



Homeowners Residential Building Permit Process Guide

Department of Planning & Development Review, Bureau of Permits and Inspections
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<https://www.rva.gov/planning-development-review/permits-and-inspections>

Permitting Process for New Homes, Alterations, Additions and Renovations to Existing Dwellings

A Residential Building permit is required for the construction of new dwellings, as well as for additions, alterations, repairs, and renovations to existing dwellings. However, Section 108 in the 2021 Virginia Residential Building Code outlines exceptions where a building permit is not required. These exceptions include ordinary repairs, window and door replacements, and cabinetry installation among others.

For a complete list of building projects that do not require a permit, please refer to the 2021 Virginia Residential Code at [CHAPTER 1 ADMINISTRATION - 2021 VIRGINIA RESIDENTIAL CODE](#)

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, you can contact the City of Richmond Permits, and Inspections Help Desk at PDRPermitsAndInspections@rva.gov or 804-646-4169

Building Permit Process

1. Building Permit Application – A building permit must be obtained before commencing any construction or alterations to a building. Construction documents are required when submitting a building permit application for a new building, addition, alteration, finishing a space, and/or interior or partial demolition of an existing structure. Depending on the project scope one or more of these file types will be required:

- Site Plan indicating the proposed setbacks of the improvements.
- Soil Report – Required for New Homes.
- Plans: foundation plan, floor plan, roof plan.
- Floor plans of each level impacted by the proposed work with differentiating existing walls, new walls, and walls selected for demolition.
- Elevations and Sections.
- Construction details.
- Trusses if applicable to the project.
- Structural Reports depending on the scope of work.

To submit plans for your proposed work, you must apply for a permit using the City of Richmond Online Permit Portal. You can access the Online Permit Portal at the link below:

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

2. **Plan Review and Approval** – The application and submitted construction documents will be reviewed by plan examiners and the necessary departments/divisions for compliance with applicable codes, ordinances, regulations, and standards.

Once approved, the permit and stamped and approved construction documents will be uploaded on the Online Permit Portal. The applicant will receive an e-mail notification stating the permit and stamped documents have been issued and can be downloaded from the Permit Portal.

3. **Inspections Request** – Once construction plans and documents have been approved and the permit has been issued, work may begin. A copy of the Permit and approved documents must be kept on-site, and the inspector must have access to these documents while the structure is under construction. You can schedule inspections using the Online Permit Portal:

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

The following minimum inspections shall be conducted by the building official when applicable to the construction or permit:

1. Inspection of footing excavations and reinforcement material for concrete footings prior to the placement of concrete.
 2. Inspection of foundation systems during phases of construction necessary to assure compliance with this code.
 3. Inspection of preparatory work prior to the placement of concrete.
 4. Inspection of structural members and fasteners prior to concealment.
 5. Inspection of electrical, mechanical and plumbing materials, *equipment* and systems prior to concealment.
 6. Inspection of energy conservation material prior to concealment.
 7. Final inspection.
4. **Certificate of Occupancy** – A Certificate of Occupancy is only required before the occupancy of a new building or change of occupancy of a structure. A new Certificate of Occupancy is not required for an addition, alterations and decks to an existing dwelling that already has a Certificate of Occupancy.

Important Items

- **Post Permit Revisions** – Any changes to the project after the permit is issued need to be reviewed and approved by our office. Revised plans reflecting the changes are required before initiation and incorporation of the work. 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

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can apply for a building permit?

An application shall be made by the owner or lessee of the relevant property or the agent of either or by the Registered Design Professional, or contractor associated with the work or any of their agents. The full name and address of the *owner*, lessee and applicant shall be provided in the application.

2. What should I know before hiring a contractor?

Obtain written estimates from more than 2 contractors, ask for referrals, and hire only licensed contractors by checking the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) at 804-367-8511 or www.dpor.virginia.gov. Have a written detailed contract, including the specific work to be done, including agreed-upon-start and finish dates, do not rely on verbal agreements. Limit your down payment or deposit.

3. What if I need to change the contractor of my project?

If the permit has already been issued and inspections have been performed, the existing permit must be canceled. A new application, along with new construction documents, must be submitted by the owner or the new contractor.

4. Do I need to hire a Registered Design Professional (RDP) to prepare the construction documents for my project?

Residential plans do not require to be prepared by an RDP. Plans can be prepared by the applicant, owner, or contractor. However, if the proposed design includes structural elements that do not conform to the requirements of the 2021 Virginia Residential Code, those elements must be designed in accordance with accepted engineering practices.

5. What are the fees for a building permit application?

The permit fees are based on provided construction costs, provided square footage numbers. The City of Richmond fee schedule can be found at:

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

6. How long it takes to obtain my permit?

Processing times for some application types may take as long as 2-3 weeks. Applications and plans are being reviewed in the order in which they are received. The goal is to have the initial review completed within 10 business days of receiving the application in plan review.

7. Is trade work included in the building permit application and approval?

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

8. What is an ADU and where Can I find more Information for applications requirements?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), attached or detached, is defined as a Dwelling Unit that is accessory to the primary dwelling. An ADU provides for separate living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation facilities, but may share living space, means of egress, utilities, or other components. You can obtain more information for the minimum ADU application requirements at City of Richmond Permits and Inspections site at the link below:

<https://www.rva.gov/planning-development-review/permits-and-inspections>

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 City of Richmond Planning and Preservation Division:
PDRPlanningAndPreservation@rva.gov or 804-646-6335
- The City of Richmond Zoning Division:
PDRZoningAdministration@rva.gov or 804-646-6340
- The City of Richmond Department of Finance for Business website is:
<https://www.rva.gov/finance/revenue-administration>
- 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 Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation website is:
<https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/node/6>