

## Certificate of Occupancy Application Instructions and General Information

*Disclaimer: The application fee is non-refundable. The issuance fee is based on the square footage of the premises for which the C of O is being requested. DCRA does not accept applications and payments that are mailed. Such submittals will be returned.*

### General Information

The purpose of the [Certificate of Occupancy \(C of O\)](#) is to ensure that the use of a building, structure or land in the District of Columbia conforms to the [Zoning Regulations](#), [DCMR Title 11](#), provisions of the [DC Construction Codes](#), and the [Green Building Act](#). In most cases, no person can use a building, structure or land in the District of Columbia for any purpose other than a single family dwelling, until a valid C of O has been issued. There are six (6) types of C of O applications: ownership change, use change, occupant load change, revision, temporary occupancy, and new building. For new buildings, there are three (3) C of O subsets: conditional, completion of core and shell, and establishment of a new occupancy.

To apply for a C of O, please complete the [C of O Application](#) and follow the directions listed below. If you propose to operate an eating establishment, please also submit the [Eating Establishment Questionnaire](#) with your Certificate of Occupancy application.

Applications seeking a [change of ownership](#) *only* may be applied for [online here](#). All other applications must be submitted in person at DCRA's Permit Center that is located at 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, 2nd floor. For applications other than ownership change, please allow 10 business days for the review of your application.

If the applicant used a Third Party Agency to perform inspections, s/he must have the Third Party Agency submit inspection reports to DCRA's [Third Party Program](#) staff to review and accept. An inspection may be required prior to the approval of the C of O.

A [C of O](#) does not take the place of any license that may be required to permit you to conduct your business at the premises for which the [C of O](#) is requested. For information concerning license requirements, contact the [Business Licensing Center](#) at 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW (2nd floor), by phone at 202-442-4311, via email [dcra@dc.gov](mailto:dcra@dc.gov) or visit the [Business Licensing & Corporate Registration](#) website.

### Application Instructions

Lines 1 to24 Lines 1 thru 21 ask for information about the proposed business/occupancy. Please be very detailed in the information you provide. Indicate N/A (non-applicable) for items that do not apply. Please make sure that the signatures, dates, telephone numbers and all information are legible.

Lines 1 - 5 This section asks for basic information about the building/property where the premises is located. Do not use abbreviations for street names. Be sure that you indicate the correct quadrant and include the zip code. Provide the building/property owner's name, phone number and email address.

Line 6 Information regarding the zone district, can be obtained from the DC Office of Zoning at 202.727.6311 or by visiting [dcoz.dc.gov](http://dcoz.dc.gov).

Lines– 7-10 This section asks for basic information about the applicant applying for the C of O. If you are applying as a corporation or other type of business entity, please use the corporation or other business entity name as the applicant's name.

Lines 11-23 This section asks for basic information about the premises and the proposed occupancy for which the C of O application is being made. Complete each question to the best of your ability. When identifying the proposed use of the building or premises, please be as detailed as possible about the premises and the type of operation, special equipment used, the age of children and number of staff in any facility, etc.

Line 11 Select the type of C of O being requested from the following categories:

**1. Ownership Change:** Check this box if you recently obtained control of the premises for which a C of O was previously issued, and you will be conducting the same use in the premises. Typically no zoning or other inspections will be required for this type of issuance, unless the previous C of O was issued greater than 10 years from the current application date.

A zoning inspection is required for nonconforming uses, for apartment buildings or rental units to confirm the number of units, for eating establishments, and in cases where the current C of O was issued greater than 10 years ago. Call (202) 442-9557 and use code #745 to schedule a zoning inspection. It normally takes 24-48 hours before the inspection results are entered into the Department's computer system after the inspection occurs.

**2. Use Change:** Check this box if you are proposing a change from the previous use of the premises. Please note that an applicant who is seeking to change the use must have proof that 1) construction or renovation work has been approved by producing an issued building permit and 2) all building permit related inspections have been conducted, approvals obtained and the results entered into the Department's computer system. If you need assistance in obtaining a copy of the issued building permit, you may call the Records Management Room at (202) 442-4480 to obtain a copy of an issued permit.

If you have not sought a building permit to make renovations, you should speak with staff from the Permit Operations Division to determine if a building permit is required before a C of O for a change in use can be issued. If the Permit Operations Division determines that a building permit is required, you will be required to obtain a building permit and have inspections conducted, with the results entered into the Department's computer system, before a C of O can be issued.

**3. Occupant Load Change:** Check this box if you propose to undertake changes such as changing the number of occupants in a rooming house, community residential facility, boarding house, the number of units in an apartment, hotel or motel, number of classrooms, students, seating capacity in a restaurant, and other similar changes.

Please note that a [building permit](#) may also be required before the C of O can be issued. Speak with staff in the Permit Operations Division to determine whether a building permit will be required to approve a C of O for a load change.

If the Permit Operations Division determines that a [building permit](#) is required, you will be required to obtain a building permit and have inspections conducted, with the results entered into the Department's computer system, before a C of O can be issued.

**4. Revision:** Check this box if a typographical error was made in a previously issued C of O. Note: no substantive changes to the use or occupancy are permitted as a revision to an issued C of O.

**5. Temporary Occupancy:** If you would like to use the building for temporary purposes, a temporary C of O may be sought. Conditions on the issuance of the C of O may also be imposed as necessary, and will include an expiration date. A building permit may be required prior to the issuance of a temporary C of O. Types of uses covered by a temporary C of O include farmers markets and other outdoor events of limited duration with no new construction proposed.

**6. New Building:** Check this box if you obtained a building permit, have recently completed construction of a new building or other structure, and now wish to recognize core and shell completion of the building or other structure, or wish to seek the right to use the premises in that building or other structure.

Before the issuance of any C of O for a new building, all necessary inspections must be completed. All work approved, and the results, must be entered into the Department's computer system before any C of O in this category can be issued. Three subsets of a new building C of O are as follows:

**1. Conditional Occupancy:** Upon request from the holder of a building permit, a conditional/partial certificate of occupancy may be issued for part of the building before completion of the entire work covered by the permit, provided such part can be occupied without endangering life, public safety or welfare. If you desire to occupy a portion of the premises under construction, you may seek a partial occupancy C of O. Review the [Issuance of Conditional Certificates of Occupancy Guidelines](#) for more information about the application/review process.

**2. Completion of Core and Shell:** This type of C of O is required for all new construction to recognize that the core and shell of a building have been substantially and materially completed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the DC Construction Codes. The issuance of this type of C of O does not permit or authorize use and occupancy of

the building for any purpose. A core and shell C of O must be obtained prior to a Conditional Certificate of Occupancy for a new building.

**3. Establishment of a New Occupancy:** Where occupancy is to be established in a new building or other structure that has not previously been occupied, upon request a C of O can be issued by DCRA to recognize the approved use and occupancy of the premises in the new building or other structure. The issuance of this type of C of O permits use and occupancy of a new building or other structure for the specified uses listed on the C of O. Issuance of the C of O may require inspection and approval of the entire new building or other structure for core and shell completion, if a conditional C of O for core and shell has not been previously requested and obtained.

Line 12 Be as detailed as possible about the proposed used of the premises, referring to the permitted uses under the Zoning Regulations of the District of Columbia and the use classifications of the DC Construction Codes.

Line 13 Be as detailed as possible about the prior use of the premises. A copy of an existing C of O is required unless no previous C of O was issued by DCRA. If you need assistance obtaining a copy of the issued certificate of occupancy, you may call the Records Management Room at (202) 442-4480 to obtain a copy.

Line 14 For proposed occupant load:

- For assembly uses (such as restaurants, public halls, churches, etc.), retail, and office uses, enter the maximum number of persons allowed under Section 1004.3 of the DC Construction Codes.
- For multi-family dwelling uses such as apartment buildings, enter the number of dwelling units.
- For rooming and boarding houses, enter the number of roomers or boarders.
- For a community residential facility (CRF), enter the number of residents.
- For hotels and motels, enter the number of rooms, and identify assembly spaces.
- For schools and child development centers, enter the number and ages of the children attending and the number of staff.

Line 15 For the calculation of the square footage of the premises to be occupied by the proposed use, please be advised of the following definition of gross floor area:

Gross Floor Area - the sum of the gross horizontal areas of the several floors of all buildings on the lot, measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls and from the center line of walls separating two (2) buildings.

The term "gross floor area" shall include basements, elevator shafts, and stairwells at each story; floor space used for mechanical equipment (with structural headroom of six feet, six inches (6 ft., 6 in.), or more); penthouses; attic space (whether or not a floor has actually been laid, providing structural headroom of six feet, six inches (6 ft., 6 in.), or more); interior balconies; and mezzanines.

The term "gross floor area" shall not include cellars exterior balconies that do not exceed a projection of six feet (6 ft.) beyond the exterior walls of the building, all projections beyond the lot line that may be allowed by other Municipal codes, vent shafts, and pipe chase shafts above the ground floor, atriums above the ground floor, ramps on the ground floor leading down to areas of parking on a lower level; and in residential zones, the first floor or basement area designed and used for parking or recreation spaces provided that not more than fifty percent (50%) of the perimeter of that space may be comprised of columns, piers, walls, or windows, or similarly enclosed.

- Line 16 List floors of the building to be occupied by proposed use. If Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) units are provided, provide the unit number of each IZ unit. If proposing to occupy below grade floors, indicate which below and above grade floors are to be occupied.
- Lines 17 For certain types of businesses, such as [eating establishments](#), auto dealers, and sexually oriented business establishments as defined in B-100, please submit the appropriate [supplemental form](#).
- Line 18 Specify if your business is a Medical Marijuana Dispensary or Production Facility.
- Line 19 If the use was approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) or Zoning Commission (ZC), please check this box, and indicate the BZA or ZC case number.
- Lines 20-21 If there is a building permit associated with this application, provide the building permit number and the use listed on the building permit.
- Line 22 Provide documentation that all inspections were conducted and approved related to the building permit.
- Line 23 If a Third Party Agency conducted the inspections, check the "yes" box and provide the Agency name.
- Line 24 Indicate whether off-street parking (i.e. *not* public, on-street parking) is provided on the property and the number of parking spaces.

If an agent is submitting an application on behalf of the owner, the application must be supported by a completed Owner Authorization Form signed by the Business Owner and notarized by a licensed Notary Public. Authorization Forms can be obtained online at <http://dcra.dc.gov/publication/certificate-occupancy-authorization-form-0> or obtainable in person from the Permit Center located at 1100 4th Street SW, Suite E240 Washington, DC 20024.