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## **Steps to Successfully Complete a Commercial Building Permit Project and Obtain a Final Certificate of Occupancy**

In addition to an approved final building inspection, most commercial building permit projects require an official City of Lawrence final Certificate of Occupancy (CO) to be issued by the Building Safety Division of the Planning & Development Services Department (BSD) prior to public occupancy of a newly constructed, finished, altered or remodeled building or building space; and prior to public occupancy of an existing space where the Building Code use and occupancy classification is being changed under a "Change of Occupancy" building permit (for example, from a business classification to a mercantile classification, even when no alteration or remodeling occurs). Some minor remodeling projects, such as those where the Building Code use and occupancy classification will not change and the design occupant load will not increase, require only that a final building inspection be approved without a new CO required. Any project other than one- and two-family, including multi-family residential with three or more dwelling units, is considered to be "commercial".

Outlined below are steps that will help General Contractors, project owners and/or tenants successfully complete their approved commercial building permit project and obtain a Certificate of Occupancy.

1. As soon as a commercial building permit application and plans have been reviewed and approved by the City, BSD staff will notify the permit applicant and the licensed General Contractor (GC) for the project. At the time of notification, BSD will also inform the permit applicant and GC if a "pre-construction meeting" is required (see Item 2 below), and if an official CO will be required.
2. Before the building permit for a commercial project is issued and released, BSD staff will contact the project GC to arrange for a pre-construction meeting with BSD/City. Although a pre-construction meeting is only required for certain larger, more complex commercial building permit projects and/or change of use and occupancy classification building permits, it is an option available for any commercial permit project. When a pre-construction conference is *not required* by BSD, the GC for the permitted project or project owner may request one. For any pre-construction meeting, the GC and/or project owner may invite project subcontractors and other owner representatives to the meeting.

During a pre-construction meeting, discussion will generally include the following items.

**Note:** For smaller, less complex projects, certain items may be omitted.

- Projected construction start date and time-lines for completion of major project milestones.
- Preparation of the site for construction (construction traffic, keeping public ROWs clean/open, equipment staging, etc.).
- Site access and maintenance during construction (site/job trailer access, access requirements for Fire, BMPs for storm water management, protection of pedestrians/public from construction site, general site maintenance).
- Overview of required City inspections (BSD, Fire, Site Plan, Utilities) and, if required by the permit, expectations for completion, documentation and submittal of special inspection results and reports to the City, including any required soils reports and/or geotechnical evaluations. A list of all required City inspections is provided by BSD to the GC at the time the permit is issued and released.
- Review of where approved project plans and permit job card will be found on the site, and inspector site access protocols and issues, if any.
- Job site contractor and trade licensing job oversight and employee supervision guidelines.
- If final plans must be submitted for required fire alarm and/or fire suppression systems/fire lines, the deadline for submission to Fire for review, required revisions, if any, and Fire approval.

- Procedures and expectations for scheduling of required City inspections by the project GC and subcontractors, including fees and scheduling of extraordinary City inspections.
  - Procedures/expectations for City inspector documentation and communication of inspection results.
  - Process for obtaining final required City mechanical/HVAC, electrical and plumbing (MEP) trade, fire, storm water, City public utility, site plan and building inspections and approvals.
  - Process for requesting and obtaining a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO), if necessary, for stocking, installing furnishings or training staff, or to obtain City approval for partial, limited and/or conditioned general public occupancy.
  - Process for requesting and obtaining a required final CO for the project.
  - Emphasis on open and clear communication among inspectors, building project contractors, project owner and, if applicable, tenant/s.
3. During construction, the GC, the GC’s subcontractors and City inspectors should not hesitate to freely and openly communicate unique situations, code questions/concerns, timing issues or potential special requests among and to each other; timely responses should be expected.
  4. The permit GC is encouraged to contact BSD to arrange for a courtesy TCO/CO inspection by City Staff in accordance with the guidelines established in the table below, the results of which will be communicated to the GC. If a partial occupancy, limited occupancy and/or conditioned full public occupancy TCO is anticipated, the GC will be *required* to complete, sign (and obtain the project owner or tenant signature) and submit to BSD a no-fee [Temporary Certificate of Occupancy Application](#) prior to the expected date of the officially requested TCO inspection, also in accordance with the table below.

	<b>Minimum # of days prior to official TCO inspection to request courtesy City inspection from BSD</b>	<b>Minimum # of days prior to official TCO inspection date to submit required TCO Application to BSD</b>
<b>Large Projects:</b> New, remodeled and/or altered area is 10,000 ft <sup>2</sup> or greater, or new construction or addition is more than 3 stories above grade.	<b>20 calendar days</b>	<b>15 calendar days</b>
<b>Medium Projects:</b> New, remodeled and/or altered space is less than 10,000 ft <sup>2</sup> and equal to or greater than 5,000 ft <sup>2</sup> .	<b>15 calendar days</b>	<b>7 calendar days</b>
<b>Small Projects:</b> New, remodeled and/or altered area is less than 5,000 ft <sup>2</sup> .	<b>5 business days</b>	<b>3 business days</b>

5. The final building inspection is the last inspection required before issuing a CO or TCO. Before scheduling the final City building inspection for issuance of a CO or TCO, the GC should make sure all required final City trade (MEP), final required City Fire inspections (emergency egress, fire suppression systems, fire alarm systems) and required site plan inspections have been previously scheduled, completed and approved. For MEP, the final inspections should be scheduled at least one business day prior to the date requested for the final building inspection; for Fire, final inspections should be scheduled with Fire inspection staff at least three (3) days prior to the date requested for the final building inspection. This allows time for the GC and/or his subcontractors to correct MEP, Fire and/or site plan “punch-list” items, and to have them re-inspected, as required, prior to the final building inspection.
6. The GC should allow up to one (1) full business day from the final building inspection approval for BSD to prepare and issue the TCO or CO for the project (usually sent to the GC via email), although BSD will make every effort to prepare and issue the CO or TCO on the same day as the final building inspection is approved, partially approved and/or approved with conditions.

Visit the City’s website at [www.lawrenceks.org/pds/building-safety](http://www.lawrenceks.org/pds/building-safety) to obtain a [Temporary Certificate of Occupancy Application](#) form and other building code, contractor licensing, and building permit and inspection information, or visit our offices at 1 Riverfront Plaza, Suite 110, Lawrence, KS 66044.