



Application for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure for Existing Commercial & Residential 4 (+) Family Buildings

(City of Solon Building Department)
(Form date: December 23, 2010)

General Procedure (refer to Application for Certificate of Occupancy)

For all the potential scenarios as listed on the application & as listed below - please completely fill out a City of Solon “Application for Certificate of Occupancy” and the “Zoning Information Form for Certificate of Occupancy.”

In all potential scenarios - the applicant is required to verify with the current building or space owner the information as required on the application & zoning information form.

Ask the current owner for a copy of the current owner’s certificate of occupancy for the building or space.

Contact the Building Department for information as to the building or space use(s) previously approved. Contact the Planning & Development Department for the current zoning use.

Upon receipt of a completed Application & Zoning Information Form, the departments (Building Department, Planning & Development and the Fire Prevention Bureau) involved will perform a review of the information provided prior to an inspection of the premises. The review process may take up to ten (10) working days to review and verify the information submitted in the application.

When all departments involved have reviewed and recommended to proceed to inspection – the building department will contact the applicant to schedule an inspection date and time. (As a new tenant, you are reminded not to move any furnishings or equipment into the building or space into the building prior to receiving your certificate of occupancy.)

The Building, Planning & Development and Fire Prevention Bureau Inspectors will note any code violations and a copy of each “Inspection Report” will be given to the applicant at the conclusion of the on-site inspection. The Inspectors will identify work requiring a permit & construction drawings. All contractors performing work in the City of Solon are required to be registered.

Upon completion of violations or items in need of correction for code compliance as determined from the inspection – the applicant shall contact the building department to schedule a re-inspection. Upon verification of the violations or items, the Building department shall issue a Certificate of Occupancy.



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Application Scenarios (A, B & C)

A. New Tenant, Building Owner Change, Condo Owner Change, Existing Tenant (change in business name) & Other (ie: Current Building or Space without a Certificate of Occupancy

No construction work, “taking existing space as is,” with no construction work to be performed or and there is no change in the previously approved space use in relation to building code and/or planning & development code.

Provide a current floor plan to scale.

Based on the application information & current floor plan - the Building Department will review the new tenant’s use in relation to the previously approved building code use for the building or space. The Planning & Development Department will review for Planning & Zoning Code compliance. The Fire Prevention Bureau will review the information for Fire Code compliance.

If the proposed use(s) or occupancy meets or does not meet the previously approved use for the Building Department, the Planning & Development Department and the Fire Prevention Bureau the applicant will be contacted to set up an occupancy inspection or for additional information.

For the use(s) or occupancy not consistent with a prior Building Department approval for the existing building or space see the “Building Department Policy & Requirements for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure.”

For the use(s) not consistent with The Planning & Development Department review, the applicant is required to coordinate with the Planning & Zoning Department.



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B. Existing Tenant with interior alterations, interior expansion, interior relocation, interior reduction, with building and/or planning department use changes –

Provide five (5) sets of drawing information. Complete a building permit application & an Application for Certificate of Occupancy with Zoning Information Form.

For use(s) not consistent with a prior Building Department approval for the existing building or space see “Building Department Policy & Requirements for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure.”

C. New Tenant with interior alterations, interior expansion, interior relocation, interior reduction, with building and/or planning department use changes –

Provide five (5) sets of drawing information. Complete a building permit application & an Application for Certificate of Occupancy with the Zoning Information Form

For the uses not consistent with a prior Building Department approval for the existing building or space see “Building Department Policy & Requirements for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure.”



Building Department Policy & Requirements for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure

Please be aware the Building Department does not perform Point of Sale, Rental Occupancy or Property Condition or Project Feasibility inspections.

Building Owner's and/or tenants who are planning to purchase or rent existing buildings or spaces – are responsible for their own verifications that a building meets building and zoning codes for their needs and use prior to purchasing or leasing.

The Building Department highly recommends potential owners or renters have their own design professional provide a property condition inspection and a feasibility analysis, both of which should include a building and zoning code analysis.

Fire suppression systems in Solon's older buildings may have not been design to protect the uses of materials proposed by a new tenant or owner. More and more products now contain plastics, which have greater heat release rates and combustibility, which may require modification or replacement of existing fire suppression systems. (For use changes or increases in fire loads an evaluation of the existing fire suppression system is required and results are required to be submitted with application or permit information.)

Code Requirements and References:

Section OBC 3402.1 defines change of occupancy as “a change in the purpose or level of activity within a structure that involves a change in the application of the requirements of the code.”

Not only the change of use and occupancy but also a change in the level of activity while maintaining the same use group will constitute the “change of occupancy.” A change in the level of activity may include increased occupant loads, increased path of travel to the means of egress, or additional required equipment or systems etc., that will raise the level of hazard based on life and/or fire risk.

OBC Section 3406.1 – states “no change of occupancy shall be made to any building that would place the building in a different division of the same group of occupancy or in a different group of occupancies, unless the building is made to comply with the requirements of this code for such division or group of occupancy. Subject to the approval of the building official, the use or occupancy of existing buildings shall be allowed to be changed and the building is allowed to be occupied for the purpose of other groups without conforming to all the requirements of this code for those groups, provided the new or proposed use is less hazardous, based on life and fire risk, than the existing building.



Building Department Policy & Requirements for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure

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Plan Submission Requirements

Once the building department has determined the building or space has use changes based on the Code Requirements & References the following documentation and items are required.

Submit a completed “Building Permit Application” and state in the description “change of use or occupancy.”

Submit five (5) sets of construction drawings sealed by an Ohio licensed design professional (Architect or Engineer)

For existing buildings without proposed alterations, drawings shall show at a minimum the existing and proposed use group designations, construction type, existing floor plan with new room names, occupant loads, required means of egress components, existing electrical panel and load information for the new use group or occupancy, existing mechanical system and equipment, existing plumbing fixture, and existing fire protection systems & evaluations (fire alarm & fire suppression systems) in terms of the new use(s).

For existing buildings with alterations, in addition to the requirements in item #2 above, drawings shall also show alteration details for each scope of work in the building.

Fees – Building permit & plan review fees will be required per Solon’s fee schedule.

Inspections – regardless if the application includes alterations or not, the applicant shall call for an inspection for each trade applicable to the building. Inspectors shall verify that the existing and altered building components are in compliance with the approved plans and applicable building codes for the new use group(s) or occupancy. (All contractors performing work in the City of Solon are required to be registered.)

Special clarification:

For change of occupancy in an existing building, the property owner may wish to occupy the existing building for the new use group without any alterations. However, in view of many fire and life safety issues concerning the change of occupancy, the building official has determined that the existing building components shall be evaluated, verified and drawings prepared by an Ohio licensed design professional (Architect or Engineer).



Building Department Policy & Requirements for Certificate of Occupancy Procedure

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These plans shall be submitted to the Solon Building Department for review and approval for all change of occupancy applications regardless if the new use occupancy is more or less hazardous than the existing use occupancy. Because of the complexity & technical analysis involved in verifying code compliance in existing buildings, the analysis and drawing preparation cannot be performed by the owner or their contractors. This information must be verified and submitted by an Ohio licensed design professional (Architect or Engineer in accordance with OBC 106.2.1.

Please note that once the plan review process is completed, the building official may determine that alterations are required to bring the existing building components up to current code requirements. Many times these changes may not be anticipated. It is highly recommended to consult with the building department to determine the previous approvals for an existing building or space prior to purchasing or leasing a building or tenant space.