when any such installations are located in a plenum, penetrate fire-rated or smoke-protected construction or are a component of any of the following:
 - 1.1 Fire alarm system.
 - 1.2 Fire detection system.
 - 1.3 Fire suppression system.
 - 1.4 Smoke control system.
 - 1.5 Fire protection supervisory system.
 - 1.6 Elevator fire safety control system.
 - 1.7 Access or egress control system or delayed egress locking or latching system.
 - 1.8 Fire damper.
 - 1.9 Door control system.
2. One-story detached structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses or similar uses, provided the building area does not exceed 256 square feet (23.78 m²) and the structures are not classified as a Group F-1 or H occupancy. This type of project requires a zoning permit application.
3. Detached prefabricated buildings housing the equipment of a publicly regulated utility service, provided the floor area does not exceed 150 square feet (14 m²). A zoning permit is required for this type of work.
4. Tents or air-supported structures, or both, that cover an area of 900 square feet (84 m²) or less, including within that area all connecting areas or spaces with a common means of egress or entrance, provided such tents or structures have an occupant load of 50 or less persons.
5. Fences of any height unless required for pedestrian safety as provided for by Section 3306, or used for the barrier for a swimming pool. Zoning regulations may apply, please contact the Zoning Administration Office.
6. Concrete or masonry walls, provided such walls do not exceed 6 feet (1829 mm) in height above the finished grade. Ornamental column caps shall not be considered to contribute to the height of the wall and shall be permitted to extend above the 6-foot (1829 mm) height measurement. Zoning regulations may apply, for more information please contact the Zoning Administration Office.
7. Retaining walls supporting less than 3 feet (914 mm) of unbalanced fill that are not constructed for the purpose of impounding Class I, II or III-A liquids or supporting a surcharge other than ordinary unbalanced fill.
8. Swimming pools that have a surface area not greater than 150 square feet (13.95 m²) and are less than 24 inches (610 mm) deep.
9. Signs under the conditions in of Appendix H. Zoning regulations may apply, for more information please contact the Zoning Administration Office.
10. Replacement of above-ground existing LP-gas containers of the same capacity in the same location and associated regulators when installed by the serving gas supplier. Zoning regulations may be applicable, for more information please contact the Zoning Administration Office.

11. Flagpoles 30 feet (9144 mm) or less in height.
12. Temporary ramps serving dwelling units in Groups R-3 and R-5 occupancies where the height of the entrance served by the ramp is no more than 30 inches (762 mm) above grade.
13. Construction work deemed by the building official to be minor and ordinary and which does not adversely affect public health or general safety.
14. Ordinary repairs that include the following:
 - 14.1. Replacement of windows and doors with windows and doors of similar operation and opening dimensions that do not require changes to the existing framed opening and that are not required to be fire rated in Group R-2 where serving a single dwelling unit and in Groups R-3, R-4 and R-5.
 - 14.2. Replacement of plumbing fixtures and well pumps in all groups without alteration of the water supply and distribution systems, sanitary drainage systems or vent systems.
 - 14.3. Replacement of general use snap switches, dimmer and control switches, 125 volt-15 or 20 ampere receptacles, luminaires (lighting fixtures) and ceiling (paddle) fans in Group R-2 where serving a single dwelling unit and in Groups R-3, R-4 and R-5.
 - 14.4. Replacement of mechanical appliances, provided such equipment is not fueled by gas or oil in Group R-2 where serving a single-family dwelling and in Groups R-3, R-4 and R-5. Please verify with the Zoning Administration office for external setbacks requirements.
 - 14.5. Replacement of an unlimited amount of roof covering or siding in Group R-3, R-4 or R-5, provided the building or structure is not in an area where the nominal design wind speed is greater than 100 miles per hour (44.7 meters per second) and replacement of 100 square feet (9.29 m²) or less of roof covering in all groups and all wind zones.
 - 14.6. Replacement of 256 square feet (23.78 m²) or less of roof decking in Group R-3, R-4 or R-5 unless the decking to be replaced was required at the time of original construction to be fire-retardant-treated or protected in some other way to form a fire-rated wall termination.
 - 14.7. Installation or replacement of floor finishes in all occupancies.
 - 14.8. Replacement of Class C interior wall or ceiling finishes installed in Groups A, E and I and replacement of all classes of interior wall or ceiling finishes in other groups.
 - 14.9. Installation or replacement of cabinetry or trim.
 - 14.10. Application of paint or wallpaper.
 - 14.11. Other repair work deemed by the building official to be minor and ordinary which does not adversely affect public health or general safety.
15. Crypts, mausoleums and columbaria structures not exceeding 1,500 square feet (139.35 m²) in area if the building or structure is not for occupancy and used solely for the interment of human or animal remains and is not subject to special inspections.
16. Billboard safety upgrades to add or replace steel catwalks, steel ladders, or steel safety cable.

Exceptions:

1. Application for a permit may be required by the building official for the installation of replacement siding, roofing and windows in buildings within a historic district designated by a locality pursuant to § 15.2-2306 of the Code of Virginia.
2. Application for a permit may be required by the building official for any items exempted in this section that are located in a special flood hazard area.

Submission Requirements

To submit plans for your proposed construction project, you must apply for a permit through the City of Richmond Online Permit Portal. You can access the portal at the address below:

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

You can access the Online Permit Portal User Guide by clicking on the heading “Other Resources”.

Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, Gas and piping work, cannot be included on a commercial building permit. Each trade requires a separate application. Construction documents are required for trade permit applications.

For projects involving multiple buildings on the same site, each building must be submitted individually. This does not apply to single structures separated into individual “buildings” by the use of a fire wall with the intent of increasing the overall size of the structure.

Application through the Online Permit Portal requires such information as the project’s street address; description of work; estimated construction value including labor & materials; contact information for the owner, contractor, architect/engineer (where applicable), and contact person.

Contractor’s Licenses or Owner Statement

Confirmation of a valid State Contractors License with the appropriate DPOR (Department of Professional and Occupational Regulations) classification is needed before a submission can be invoiced and routed to the plan examiners. Contractors are required to confirm they hold a valid Virginia business license. If the total construction value of their work in the City of Richmond totals \$25,000 or more in the previous 12 months (From the date of submission back 12 months) then confirmation of a City of Richmond Business license is required before a submission can be processed. You can reach the City of Richmond Business license office by calling 804-646-6662.

An applicant can apply for a permit without designating a contractor as long as a written statement, supported by an affidavit is submitted stating that he/she is not subject to licensure or certification as a contractor per Title 54.1-1111 of the Code of Virginia. Refer to The Code of Virginia Title 54.1-1101 for a list of exceptions from meeting the Code of Virginia Contractor Requirements. You can find a copy of The City of Richmond “Building Permit- Owner Statement” form at:

<https://rva.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/BuildingPermitOwnerStatement.pdf>

Construction Documents

All documents must be submitted as a single black and white pdf file. Below is a list of the City of Richmond acceptable file names. Depending on the project scope one or more of these file types will be required.

- Project Narrative
- Plans – Plans may be required to be Sealed and Stamped, depending on the scope of work
- Site Plan indicating the proposed setbacks of the improvements
- Soil Report – Required for new construction and may be required for additions or alterations depending on the scope of work
- Asbestos Report if applicable
- Structural Reports depending on the scope of work
- COMcheck report verifying that the new construction meets the energy efficient requirements outlined in the 2021 Virginia Energy Conservation Code
- Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing plans if provided should be submitted into a separate pdf file by discipline. The MEP are not approved as part of the commercial building application.

Plans which are incomplete or illegible will not be accepted. The minimum scale used on architectural plans shall be 1/8” = 1’-0”. Civil and site plans can be plotted at a smaller scale, such as 1”=30’.

All architectural and engineering plans shall be sealed and signed by a Registered Design Professional responsible for the design in the Commonwealth of Virginia except where, exempted by Section 54.1-402 of the Code of Virginia.

Building Permit Application Fees

The City of Richmond permit fees are based on provided construction costs, provided square footage numbers, and computer-generated R. S. Means Estimating Calculations. You will be invoiced through the Permit Portal once your application has been reviewed and processed by a Permit Technician.

The City of Richmond fee schedule can be found at:

<https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/PermitsFeeSchedule.pdf>

Plan Requirements

All plans shall include the project address, the project name, and the name, address, phone number, and occupation of the designer. All sheets shall be numbered. Title 54.1-402 of the Code of Virginia can be referenced to determine if a Register Design Professional Sealed and Stamped Plans are required.

The following construction documents are required when submitting a building permit application for a new building, addition, alteration, repair, change of use, and/or interior or partial demolition of an existing building. Below is a list of drawing set requirements:

Submitted documents must include the following information.

1. Cover Sheet:

- a) Name of the project
- b) Address
- c) Drawing index

2. Life Safety Sheets:

- a) Name and edition of the codes used for the design
- b) Design criteria:
 - Seismic load
 - Wind load
 - Floor load and floor elevation
 - Geotechnical information
 - Live load
 - Dead load
- c) Type of construction.
- d) Number of stories and building height
- e) Use and occupancy classification
- f) Area and height limitations
- g) Previous structure use if a change of occupancy is proposed
- h) Separated or non-separated mixed-use (mixed-use buildings only)
- i) Occupant load analysis
- j) Fire suppression system and type
- k) Fire alarm system and type
- l) Fire wall, fire barrier, fire partition, and smoke barrier locations
- m) UL details for all rated assemblies
- n) Fire penetration details
- o) Means of egress analysis
- p) Accessibility requirements

3. Site Plans: Required for new construction, additions, and exterior modifications.

- a) Building location and proposed modifications in relation to property lines
- b) Site work
- c) Erosion and sediment control
- d) Parking – Indicating accessible spaces and route
- e) Encroachments on public roads, alleys, or sidewalks

4. Key Plan:

- a) Required for large projects in strip centers or larger complexes
- b) Provide building use of adjoining tenants where applicable

5. Architectural Plans:

- a) Floor Plans
 - Provide floor plans of each level impacted by the proposed work with all rooms labeled.
 - Differentiate between existing walls, new walls, and walls selected for demolition.
 - Show the location and size of new doors, windows, and openings.
 - Provide ceiling heights

- Indicate accessibility clearances
- Show new and existing plumbing fixtures
- Indicate accessibility clearances
- Locate Stairs, Elevators, Lifts, and Ramps
- Locate exit signs and egress lights
- Locate Fire extinguishers
- Provide system furniture and equipment layouts as they affect egress.
- b) Roof Plan – Including covering material and slopes when applicable
- c) Building Elevations
- d) Building Sections and Details
- e) Wall Sections
 - Indicate material types
 - Identify Required fire-resistant assemblies
 - Indicate Insulation R values
- f) Sections of all new stairs including tread, riser, handrail, and guard dimensions
- g) Partition Types
- h) Door and Window Schedules
 - Indicate sizes
 - Provide Fire rating
 - Provide Hardware information
 - Indicate location of safety glazing
 - Provide U Factors
- i) Structural Plans (Where Applicable)
 - Provide sealed drawings where required by Title 54.1-402 of the Code of Virginia
 - Foundation plans
 - Floor framing plans
 - Roof Framing plans
 - Sections and details

6. Soils Report:

A soil report including foundation recommendations is required for new buildings and additions.

7. Asbestos Report:

In accordance with § 36-99.7 of the Code of Virginia, the *local building department* shall not issue a building permit allowing a *building* for which an initial building permit was issued before January 1, 1985, to be renovated or demolished until the *local building department* receives certification from the *owner* or his agent that the affected portions of the *building* have been inspected for the presence of asbestos by an individual licensed to perform such inspections pursuant to § 54.1-503 of the Code of Virginia and that no asbestos-containing materials were found or that appropriate response actions will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Clean Air Act National Emission Standard for the Hazardous Air Pollutant (NESHAPS) (40 CFR Part 61, Subpart M), and the asbestos worker protection requirements established by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration for *construction* workers (29 CFR 1926.1101). Local educational agencies that are subject to the requirements established by the Environmental Protection Agency under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) shall also certify compliance with 40 CFR Part 763 and subsequent amendments thereto.

To meet the inspection requirements above, except for schools, an asbestos inspection for renovation projects involving only the repair or replacement of roofing, floor covering, or siding materials may be satisfied by a statement assuming that the materials contain friable asbestos. Additionally, the statement must confirm that any asbestos installation, removal, or encapsulation will be accomplished by a licensed asbestos contractor.

An abatement area shall not be reoccupied until the *building official* receives certification from the *owner* confirming that the response actions have been completed and final clearances have been measured. The final clearance levels for reoccupancy of the abatement area must not exceed 0.01 asbestos fibers per cubic centimeter, as determined by Phase Contrast Microscopy analysis (PCM) or 70 or fewer *structures* per square millimeter, as determined by Transmission Electron Microscopy analysis (TEM). You can find a copy of the Asbestos Certification at the link below:

<https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/Asbestos-Certification.pdf>

8. COMcheck:

Indicate on the submitted documents that the design complies with the thermal envelope requirements outlined in Table C402.1.3 of the 2021 Virginia Energy Conservation Code or provide COMcheck documentation demonstrating compliance with the Virginia Energy Conservation Code.

COMcheck software, available at the website listed below, is designed to simplify the process of verifying that the proposed design meets the requirements of the Virginia Energy Conservation Code and ASHRAE Standard 90.1. To obtain the Asbestos Certification form please click on the link below:

<https://www.energycodes.gov/comcheck>

9. Specifications:

Provide specifications as needed if they include building code information not shown on the plans. For example, hardware specifications may be required if the plans do not include details on locking mechanisms or door closers. Similarly, roofing specifications may be necessary if the plans do not specify the roof covering classification.

10. Special Inspections:

City Plan Reviewers will determine if a project requires Special Inspections under Chapter 17 of the VCC. If Special Inspections are required, the Plan Reviewer will email the applicant a copy of the City's Special Inspections (SI) Manual, which includes the necessary forms. The SI Manual can also be accessed at the link below:

<https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/SpecialInspectionsManual.pdf>

The applicant must upload the following SI Meeting documents to the City's Online Portal as a single document:

- Exhibits 1
- Exhibit 2
- Schedule for Inspections
- A contact list including names, titles, phone numbers, and emails for all individuals listed in Exhibits 1 & 2 and any additional attendees.

Once the special Inspections documents are reviewed, City staff will contact the applicant to schedule the SI meeting within five business days, unless a later date is requested. The following individuals must attend the SI meeting:

- General Contractor
- Owner,
- Tenant or their representative
- Engineer or Architect
- Structural Engineer (SER)
- Special Inspections Engineer of Record or Representative (SIER)

After the SI Meeting is complete and all required documentation is submitted, the building permit will be issued if there are no other code issues. Once construction begins, it is expected that the following reports be submitted:

- Special Inspections Daily Reports.
- Special Inspections Completion Packets must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy. Our staff will work with the applicant to ensure the correct documentation is provided.

Once the final report reaches the approved status, our staff will approve the Final SI Inspection.

11. Material Safety Data Sheets:

MSDS sheets must be submitted for all hazardous materials stored in or near the building. Additionally, a complete list of materials, including the quantities stored, is required to ensure an accurate review of the project design.

Construction Trailers: Construction Documents for temporary construction trailers must include:

1. Proposed use classification and occupant Load.
2. Exterior dimensions of the trailer.
3. Site plan showing the trailer's location in relation to property lines and adjacent structures.
4. Proposed parking spaces.
5. Indication of whether the trailer will have a functioning restroom.
6. Tie down details.
7. Step and ramp details.
8. Information from the trailer data plate, including the code under which the trailer was manufactured.
9. Duration of time the trailer will remain on site.

Plan Review and Approval of Construction Documents

Once the application fees have been invoiced and paid the Permit Technician assigned to your project will route your documents to the necessary departments/divisions. The submission will then be technically reviewed by the appropriate plan examiners in accordance with applicable codes, ordinances, regulations and standards. The various agencies will review your documents simultaneously verses sequentially.

Building permits are typically reviewed by multiple agencies. In addition to the Building Code review, permits may be forwarded to some of the following departments:

- Building Department
- Zoning Division
- Planning and Preservation
- Land Use Administration
- Commission of Architectural Review
- Public Works
- Public Utilities
- Water Resources
- Code Enforcement / Property maintenance
- Fire Department

These agencies will review a specific aspect of the proposed construction to verify compliance with their regulations. Building Department initial review will be completed within 5-10 City's business days of receiving the application in plan review for projects \$1-\$1.5 million and 10-20 City's business days for projects \$1.5-\$20 million. Projects over \$20 million may take 30+ City business days to review.

At the time of submission, your application will be given a tracking number referred to as a "Plan Number". Once your application is approved a "Permit Number" will be issued. These two numbers will be unique and will not match.

Once approved, the permit and City of Richmond stamped documents will be uploaded on the Online Permit Portal. The Applicant will receive an e-mail notification stating the permit has been issued and can be downloaded from the Permit Portal. A copy of the Permit and approved documents must be kept on the building site and the inspector must have access to this set while the structure is under construction.

Responding to Plan Review Comments

If questions arise or discrepancies are discovered when the construction documents are examined, the applicant will be notified by e-mail. Review comments for the permit application will be available on the Online Portal. If an application is routed to multiple departments/divisions, an applicant potentially could receive review comments from multiple reviewers.

Once all questions and discrepancies have been addressed, revised documents need to be uploaded on the Permit Portal. It is important that the applicant send an e-mail to the plan reviewer requesting the information notifying them that new information has been uploaded and is in need of review.

Revised documents must be resubmitted in their entirety. The goal is to have one complete stamped and approved set of drawings and reports when the review process is complete.

Post Permit Revisions

Every building must be constructed per the City of Richmond, Bureau of Permits and Inspections approved plans and construction documents. If any changes or revisions to the project are proposed, those changes need to be reviewed and approved by the City of Richmond, Bureau of Permits and Inspection, before initiation and incorporation of the work.

A revised set of plans reflecting the proposed changes need to be uploaded directly to the City of Richmond Online Permit Portal. Load the post permit revision to the Plan application number not the permit side.

Fees are typically due, and the revision must be reviewed by a Permit Tech before it is handled by a plan reviewer. Post-permit revisions can be submitted by completing the Revision Form:

[RevisionResubmittal-Plan-Intake-Sheet.pdf](#) and email it to PDR.Permits@rva.gov

Permit Expiration

Building permits are valid for 180 days from the date of issuance. Every time there is a building inspection on the property, the permit is extended for another 180 days from the date of the last inspection. If your permit has expired, you can request an extension by completing the Extension Form:

[Permit Extension Application.pdf](#) and email it to PDR.Permits@rva.gov

Permit Cancellation or Refund

Any authorized agent listed on the permit can request a cancellation. If any refunds are due, they will be issued back to the payor on record. You can request a cancellation or refund by completing the Cancellation Form:

[Authorization to Kill Permit.pdf](#) and email it to PDR.Permits@rva.gov

Inspections

Once construction plans and documents have been approved and the permit has been issued, work may begin. You can schedule inspections using the Online Permit Portal, [Online Permit Portal](#)

Below is a list of typical building inspections and the associated system codes. Applicants should request only those inspections relevant to their scope of work. Inspection requests can be made 24 hours a day. All building inspections must be scheduled before midnight on the day prior to the inspection appointment.

1. Footing – The footing trench must be completely prepared for concrete. Grade pegs must be in place location, depth, width, reinforcing and soil conditions will be checked.
2. Foundation – Footing inspection must be approved before proceeding. If poured concrete foundation, call for inspection when forms are in place and before placing concrete. If masonry foundation, call before framing is started. During the inspection, the inspector will check materials, foundation size, anchoring, vent placement, access doors, and reinforcing if required,
3. Slab – If there are any underslab electrical or plumbing installations, trade inspection approvals must be obtained before calling for a slab inspection. Inspectors will check soil condition, compaction, thickness, reinforcing, vapor barriers and expansion joints.
4. Framing – Rough in inspections must be approved for electrical, plumbing and mechanical work prior to calling for a framing inspection. Approved plans must be on the job site. Inspectors will check lumber grades, nailing schedules, cutting, notching and adherence to approved plans.
5. Insulation – After framing inspection has been approved and all insulation has been installed, call for insulation inspection. Attic and under floor insulation will be checked at final inspection.
6. Sill – For siding replacement or installation, call for sill inspection when bottom boards of existing siding are removed, and existing sill is exposed. The inspector will check for the sound of existing sills and other structural elements.
7. Veneer – Call for inspection when all sheathing is secured, and doors and windows are wrapped. The inspector will check for the type of sheathing, proper installation of sheathing and nailing schedule.

8. Other – This is used for inspections other than those listed above.
9. Fire Separation- This inspection is used to inspect fire-resistance rated wall assemblies, vertical assemblies and fire blocking materials approved for use as fire blocking to resist the free passage of flame to other areas of the building through concealed spaces.
10. Partial Final – This inspection is used only on large commercial projects to final out an entire floor when the remainder of the building is not complete.
11. Final – Call for final inspection when all work is completed. The inspector will check for smoke detectors, handrails, guardrails, required egress, and access to attic and concealed spaces. Building numbers must be attached to the building and visible from the street. Required for Certificate of Occupancy.

Virginia Construction Code Section 113.8—Final Inspection

Upon completion of *construction* for which a permit was issued, a final inspection shall be conducted to ensure that any defective work has been corrected and that all work complies with the USBC. This includes approvals or any modifications under Section 106.3. The *building official* shall be permitted to require the electrical service to a *building* or *structure* to be energized prior to conducting the final inspection.

Before occupancy or a change in occupancy of a building or structure, a Certificate of Occupancy must be issued in accordance with Section 116. Additional inspections may be required depending on the scope of work of your project, including final inspections for Certificate of Occupancy, please verify with other departments:

Zoning Final, call 804-646-4169 or email PDRZoningAdministration@rva.gov

Land Disturbing Final, call 804-646-7087 or email Waterresources@rva.gov

Public Works Final, call 804-646-6430 or email RightofWay@Richmondgov.com

Public Utilities Final, call 804-646-7586 or email <https://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/permits>

Audit

An audit is required for projects \$1,500,000 and over. The estimated construction costs and final construction costs will be compared to determine if the original permit fees need to be adjusted. The building inspector can provide information concerning who to contact to start the audit process.

Certificate of Occupancy

A Certificate of Occupancy indicating completion of work must be obtained prior to occupancy or change of use or occupancy of a building or structure. A Certificate of Occupancy will not be issued until all required final inspections are successfully completed. For projects requiring Special Inspections under Chapter 17 of the VCC, the final Special Inspection Report must be reviewed and approved by the office of the Commissioner of Buildings prior to a final inspection.

To request a Certificate of Occupancy submit the request form linked below:

[Request a Certificate of Occupancy form.pdf](#) and email it to PDR.Permits@rva.gov

Additional Submission Requirements

Additional Permits may be required above and beyond the building and trade permits depending on the project scope and project location. Refer to the Planning and Preservation, Zoning, Water Resources, Public Utilities and Public Works sections below for general information concerning requirements for special conditions. Each department should be contacted for more specific information.

Zoning Division

Each parcel of property within the City of Richmond is part of a designated zoning district. The zoning district specifies the permitted land uses, such as residential, commercial, or industrial, and the minimum distances or setbacks from the property lines for buildings, accessory structures, and fences as well as maximum height restrictions. If the permit request is for new construction, architectural design, and landscaping standards may also apply to the property or project.

Any questions related to setbacks or allowed uses within a zoning district can be addressed directly with the Zoning Administration office by calling (804) 646-6340 or email PDRZoningAdministration@rva.gov

Department of Planning and Development Review—Planning and Preservation Division

If your property is located within a City’s Old and Historic District, a certificate of appropriateness from the Commission of Architecture Review is required for any new construction or exterior alterations that are visible from the public right of way prior to the issuance of a building permit. Alterations typically exempt from building permit application may require a permit if located within a historic district per the exception in Section 108.2 of the Virginia Residential Code and Section 15.2-2306 of the Code of Virginia. To determine if your property is within a City’s Old and Historic District, please consult the City’s Old and Historic Districts Map using the link below:

<https://cor.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=60ee42f309734f2aa23955db82f707b5&extent=-77.4823,37.5406,-77.4403,37.5692>

For more information, please contact the Planning and Preservation Office at 804-646-6335 or email PDRPlanningAndPreservation@rva.gov

Department of Public Utilities – Water Resources Division

The City of Richmond Water Resources Division has combined the three previously used permits into one. Land Disturbing (LDIS), Richmond Stormwater Management permits (RSMP), and on-site (civil) stormwater permits (STRM) are now combined into the Richmond Erosion and Stormwater Management Program Permit (RESMP). Water Resources is also a part of the review team for most other types of building permits including, but not limited to residential and commercial permits for new and redevelopment projects, demolition, and some trade permits. Most building permits for the construction of detached, single family dwellings that are not a part of a common plan of development, will require a separate Richmond Erosion and Stormwater Management Program Permit (RESMP).

Richmond Erosion and Stormwater Management Program Permit (RESMP)

RESMP Permits are required for land disturbance of 4,000 square feet or greater or land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or greater in a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area (CPBA). This permit will cover all erosion and sediment control, storm drainage installation, structural and non-structural best management practices, CBPA, and floodplain regulatory requirements.

Reference the Stormwater Permitting page <https://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/permits> for the RESMP permit application and checklist.

The following information may be required by Water Resources before a building permit is approved:

- a. RESMP application and fees.
- b. Contractor’s City of Richmond business license.
- c. Contractor’s H/H or plumbing license.
- d. RLD designation form.
- e. RLD certificate.
- f. E&SC bond agreement (amount - \$ TBD based on plans)
- g. E&SC Bond Receipt Copy (will be provided upon bond payment)
- h. Agreements in lieu (AILOs) for erosion control and stormwater.
- i. Nutrient credit purchase receipt.
- j. Recorded SUMA agreement and exhibit.
- k. SWPPP and general state registration statement.
- l. RPA Encroachment Application.
- m. USACE-approved wetlands delineation and permits.
- n. Section 408 approval for development near the floodwall

CBPA Mapping

Locally designated Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas have been depicted on adopted Bay Act maps for the City of Richmond. These maps are to be used as a guide for applicants and local staff as to the general location of CBPA Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) and Resource Management Areas (RMAs) on lots and parcels and should be used for planning purposes only. Once a project is proposed, a site-specific location of the RPA and the RMA must be determined. The locally adopted CMA can be found at:

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=10339f483a774998930b81accf227768>

To apply for a RESMP permit, upload all the required documents and plans in a PDF format and email them directly to Waterresources@rva.gov.

Any questions, or resubmittals, should be sent to Waterresources@rva.gov. The submitted application subject should be titled the address of the main project.

For additional information, call the Water Resources Department at 804-646-7586 or visit us online at <https://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/stormwater-utility>.

Department of Public Works—Right-Of-Way Division

A Work-in-Streets Permit (WISP) is required whenever work is done within the public right-of-way, a public easement, or impacts a public facility. Examples of work requiring a WISP are as follows:

1. The placement and/or use of equipment and materials on sidewalks, curbs and gutters, streets, alleys, and easements. (i.e. use of ladders, lifts, and cranes, placement of dumpsters, PODs, and trailers).
2. Any improvements to or within the public right-of-way or easement. (i.e. repairing or installing sidewalk, driveway apron, curb, gutter, and/or streets).
3. The installation, repair, or removal of entrances or driveway aprons to public streets.
4. Excavation and connection or removal of private sanitary or storm facilities to the public sewer system.
5. The installation and/or repair of signs, canopies and awnings, footings, or other building features above, at, or below public sidewalks, streets, or alleys. (A separate encroachment application must be submitted).
6. Connections to public infrastructure (driveways, construction entrance, etc.) even if off a public alley.

There is an application for a WISPs permit and fees for inspections, along with the requirements for insurance.

For additional information visit us at <https://www.rva.gov/public-works/right-way-management> or email RightofWay@Richmondgov.com

Contact Information

- The City of Richmond, Planning and Development Review website is:
<https://www.rva.gov/planning-development-review>
- The City of Richmond, Permits and Inspections Help Desk:
PDRPermitsAndInspections@rva.gov or 804-646-4169
- The City of Richmond, forms and other information can be found on our website:
<https://rva.gov/planning-development-review/permits-and-inspections>
- The International Code Council website is:
<https://www.iccsafe.org/>
- The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development website is:
<http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/codes>
- The City of Richmond Department of Finance for Business website is:
<https://www.rva.gov/finance/revenue-administration>
- The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation website is:
<https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/node/6>