

Code Enforcement: Affordable Housing Programs and Expedited Services

Mecklenburg County is committed to a thriving and economically diverse community. Our goal is to assist in the efforts of the County and City in increasing affordable housing availability and inventory. Since 2018, Mecklenburg County has been working with industry, design professionals, developers, and contractors to understand the challenges and to become more aware of the service tools and process incentives needed to support this effort.

Our assistance is focused on lowering costs to permit affordable housing projects. As part of that effort, focus groups of interested parties indicated that collaboration during all phases of the permitting and construction process and timely issuance of a final Certificate of Occupancy were critical to the success of these projects. Mecklenburg County has piloted services for permitting, plan review and inspections service fees for affordable housing, which now will be extended to all affordable housing projects in Mecklenburg County.

For customers focused on affordable housing, the following services and assistance are offered by Mecklenburg County.

Affordable Housing Benefits

Currently, Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement, in collaboration with the Mecklenburg County Building Development Commission (BDC) has authorized adjustments to the fee ordinance which provides up to 20% reduction in fees for multifamily housing projects that meet certain criteria, to include affordable housing projects. The affordable housing projects are eligible for a discounted fee estimated based on \$78 per square foot in construction value in comparison to the current valuation of \$98 per square foot for these types of projects. The eligible projects include VA-constructed housing, with R-2 occupancies (structures with more than two sleeping or dwelling units), that are no more than three (3) stories.

What does that mean for the customer? A reduction of the total construction cost and reduced permitting fees. For more information about how this works, please see the link below.

<https://www.mecknc.gov/LUESA/CodeEnforcement/Tools/Publications/Documents/BVDCalc.pdf>

The Permitting Process

Mecklenburg County offers and encourages a highly collaborative plan review and construction process. Focused design, development and review services that enhance continuous development of affordable housing include the following:

- A dedicated plan review team for affordable housing projects with a Code Enforcement project manager to oversee the process.
- Architects and engineers who are “superior performers” in our A/E Pass Rate Incentive Program will be eligible for:
 - o Priority Review
 - o Review Schedule Preference Consideration
 - o Conditional Permitting
 - o Team Plan Review Services (Inspections and Plans Reviewers)

For information about our A/E Pass Rate Incentive program, please see the link below.

<https://www.mecknc.gov/LUESA/CodeEnforcement/PlanReview/Pages/AEPassFailRate.aspx>

Code Enforcement:

Affordable Housing Programs and Expedited Services

- No cost preliminary review services for affordable housing projects. Typically, projects receive one free preliminary review and are charged for additional preliminary reviews thereafter.
- Code Enforcement staff will coordinate meetings with the city and other project stakeholders to go over site planning and ensure all parties are maintaining open lines of communication.
- During the plan review process, when applicable, Code Enforcement will utilize redline procedures such as “approved as noted” and interactive review to reduce project resubmittals in the building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing trades. Exit meetings will be held between cycle reviews with the inspectors who are going to perform the inspections to minimize the chance of unexpected delays in the field.
- When project plans are approved and ready for permitting, the inspections team, contractors and administrative staff meet to verify permitting strategies, to ensure the understanding of how inspections will work and how the project will be delivered, using an appropriate scheduled timeline as a project resource. Timelines are provided by the contractor or the design team.

The Inspections Process

- Mecklenburg County will designate a Code Enforcement project manager and inspection team to ensure seamless and continuous communication throughout the entire inspections process.
- The contractor will work with our team of inspectors to maintain continuity of the project and assist with phasing strategies that may be required.
- Field inspectors will be authorized to approve minor design changes in the field if the change receives sign-off from the design professional. This change will eliminate further plan review, and resulting delays, during the process. Customers will need to discuss these issues with field inspectors on an ad hoc basis – we will accommodate these changes when possible, but not all changes can be addressed in this way.
- An assigned inspection team allows the contractor to advise the inspector of changes to the design, timeline, or other schedule changes that may affect the close-out/delivery date for the project. Our staff members understand the special circumstances that may surround the funding for an affordable housing project and prioritize helping our customers comply with the terms of that funding whenever possible.

For general contractors that are high-level performers and pass 90% or more of all inspections, the contractor will be eligible to receive a refund of 1% to 10% on a given project, as part of a Mecklenburg County incentive program. Please see link for more information about the program how to qualify.

<https://www.mecknc.gov/LUESA/CodeEnforcement/Documents/PassRateIncentivePrgDes.pdf>

Certificates of Occupancy

- The Code Enforcement project manager and the inspection team will provide continuous feedback, identifying primary issues and next steps to meet the timeline set forth for issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.
- No cost walk-through before the final inspection covering all trades (BEMP) so the contractor will understand what is expected during final inspections to ensure a timely CO issuance.

There is no application process or special path of entry to take part in these benefits and programs. All qualifying affordable housing projects may participate in the program. Please discuss this with us at the earliest possible time to ensure maximum benefit.

For more information, please contact Tom.Smith@Mecklenburgcountync.gov.