How to Apply for a Commercial Building Permit

Updated 8/12/26

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See the accompanying process flowchart | Ver la guía en español

Apply

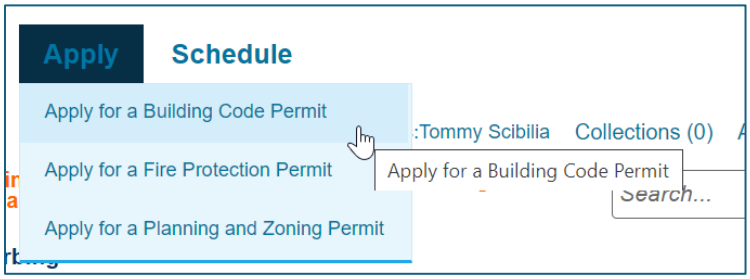
Follow the instructions below to apply for a **commercial building permit ("BLDC…").**

1) If the contractor applying does not already have a free account in our Permit Portal, create one by clicking the "Register Now" link on the portal home screen.

2) Log into the Permit Portal.

Note: Be sure to "Allow Pop-ups" on this website for it to function properly.

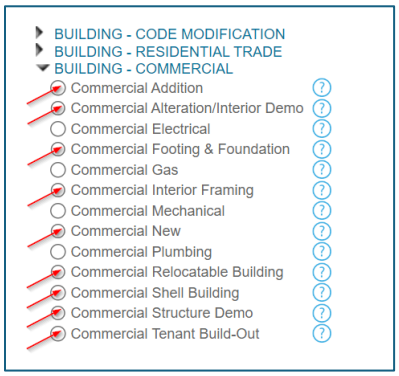
3) Hover over "Apply" and select "Apply for a Building Code Permit".



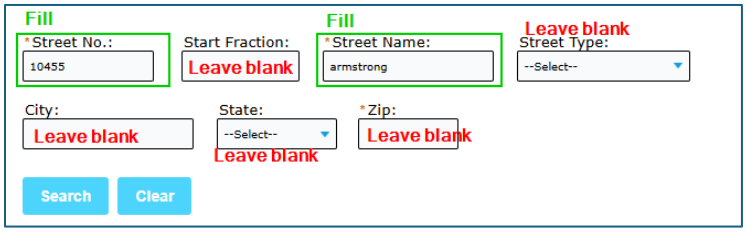
4) Read and accept the terms of the disclaimer.

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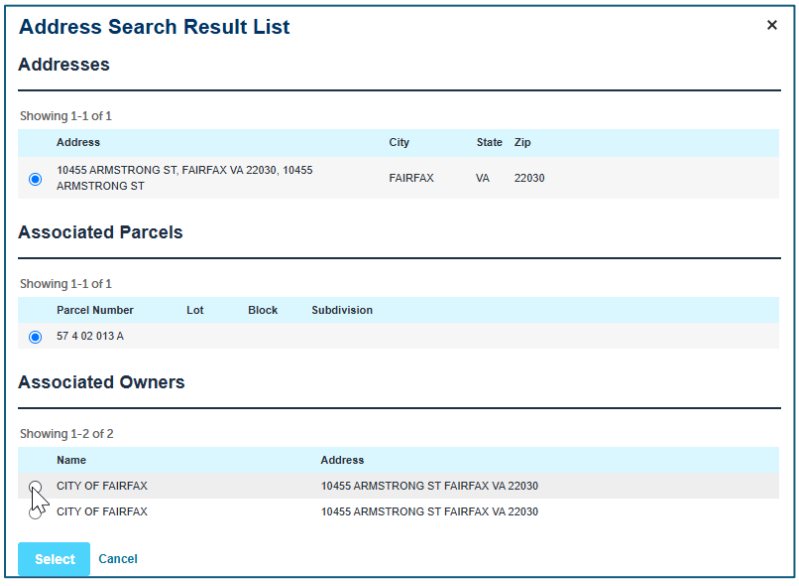
5) Select the relevant permit type:



6) Click "Continue Application" at the bottom of the screen to start filling out the application. To enter an address, enter only the street number and the street name. For street name, **do not** include words or abbreviations such as "Drive," "Dr", "Street", "St," etc. **Leave all other fields blank**. Click "Search".



7) The pop-up window will display the street address and parcel number, which should already be selected. At the bottom of the window, select a property owner, and click "Select" to continue. All other fields on this page will automatically populate. Click "Continue Application" on the main screen.

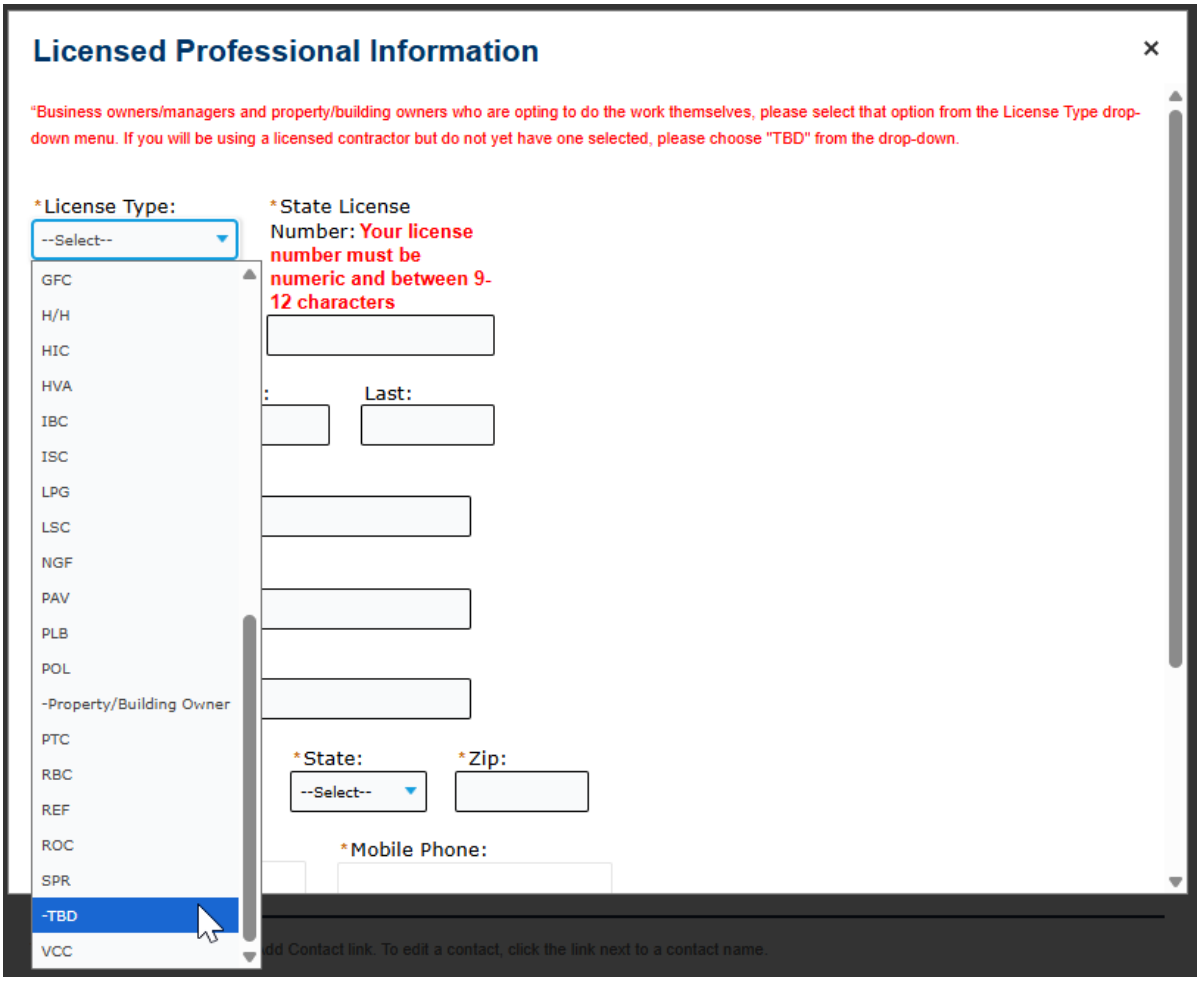


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8) On the next screen you will be prompted to enter a Licensed Professional's information. Click "Add New" and enter their information in the pop-up window. Click "Save and Close" when complete.

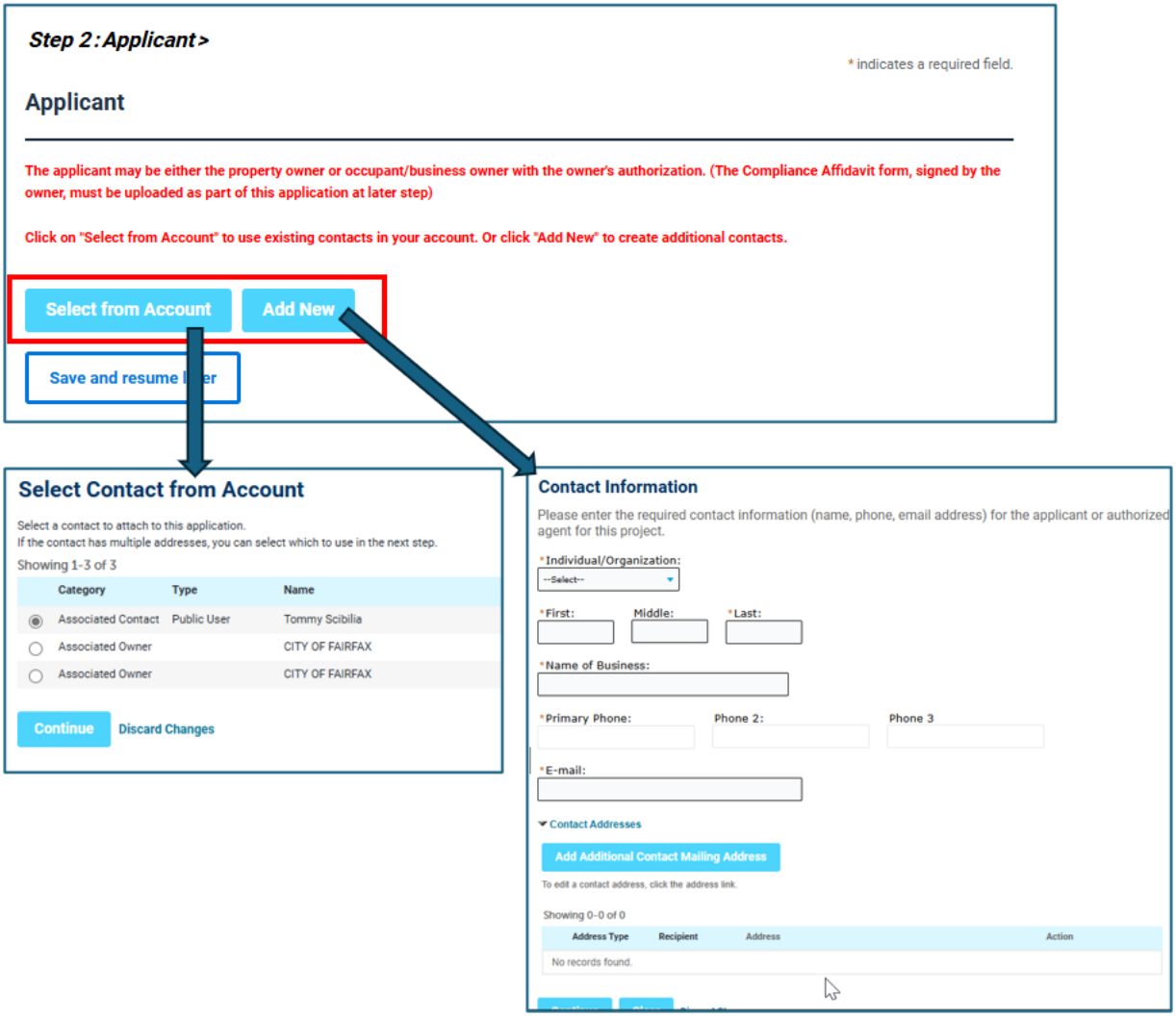
Note: If you do not have a licensed professional lined up at the time of filing the application, you can select "TBD" in the "License Type" drop-down menu. Note that you will have to provide the contractor's information prior to the permit being issued.

Note: If you select either "Business Owner/Manager" or "Property/Building Owner," the implication is that you are opting not to use a licensed contractor/tradesperson for the work and an exemption statement will be required to be submitted with your application. See more information on subsequent steps in this guide.

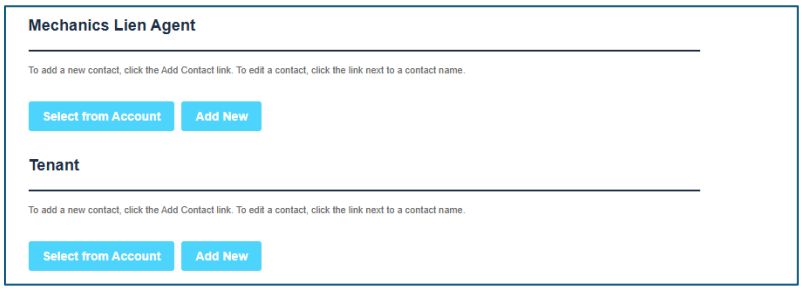


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9) Below, to assign an applicant you can either select a contact already associated with your account or assign the role of applicant to another person. To select from your account, click “Select from Account”, select the contact you want to use from the pop-up window, follow prompts to complete contact information, and click “Continue”. If you want to add a new contact as applicant, click “New”, add required contact information, and click “Continue”.

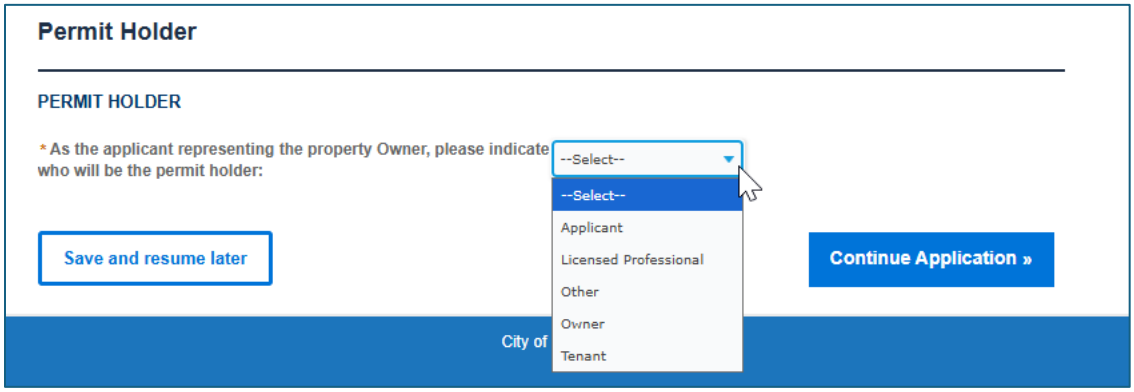


10) Below, enter Mechanics Lien Agent and/or Tenant in the same way as in the previous step if either are applicable.

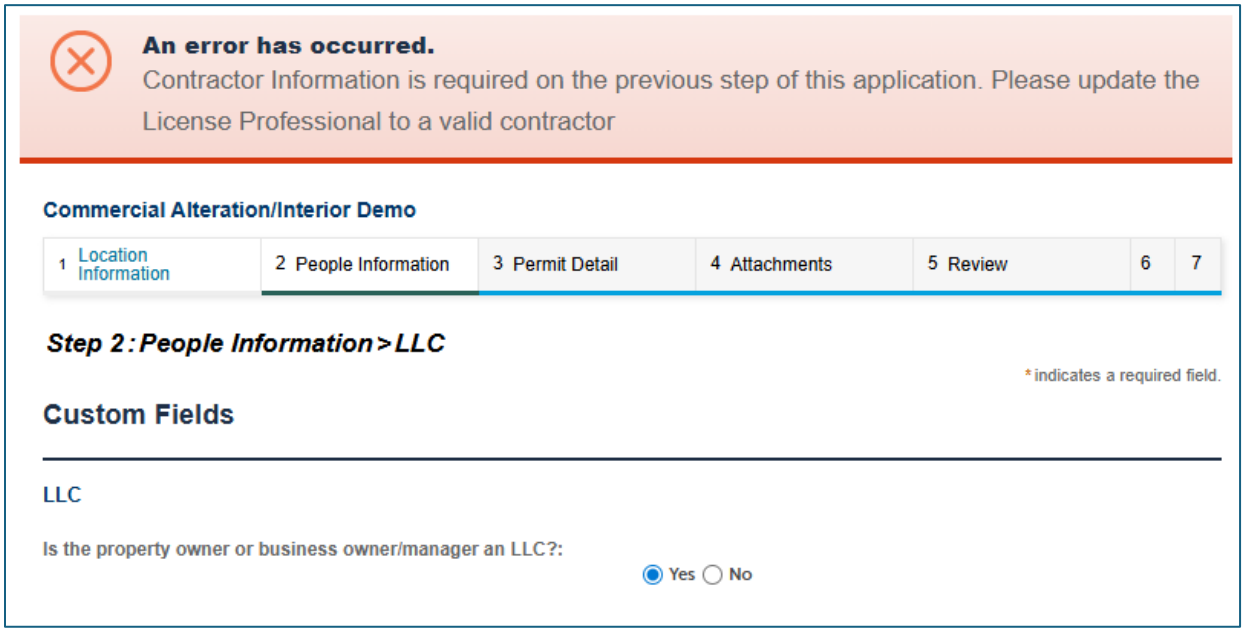


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11) At the bottom of the screen, please select a Permit Holder from the drop-down menu. In order to select "Tenant," you must have added a contact in the previous step. If you select "Other," you will be prompted to enter a first and last name that will appear on the issued permit. Click "Continue Application" to proceed.



12) If you **did not** select "Business Owner/Manager" or "Property/Building Owner" for License Type on the previous screen, you can skip this step of the guide. Otherwise, on the next screen, identify whether the business/property/building owner is an LLC. If so, you will be required to return to the previous step and select a valid contractor license type or "TBD." If "No," select that option and click "Continue Application" to proceed.



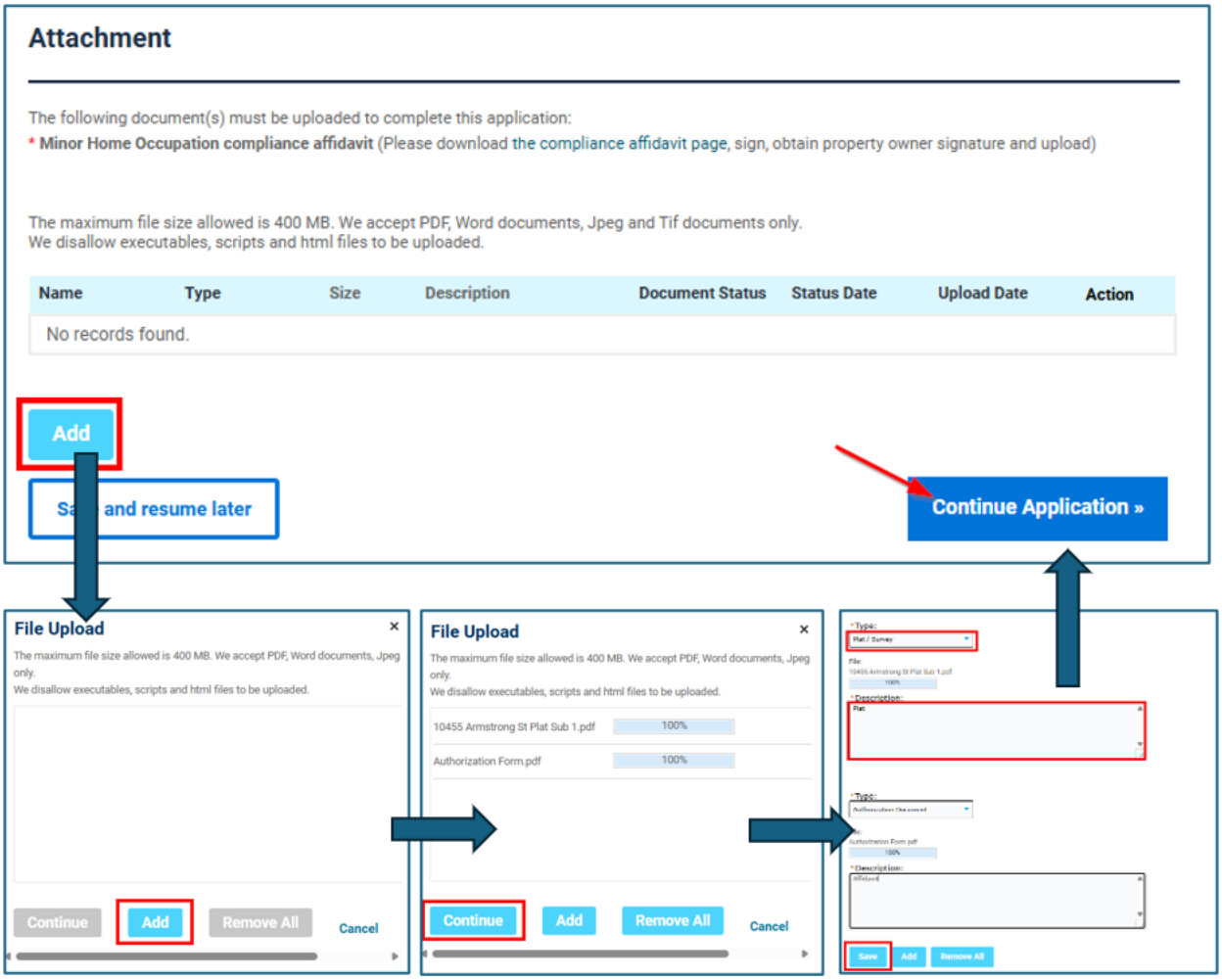
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13) The next page is where you will enter the specifics of the project, including the scope of work, building use, the Construction Code to be used, info on fire protection systems, and estimated job cost. Typically, a licensed contractor or design professional like an architect or engineer can answer these questions. If you are having trouble filling out this information, please start by contacting your contractor or design professional for assistance. If you still are having trouble, staff in Code Administration may be able to assist on a case-by-case basis. Call 703-385-7830 to reach them. Once all required info is provided, click "Continue Application".

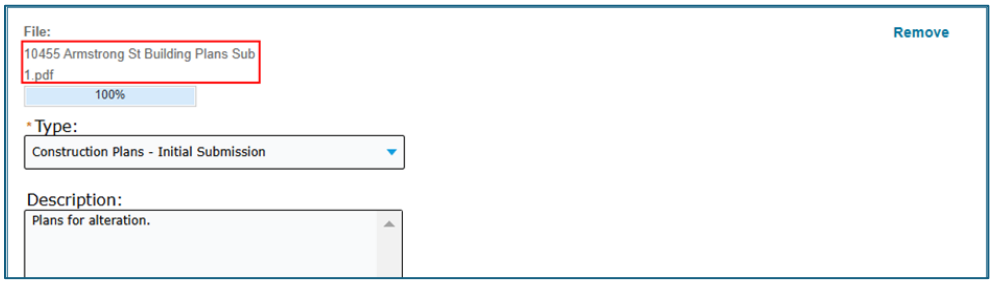
14) On the next step, you will need to submit the following attachments with this application type. Note this list is not exhaustive, and more or fewer items may be needed for staff to complete their review depending on the scope of your proposal.
    - Building plan as a **single PDF file**. Separate sheets uploaded individually will not be accepted.
        - For very basic scopes of work, drawings may not be required. Drawings for simple and minor changes may be prepared by the contractor. More involved work may require plans prepared by an architect or engineer licensed in Virginia.
    - Virginia Contractor's License
        - If you selected "TBD", "Business Owner/Manager", or "Property/Building Owner", this will not be required. If "TBD", the record will continue to be processed, but the contractor's license must be uploaded to the record before the permit can be issued. Staff will contact you to remind you.
    - City of Fairfax Business License
        - Contractors doing work in the city that surpass an annual job cost threshold must have a valid City of Fairfax Business License, in accordance with Code of Virginia § 58.1-3715. The portal will notify you if one is required. If you have questions, you can contact Revenue staff at 703-385-7884.
    - Owner Exemption Statement
        - This is only required if you selected "Business Owner/Manager" or "Property/Building Owner" on for Licensed Professional type. It must be signed and notarized.
    - Asbestos Affidavit (and asbestos abatement report if applicable) **for existing buildings only**, which demonstrates that:
        - There is no asbestos-containing material being affected, OR
        - If there is asbestos-containing material it has already been or will be abated, OR
        - The project is exempt from the requirement to abate (e.g. built after 1/1/1985, single-family building, etc.).
    - Accessibility Compliance Form to demonstrate that the building is ADA compliant or sufficient improvements will be made to bring the building closer into full compliance.

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15) To upload Attachments, click “Add” at the bottom of the screen, click “Add” again in the pop-up window, select the documents for upload, and click “Continue”. Select the document type from the dropdown menu (note that certain document types are required to be selected in order to submit the application), enter a short description, and click “Save”. Click “Continue Application” to move to the next step.

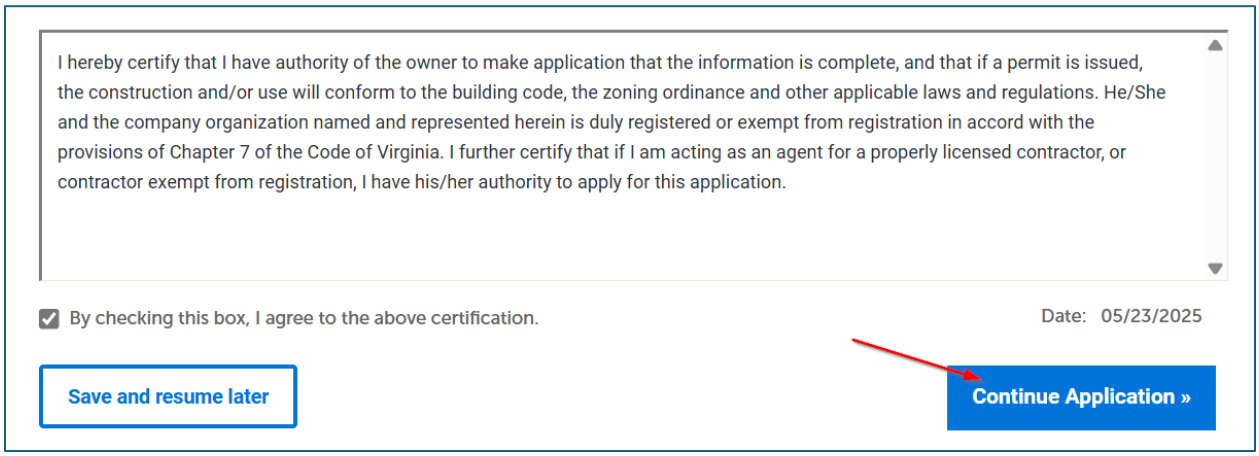


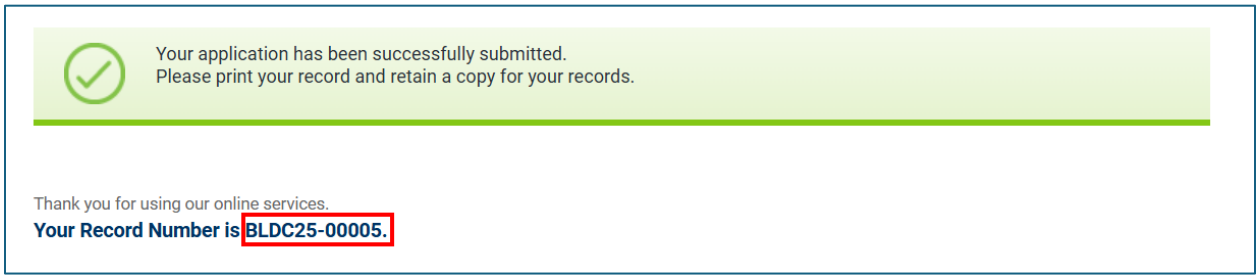
Note: Building or site plans must be uploaded with the following **naming convention**: [Address] [Document type] [Record type] [Submission Number]. Example: “10455 Armstrong Street Building Plans Sub 1”.



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16) Review the summary page, agree to the certification, and click "Continue Application" to submit. A building permit record number will be provided on the following screen ("BLDC…"). **If you do not see a record number, you have not submitted your application, and it will not be reviewed**.



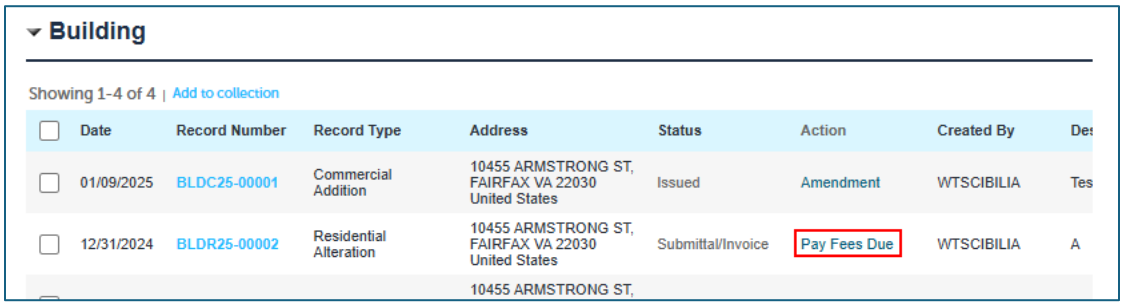


Note: If the initial submission did not contain enough information for staff to assess what permits are needed, you will receive an email stating that the submission is incomplete, prompting you to resubmit the record with additional information or attachments. See separate guide: **How to Resubmit Applications**.

Note: After a building permit application has been submitted, you will need to apply for the associated Trade Permits separately, referencing the "BLDC…" record number for the building permit (see above). See guides on previous page for **Commercial Trade Permits**.

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17) Once the application is accepted, you will get an email letting you know that an invoice for the permit review fee needs to be paid, which can be completed online. To pay an invoice, login to the permit portal, navigate to "My Records" under the "Home" menu, and click "Pay Fees Due" in the "Action" column for the applicable record.



18) Once the fees are paid, the application will be routed for review.

19) You will get emails from the portal throughout the review process letting you know if there is any action that needs to be taken, including addressing comments (see separate guide: **How to Resubmit Applications**) and applying for a zoning permit, which is often required to accompany building permits, dependent on the scope of the proposal (see guide on previous page for **Commercial Zoning Permits**). Emails will be from Auto_Sender@Accela.com. Make sure to check your spam folder periodically in case the portal's emails are inadvertently being sent there.

End of section

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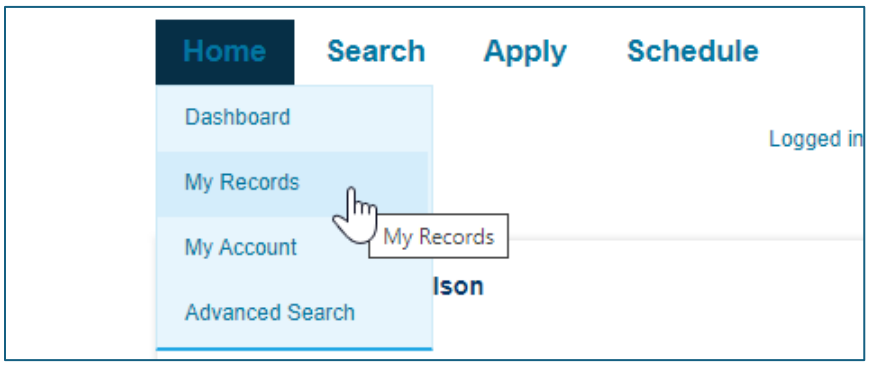
Review Timeframe

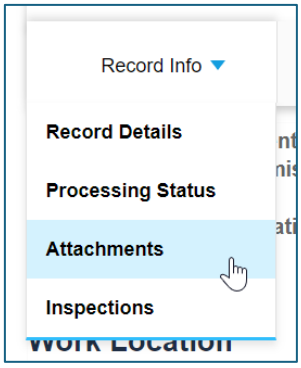
Building permits and zoning permits are often reviewed at the same time. **The building permit will not be issued until the zoning permit has been approved**. Currently, zoning permits are being reviewed for comments or issuance within 2 weeks of application acceptance, and building permits are being reviewed for comments or issuance within 4 weeks of application acceptance.

End of section

Permit Issuance

Once the building permit is issued, you will receive an email with the permit attached. You can also download it from the portal by navigating to it in "My Records", clicking on the record number ("BLDC..."), and navigating to "Attachments" under "Record Info". The permit document name will begin with "Forms_and_Letters\".





To schedule inspections, please see separate guide: **How To Schedule Inspections**.

End of document

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