



Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Development Guide

This guide aims to provide an overview of the process for new development or redevelopment in Duluth to assist business owners, building owners, developers, and design professionals through the review and construction process. This resource offers guidance and answers frequently asked questions regarding certificates of occupancy, building permits, inspections and more.

Working with the City

As you plan and develop your project, you may work with several City work groups, all working as a team to make your project successful:

Construction Services & Inspections

Our goal is to guide people to build safe, durable, energy efficient, accessible buildings. CSI processes and routes permit applications, and plans, and coordinates the reviews from multiple departments. We keep you informed about your project and are here to help, from the initial research, through plan review, to the final inspection.

Website: [Construction Services & Inspections](#)

Phone: 218-730-5240

Email: permittingservices@duluthmn.gov

Planning & Economic Development

Planning & Economic Development provides community information and referral services, technical and financial resources, and one on one guidance while integrating land use, long range planning, and community development functions of the City.

The Unified Development Chapter (UDC) is the official body of zoning rules and regulations to guide land use and development in the City of Duluth.

Website: [Planning & Economic Development](#)

Phone: 218-730-5580

Email: planning@duluthmn.gov

Engineering Division

Engineering issues a variety of permits that affect the public infrastructure such as excavation in City right-of-way, driveway aprons, street and sidewalk obstruction, over-sized loads, new culverts, and sewer, water and gas main extensions and connections.

Engineering administers the Fats, Oils & Grease (FOG) ordinance for food service facilities and reviews and coordinates storm water management permits and erosion control permits.

Website: [Engineering](#)

Phone: 218-730-5200

Email: engineer@duluthmn.gov

City Clerk

Business licenses are obtained at the City Clerk's Office. Follow the link above to find out if your business needs a permit through the City Clerk.

Website: [City Clerk](#)

Phone: 218-730-5500

Email: clerks@duluthmn.gov

Fire Department

Besides fighting fires and issuing permits for fire related activities, the fire department administers Duluth's rental licensing ordinance, property maintenance code, solid waste compliance enforcement, operational permits for businesses, and vacant building registration program. CSI routes certain plan submittals to the fire marshal for review for compliance with the fire code.

Website: [Fire Prevention & Life Safety](#)

Phone: 218-730-4380

Email: lifesafety@duluthmn.gov

If You Are Considering Redeveloping or Reusing an Existing Building...

Read the [Considering an Existing Building for Your Business](#) handout for important information on reusing an existing building.

Getting Started

- Contact the City's Economic Developers to discuss financial programs that could help with your development or for referrals to other agencies that can help with business planning and strategies.
- Determine whether you will [hire an architect](#) (aka design professional). An architect will help you with the entire planning, design, and construction process, and can help you select the best site for your business and your budget. If your project includes a new building or any changes to an existing building or its systems, or if you are changing the use of the building or space, Minnesota statutes likely require that an architect design the work. Consider involving an architect early in your planning.
- Find out what the code requirements and development standards are for your project. This is the point where your design professional can help you understand how building codes and site development regulations will impact the work you need to do to make your project compliant, and from there what costs to anticipate.
- Determine whether any special processes are required for zoning and land use approval, such as a variance, special use permit, or other action by the Planning Commission or City Council. You can schedule a Planning Pre-Application Meeting with Planning staff who can help you understand the applicable standards and the process. Contact Planning to schedule a meeting.
- Once you know what it will take to comply with land use regulations, your architect can begin developing the design for your project. Before this plan is finalized, we recommend that your architect schedule a Construction Services [Pre-Code Review Meeting](#) to introduce the project to building plan reviewers, ask code related questions, and make sure all are on the same page about code requirements. To schedule a Pre-Code Review Meeting, complete the [Commercial Plan Review CSI Preliminary Code Review Meeting Request](#) form

The Permitting and Review Process

Construction Documents and the Application Package

Your architect will prepare plans showing the design and construction details for the project. These plans and details instruct the builder how to build the design you and your architect have determined for your project. Construction documents also show plan reviewers and inspectors how the project will be constructed to comply with applicable codes.

The [Frequently Used Forms](#) page explains the applications, forms, plans, and other items that need to be submitted with your permit application.

Plan Review

Find out what to expect during [Plan Review](#) on our web page.

When the Permit is Issued

When you pick up the issued permit and reviewed plans, read the paperwork that comes with it. The permit holder is the person responsible for the work described in the permit and for calling to schedule inspections. The permit holder should be in contact with the design professional to coordinate approved delayed submittals and plan changes to avoid delays in the construction process. Review the [Commercial Permit Holder's Responsibilities](#).

During Construction

Pre-Construction Meeting

We have found that pre-construction meetings with the construction, design and development team and the City's team help projects run more smoothly. The location and agenda for the pre-construction meeting is dependent on the size & type of the construction project. For large projects, we hold meetings at City Hall. This meeting is an opportunity to introduce everyone involved in the project. Expectations for inspections, meetings, special inspections, delayed submittals, shop drawings, and plan changes are some of the topics discussed at the pre-construction meeting.

Plan Changes and Delayed Submittals

We use a [specific process](#) for reviewing changes to the plans or for submitting delayed items. This ensures that we track and review changes in a timely manner so that construction is not delayed.

Inspections and Construction Meetings

The permit holder is responsible for [requesting inspections](#) a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the time desired. The name and phone number of the inspector assigned to the project will be listed on the Plan Review Comment Sheet and on the permit.

Construction meetings after the initial pre-construction meeting may include a framing sequencing meeting or a pre-final meeting. Required meetings are determined early in the project and will be coordinated by the construction inspector.

Inspections by Other City Work Groups

Other City work groups besides Construction Services may need to perform inspections during construction and prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy or Letter of Completion. You should find this information in the approval documents issued with the permit. The permit holder is responsible for making contact to schedule inspections. The Fire Marshal will inspect the mechanics of the sprinkler system, fire command center, fire department connection, and other fire code required components. The Planning division may need to inspect landscaping, lighting, or equipment screening to verify compliance with the zoning code and with Planning Commission conditions of approval. The Engineering Department may need to inspect utility extensions or storm water systems.

Pre-Final Meeting & Final Inspection

At the pre-final meeting, we discuss items needed for a successful final inspection. You will receive a pre-test confirmation checklist to document the pre-testing of the HVAC, alarms, and other systems to promote greater success at final inspection. Any questions regarding the final inspection should be directed to the construction inspector assigned to your project.

Certificate of Occupancy or Letter of Completion

The building, fire, and zoning codes require that a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) is issued prior to occupancy of a building when a building is new or it changes occupancy. The construction inspector will initiate issuance of a C of O when requested after the final inspection. This process may take up to three business days. It will be emailed to the person who requested it, unless a hard copy is specifically requested.

A Letter of Completion states that the permitted work has been completed when a Certificate of Occupancy is not needed and will be initiated by the construction inspector when requested after final inspections are completed.