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## GUILFORD COUNTY CONTRACTOR'S BULLETIN

### TOWNHOUSE/CONDOMINIUM/APARTMENT/COMMERCIAL/ INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS

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Incomplete site inspections of townhouse, condominium, apartment, commercial/industrial projects and change of occupancies where exterior site work is involved has led to extreme difficulty for the builder, the homeowner's association, the individual owners, and the County. Particularly, in cases where individual lots are sold and areas are held in common, the legal proceedings to clarify responsibility for site deficiencies are both extended and troublesome.

Our policy is to clear site plan problems prior to occupancy.

#### RESPONSIBILITY:

This task has been assigned to the Soil Division of the Inspections Department, which is most familiar with landscaping, soils, grading, and other structures associated with the site.

#### TIMING:

At the time of final inspection for the project, the general contractor should make sure all of their required inspections are ready and is responsible for scheduling these inspections. These inspections might include plumbing, heating, electrical, building, site and fire. Plumbing, heating, and electrical finals should be approved before final building inspection is scheduled. The building inspector will not make a final inspection until these inspections are approved first. **NO OCCUPANCY** is allowed until all of these required inspections are approved or temporary Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.) is granted for each trade.

#### PHASES:

Some projects such as those involving townhouses, condominiums and apartments are phased to allow occupancy of that portion of the site directly affected by the particular buildings in the project. Phasing is a very important front-end design matter because we look for site compliance in conjunction with phased occupancy. Record by phase.

#### STANDARDS:

It is understood that building occupancy can sometimes precede total compliance of the site and that Temporary Occupancy Certificates can be issued once the critical items are completed. The following critical items related to the site must be completed prior to Temporary Occupancy:

- (1) Safety: Sidewalks crucial to pedestrian travel; fences around pools, essential traffic signs, handicapped ramps, etc.
  - (2) Site Clean-Up: Removal of construction debris from area.
  - (3) Sanitation: Containers on site with sufficient capacity for the proposed development.
  - (4) Services: Central mail buildings if shown on site plan.
  - (5) Utilities: Electrical; telephone, and gas services (if required); water, sewer, and storm sewers built throughout the phase. If on a septic system, the operations permit is to be obtained from the Health Department (i.e., final health approval).
  - (6) Erosion Control: Structures essential to the control of on-site erosion and seeding necessary to maintain critical areas including water quality structures (ponds).
  - (7) Parking and Drives: Required spaces, drives and loading areas paved per the approved site plan to provide vehicle access and a safe and orderly flow of emergency vehicle traffic. All handicap-parking spaces must be clearly identified with posed approved handicap and maximum penalty signs. On gravel without curbing, concrete, treated or similar permanent types of bumpers are to be used to identify all handicap parking spaces in addition to required signs.
  - (8) Permanent Watershed Protection: Structures to be substantially complete and operational. Basins that are used for temporary erosion control shall have sediment removed.
  - (9) Must have an approved landscaping plan.
  - (10) All final plats submitted and reviewed for watershed and planning requirement. Exception: For townhouses and condominiums, a final plat must be recorded because exact verification of the property lines is necessary.
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The following items may be deferred for a subsequent inspection:

- (1) Landscaping: Permanent vegetative germination, coverage, and landscaping of grounds which are not critical to erosion control, exterior sprinkler systems, etc.
- (2) Lighting: Exterior lighting of parking lots and accessory buildings.
- (3) Structures: Non-critical fences, signs, garbage receptacle screening, tot lot, play equipment, etc.
- (4) Sidewalks: Non-crucial sidewalks, decorative brickwork, etc.
- (5) Parking: All parking spaces and stacking lanes as shown on site plan shall be clearly identified with paint lines, bumper guards, curbs or similar treatments as approved on the site plan.
- (6) Watershed Protection: An engineer's certification of completion for a water quality structure is required prior to final Certificate of Occupancy.
- (7) All final plats approved and properly recorded.

It should be understood that prior to a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy being issued that all of the final trades inspections (building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing); the final inspection by the Fire Marshall and the Soils Division, and health approval when required, must be completed. The Temporary Certificate of Occupancy is to allow occupancy, only while noncritical site items are being completed. The Trades Inspectors generally have no discretion with building code compliance. The building must meet the code in order to occupy.

Essentially, our rule of thumb is: It must be safe but it doesn't have to be pretty. We will issue Temporary Occupancy on completed townhouse, apartments and condominium buildings although the aesthetic points of the site have not yet been completed. Occasionally a high dollar item (retaining wall) or item required by law (screening buffer) may have to be bonded to insure completion.

PROCEDURE:

- (1) Developer requests final building inspection.
- (2) Final building, final site, and final fire are automatically scheduled by the B/Z Technician or the building inspector. Other inspections (electrical, mechanical, plumbing and health) are to be scheduled by the respective subcontractors.
- (3) A final site punch list will be prepared for the developer by the Soils staff.
- (4) All critical items must be completed, and special high dollar or legal items bonded.
- (5) The Temporary Occupancy Permit can be issued. The Soils staff will note, after reaching an understanding with the contractor and the owner, the length of the temporary and the items to be completed. A copy of the inspection ticket will be sent to all concerned parties (developer or owner and contractor).
- (6) After 60 days or sooner, if the work has been completed, the final site inspection is automatically conducted to determine progress or completion.
- (7) If complete, final occupancy will be issued, and all bonds can be released.
- (8) If incomplete, a revised time frame for completion will again be discussed with the developer. The owner will be reminded on the inspection ticket of the first recall of the final inspection that a Temporary C.O. by ordinance can only be extended a total of six (6) months without initiating enforcement action such as a Notice of Violation.

This procedure is not meant to be onerous, but the recent difficulties we have experienced with final project close out necessitates a proactive stance on our part. We realize that final site punch lists are not always on top of your "to do" list, but our responsibility is to both you and the owner.

