



FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions



This page provides answers to common questions related to processes, requirements, and services. The information below is intended to clarify expectations, outline next steps, and address common inquiries.

For additional information not addressed on this page or within the associated form, please email Applicationservices@albemarle.org.

Information may be reviewed by scrolling down the page, or a selection may be made from the list to be taken directly to the desired section.

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WHEN WILL I GET AN ADDRESS FOR MY NEW STRUCTURE?

- Albemarle County assigns addresses to structures, not parcels.
- A new dwelling/Accessory Sleeping Unit will receive an address once the footing inspection has been approved.
- A non-habitable structure, such as farm buildings and garages, do not automatically receive an address. After the final inspections are approved, please reach out to addressinfo@albemarle.org to begin the addressing process.
 - To determine what final inspections are needed, please refer to the [Inspections](#) section of this document

WHAT IS BTEX TESTING AND WHEN IS IT REQUIRED?

BTEX testing is water quality testing for the presence of Benzene, Toluene, Ethylbenzene, and Xylenes. This testing is required when a new structure that includes habitable space will be served by a private groundwater well and the property is located within, or partially within, a known contamination area.

In Albemarle County's GIS system, BTEX contamination areas are identified as **LUST (Leaking Underground Storage Tanks) layers**. To determine whether a parcel is located within a BTEX zone, you must first search for the parcel in the GIS system using the property address or Parcel ID. Once the parcel is located and highlighted on the map, select the first icon labeled **Map Layers**, scroll down, and enable the **LUST layers**. The map will automatically refresh.

If the selected parcel is located within a BTEX zone, it will be highlighted in orange or red, indicating that BTEX testing is required.

For additional details, please refer to our [BTEX/LUST Information Document](#).

HOW DO I SUBMIT AN AMENDMENT TO A BUILDING PERMIT?

For issued permits or permits that are still under review, amendments are submitted by completing the [Amendment Justification Form](#) and uploading it, along with all supporting documentation, to the permit through Civic Access.

Important Note: Once an amendment is submitted, inspection requests are temporarily suspended. Inspections may not be requested until the amendment has been reviewed and approved.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY PLANS OR PROJECT CHANGES BEFORE THE PERMIT IS ISSUED?

The amendment process remains the same. The [Amendment Justification Form](#) and all supporting documentation must be uploaded to the permit via Civic Access.

As an alternative, the original permit may be withdrawn and a new application submitted with the revised plans and information. This option may result in a clearer and more organized permit record.

MY BUILDING PERMIT IS EXPIRED, WHAT DO I DO?

Building permits may expire if work does not begin or continue within required timeframes. The Virginia Construction Code allows the Building Official to revoke a permit if work does not commence within **six months of issuance or if work is suspended or abandoned for six months after issuance.**

Permits for plumbing, electrical, and mechanical work are not revoked as long as the associated building permit remains active.

Permit holders must demonstrate substantial progress, typically through approved inspections or other documentation showing work has occurred. Upon written request, the Building Official may grant one or more permit extensions, not to exceed one year per extension.

To request an extension, complete the [Permit Extension Request Form](#) and upload it to the permit through the Civic Access Portal.

HOW CAN I TRACK THE REVIEW OF MY BUILDING PERMIT?

After logging into Civic Access, select **My Work** from the top menu. Choose **My Permits** for building permits or **My Plans** for planning, zoning, or engineering applications.

Select the application number to open the Permit Summary page, then select the Reviews tab. Individual review lines may be opened to view reviewer names and comments.

Review status colors indicate the following:

- **Gray:** Review has not started.
- **Green:** Review has been approved.
- **Red:** Review requires resubmittal of items.

Once all required reviews are completed a Permit Review Summary will be emailed to the contact on file. This summary states all review information, such as reviewer information and any comments that needs addressed.

The reviewers contact information can be viewed by visiting the [Staff Directory](#).

WILL I RECEIVE A CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY FOR MY BUILDING PERMIT?

A Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.) is issued once certain building permits are finalized. This indicates that all required inspections have been completed and approved, and the structure has been determined to be compliant with applicable codes and regulations.

A Certificate of Occupancy is required for:

- New dwellings
- Accessory Sleeping Units
- New commercial spaces that have not previously received a C.O. or that involve a change in use group

When a Certificate of Occupancy Is Not Issued

A Certificate of Occupancy is not issued for:

- Structures without habitable space, such as garages, workshops, or carports
- Dwellings that have previously received a Certificate of Occupancy, including alterations or remodels

If there are questions about whether a Certificate of Occupancy is required for a specific project, Community Development staff can provide additional guidance.

WHEN WILL I RECEIVE MY CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY?

Virginia Building Code Reference

116.1 General; when to be issued.

Prior to occupancy or *change of occupancy* of a *building* or *structure*, a certificate of occupancy shall be obtained in accordance with this section. The building official shall issue the certificate of occupancy within **5 working days** after approval of the final inspection and when the *building* or *structure* or portion thereof is determined to be in compliance with this code and any pertinent laws or ordinances, or when otherwise entitled.

Exceptions:

1. 1.A certificate of occupancy is not required for an accessory *structure* as defined in the IRC.
2. 2.A new certificate of occupancy is not required for an addition to an existing Group R-5 *building* that already has a certificate of occupancy.

A Certificate of Occupancy is typically issued within five business days after all final inspections have been approved, and the structure is confirmed to be in full compliance with the Virginia Building Code and all applicable ordinances.

If issues are identified during the C.O. process, they must be resolved before the Certificate of Occupancy can be issued, which may extend the issuance timeframe.

WHAT INSPECTIONS ARE NEEDED TO FINALIZE MY BUILDING PERMIT

Required inspections depend on the scope and type of the project. It is recommended that required inspections be discussed with the inspector during the first inspection. The permit placard lists the minimum required inspections, which are established by the Virginia Building Code. All inspection requests must be submitted through the Civic Access Portal.

113.3 Minimum inspections.

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

1. 1.Inspection of footing excavations and reinforcement material for concrete footings prior to the placement of concrete.
2. 2.Inspection of foundation systems during phases of *construction* necessary to assure compliance with this code.
3. 3.Inspection of preparatory work prior to the placement of concrete.
4. 4.Inspection of structural members and fasteners prior to concealment.
5. 5.Inspection of electrical, mechanical and plumbing materials, *equipment* and systems prior to concealment.
6. 6.Inspection of energy conservation material prior to concealment.
7. 7.Final inspection.

For new dwellings and Accessory Sleeping Units, the following final inspections are required:

- Final Building
- Final Mechanical, including approval of the Building Envelope Leakage (blower door) test
- Final Plumbing
 - For dwellings served by a new well and septic system, the Health Department's Final Operations Permit must be received prior to this inspection
- Final Electrical
- Final Engineering
- Final Zoning

HOW DO I SCHEDULE AN INSPECTION FOR MY ISSUED BUILDING PERMIT?

All inspection requests must come through [Civic Access](#).

Detailed instructions are available in the [Civic Access Guide](#).

For a quick reference guide please refer to our [Reference Guide for Scheduling Inspections](#).

HOW DO I CANCEL AN INSPECTION?

To cancel an inspection that has been assigned to an inspector, the inspector needs to be contacted directly.

Inspector contact information may be found by visiting the [Inspector Contact List](#).

WHAT IS MY PARCEL ZONED, AND WHAT USES ARE ALLOWED?

The zoning district for a parcel can be viewed using Albemarle County's GIS system.

Open [Albemarle County's GIS system](#).

1. Acknowledge any system update notices by selecting **OK**.
2. Review and accept the terms and conditions by selecting the checkbox, then select **OK**.
3. Search for the parcel by entering the property address or Parcel ID in the search box labeled "**Find address or place.**"
 - o If using a Parcel ID, enter the full number, including any leading zeros, and do not include dashes.
4. Select the magnifying glass icon to search.
5. Choose the correct parcel from the drop-down list. The parcel will be highlighted on the map.
6. At the top of the map, select the first icon labeled **Map Layers**.
7. Scroll through the list and enable the **Zoning** layer.
8. The map will automatically refresh. The zoning legend identifying the zoning districts will load on the left side of the screen, and the zoning designation for the selected parcel will be displayed on the map.

After identifying the zoning district, refer to [Albemarle County Code, Chapter 18, Article III - District Regulations](#). This section of the Code outlines the uses permitted within each zoning district.

- **By-right uses** are uses that are allowed within a zoning district without the need for additional approvals, provided all applicable zoning and building requirements are met.
- The Code also identifies uses that require approval of a **Special Use Permit** before the use may be established.

If a proposed use is not listed as a by-right use or as a use allowed with a Special Use Permit within the applicable zoning district, the use is not permitted in that district.

If assistance is needed interpreting the zoning information shown, Community Development staff can provide additional guidance.

HOW TO SUBMIT PAYMENT FOR AN INVOICE?

There are two methods to submit payment, depending on whether the payer is listed as a contact on the application.

When the payer is listed as a contact on the application:

Log into [Civic Access](#) and navigate to the application's summary page. Scroll to the Fees section near the bottom of the page, select **Add to Cart**, and follow the on-screen prompts to complete the payment.

To access a permit's summary page, select **My Work from the top black ribbon. From there, select the appropriate application type (permit or plan), then open the application by clicking on the application number.

When the payer is not listed as a contact on the application:

Visit [Civic Access](#) and select **Pay Invoices** from the top menu. In the search bar, enter the full invoice number, which begins with **INV-0000XXXX**. Once the invoice appears, select **Add to Cart** and follow the on-screen prompts to submit payment.

WHAT IF THE PROJECT HAS THIRD-PARTY REVIEWED PLANS?

A **third-party plan review company** is an independent firm, approved by the County, that reviews construction plans for compliance with applicable building codes and regulations on the County's behalf. These companies perform a technical code review like the County's standard plan review.

A third-party plan review company is different from an **architect** or a **professional engineer (PE)**. Architects and PEs are responsible for designing the project and certifying that their plans meet applicable codes and professional standards. A third-party plan reviewer does not design the project. Instead, the reviewer evaluates completed plans prepared by the architect or PE to confirm code compliance.

When a project begins with third-party reviewed plans, **all associated trade permits and the building permits linked to that project must also use third-party plan review** to ensure consistency across the entire project.

Although plans are reviewed by a third party, the County is still required to conduct its own review to verify that all information is complete, accurate, and consistent with County requirements. This County review is typically an **expedited review**, not a full plan review, and is intended to confirm compliance rather than duplicate the third-party reviewer's work.

There are currently two approved third-party review companies: ESC and Code Check. For more information about this process, please reach out to the Building Official. Their contact information can be found the [Staff Directory](#).