

Small Business Permits: Top Tips for Success

February 2016

Getting started

Congratulations! You are preparing to improve your successful small business by moving into new space or renovating your existing location. We'd like to see you **back in business** as soon as possible – here are our top tips to ensure that your project is a successful one. **Be patient and plan ahead.** Construction and build-outs take time and require that you follow all the correct procedures.

Hire a professional architect

- We strongly recommend that you hire a **professional architect** who is familiar with Virginia Building Codes. It will save you time and money in the long run.
- Once you have hired an architect and have a conceptual design, you may want to request a **code consultation meeting** with the technical staff in the County's Inspection Services Division - so you don't end up with any unpleasant surprises.

Choose your space wisely

- If you have a choice, choose the space that is already being used for your same use – it will save you time and money.
- When choosing your location/space, be aware of **building codes and zoning ordinances**.
 - If your use of the space is not permitted by right under zoning ordinances, you will need to: choose another space (location) or apply for a special exception (administrative change, rezoning, site plan amendment, use permit).
 - To determine if your proposed use is, in fact, a different use of the space, you can obtain a copy of the original **Certificate of Occupancy**. Come to the Zoning Office, 2100 Clarendon Blvd., 10th floor, Arlington, VA, 703-228-3883.
- Are you **changing the building code use group classification**? If so, Virginia state building code requires that a space undergoing a change in use must comply with the **requirements of new buildings** for the new use. This can be very time consuming and expensive.

You need a building permit if you are making *any* changes to the space – including its use.

Documents required for permits

All of the following documents are required for your building permit. Items 3-5 must be incorporated into your **architect/engineer's original drawings**. Each page must bear the original seal and signature of the responsible Virginia registered design professional. All building permits will be submitted through our ePlan Review portal. All documents should be searchable PDFs.

1. [Accessibility Compliance Form.](#)
2. [Asbestos Compliance Form.](#)
3. **Architectural Drawings** to include **Code Analysis** (see sample below), scaled and dimensioned floor plans, elevations, sections and details, as appropriate; room/door/window schedules, and partition schedules with fire ratings and test numbers, as appropriate. Provide key plan of floor, showing renovation space and egress to the identified floor exits. Indicate new and existing work (clouds are not an acceptable method to indicate new work).
4. **Electrical Drawings** to include riser diagram, panel/light schedules and power/light plans. Indicate new and existing work.

5. **Mechanical Drawings** to show the location of all existing supply and return registers (if the system and ductwork are existing, indicate as such) and complete duct layout with all main and branch sizes, register sizes and CFM at each register (if ductwork is new). In addition, provide schedule for new equipment.
6. **Plumbing Drawings** to include riser diagrams, schedules and layouts. Indicate new and existing work.

“Express” ePlan Review service

Arlington County offers an “express” ePlan Review service. This means that we can review (and potentially approve) your construction documents within 1-2 business days.

Projects including any of the following **are not eligible** for “express” ePlan Review service;

- An increase in gross floor area.
- Any site change including changes to required parking; any exterior changes.
- A change in Building Code Use Group.
- Plans that include first floor or below; garage levels; top floor; penthouse; trailers; cranes; roof top.
- Any structural modification to the building.
- More than one floor of the building (multi-level alteration may be submitted for express ePlan Review on a single-floor basis -- this will require a new submission and permit for each).

Please note that **complex alterations** requiring an extensive review may be put into the regular plan review process.

Sample Code Analysis

Code Analysis for your project must be incorporated into your **architect/engineer’s original drawings**. This sample is not intended to be all inclusive and represents only “minimum requirements” for any plan.

For example use only:

	Existing Building	Proposed Alteration	Unacceptable
IBC Use Group	B	B	Bank
Construction Type	2C	II B	Wood
Number of Stories Above Grade	2	2	?
High Rise (Y/N)	N	N	N
Covered Mall (Y/N)	N	N	?
Fully Sprinklered (Y/N)	Y	Y	?
Fully Monitored (Y/N)	N	Y	?
Floor Area of Renovation	5000	1200	See plans

Contact us

Inspection Services Division, 2100 Clarendon Blvd., 10th Floor, Arlington, VA 22201. **703-228-3800**.

Visit us online: www.arlingtonva.us/cphd.