



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

Development Management

Frequently asked questions

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Building Development Management

Frequently asked questions

Building Development Management (BDM)

1. What is building development management?

- Building development management is the control or regulation of building activities.
- In South Africa, our Constitution assigns this function to local authorities, in this case the City of Cape Town.
- It is likely to affect you if you are planning to do construction at your home.

2. What building activities does the City of Cape Town control or regulate?

- The construction of new buildings and the alteration, extension or conversion of existing buildings.
- Change of use of existing buildings and the demolition of existing buildings or structures.

3. What roles and responsibilities does Building Development Management within the Development Management have?

- Approving standard building plans
- Approving permits for smaller works, such as swimming pools and small wendy houses
- Extending the validity of approved building plans
- Issuing permits for temporary structures
- Issuing hoarding permits
- Providing copies of approved building plans
- Carrying out building inspections during construction
- Issuing an occupancy certificate
- Enforcing building regulations
- Investigating and resolving building complaints
- Contraventions and illegal building work
- Maintaining statistics on construction activity in the City of Cape Town area

4. What is a building plan?

- A building plan sets out the detailed technical specifications of a planned new building or structure.
- It is required by law and must be approved by Development Management before any construction may start on a site.

5. How do I get a copy of my existing approved building plan?

- Register for e-services on the City of Cape Town's website to obtain a username and password. Requests for copies of existing building plan applications can be requested online.
- Activate the BDM service. Once activated you can request a copy of an existing building plan.
- Complete:
[BDM14 – Application for permission to obtain copies of approved plans \(is this still applicable\)](#)
- The following documentation is required to complete your request:
 - Copy of the owner's ID
 - Copy of latest municipal account
 - Consent letter from property owner if you are representing the owner and
 - A copy of representative's ID

Note:

Copies of building plans are only be provided to the registered property owner. Authorisation must be obtained from the registered owner allowing a third party permission to obtain a copy – referred to above as the consent letter that must accompany the request.

6. What is the cost of obtaining a copy of my building plan?

- Tariffs are available on the City of Cape Town website
 - [Building Development Management Tariffs](#)
 - [Land Use Management Tariffs](#)
- An invoice will be generated for payment once all documentation has been received
- The applicable fee will depend on whether an electronic copy or hard copy is requested

7. How long do I wait for copies of my plans?

- The City's database of approved building plans is comprehensive and some of the approved building plans on record may not be held at the district office, but may have been centrally archived.
- If the plans are electronic and the request complies with requirements, it can be provided immediately.
- If the plans are not electronic and the hard copies have been archived, in other words they are no longer at a development management office but have been sent to a central repository then there will be a waiting period. This waiting period is approximately 1 week.

8. What do I do if the City does not have a copy of my building plans?

- The City is not required to keep copies of approved building plans, although it does have a comprehensive database of approved building plans – there is no guarantee that there will be a copy on file.
- Where a building plan is not available and cannot be sourced anywhere else (the archives), it is the registered property owner's responsibility to have the built structures on the property measured and plans drawn up, if required. This is generally required when the property owner intends to make additions or alterations to an existing structure.

9. What must I do to prepare to submit a building plan application/ Where do I start?

- Research your properties information to understand what is permitted:
 - Request a copy of any previously approved building plans (see how do I get a copy of my existing approved building plan)
 - Request a copy of the properties title deeds or deed of transfer
 - Request a copy of the registered survey diagram from the Surveyor General
90 Plein Street, Cape Town
021 467 4800
 - Request a zoning certificate for the property to understand the current zoning and the development parameters, including the restrictions relating to your property
- Consult [Development Managements Development Guideline Series](#). It provides a range of valuable information related to development within the City of Cape Town.

10. My building plan application did not meet the requirements of a land use clearance – what does that mean?

- When a land use application is triggered as a requirement, the customer must first meet the land use requirements before making a building plan submission. A land use application is separate from a building plan application.
- The processing of a 'clean' building plan application, in other words a building plan that has all prerequisite approvals in place before submission, should not exceed the statutory timeframes of 30 days for buildings smaller than 500 m² and 60 days for buildings larger than 500 m².

11. How does the customer submit a request to make changes to an approved building plan?

- Should you at any stage wish to deviate from an approved building plan, you may apply for an amendment. Approval for any deviation is essential if you do not want to run into problems when you want to sell your house later on if there is a discrepancy between the built structure and the approved plan.

12. Who can draw up building plans?

- Only a registered architect can draw up building plans.
- There is a list of building types that don't require SACAP-registered architects to draw plans – these are called minor works. You can read more about minor works in the [Building Development Management booklet](#) in the Development Management Information Guideline Series.

13. Who can submit building plans?

- The registered owner of the property or the registered architect can submit building plans.

14. How do I submit my building plan application?

- Register for e-services on the City of Cape Town's website - to access a username and password
- Activate the BDM service. Once activated you can submit your building plan application.

Access the online guideline booklet '[How to register for e-services and submit an application using the Development Application Management System \(DAMS\)](#)' to find out more.

15. I do not have access to the internet, how can I submit my building plans?

- Each planning district office will offer facilities and assistance to anyone who does not have access to a computer or the internet.
- This includes professional advice on registration and how to submit a plan using the online platform.

16. What documents are needed when submitting a building plan?

- Power of attorney to submit on someone else's behalf (if applicable)
- If you are the owner submitting, upload a blank document as substitute for the power of attorney
- Your building plans
- SANS 10400 form
- Application form signed by the owner

17. How long does it take to consider and approve a building plan?

- Building plans for buildings smaller than 500 m² may take up to 30 days to assess.
- Building plans for buildings larger than 500 m² may take up to 60 days to assess.

NB! The timeframes above apply to building plan applications that do not trigger a land use requirement. Should a land use application be required, it must be dealt with prior to the submission of a building plan application and will impact the length of time till a decision can be taken on the building plan application.

18. I want to check the progress on the approval of my building plans?

- Throughout the application process, both the owner and their authorised representative will receive status updates on the progress of the building plan application.
- Alternatively you can contact the relevant district office [Development Management Information Hub](#)

19. For how long does the approval of a building plan remain valid?

- An approved building plan remains valid for one year from the date of approval.
- If the plan expires, application can be made to the City of Cape Town to extend the validity period.

20. How do I apply to extend the validity period of my approved building plan?

- A building plan is valid for one year from the date of approval. If no building work has commenced within that year, the approval will lapse and the customer will have to make a resubmission. An extension of validity is a building plan application type available on e-services. Any customer not registered for e-services will first have to register.
- A customer making an application for resubmission within 18 months of the previously approved date will only pay half the building plan submission fees per application.

21. How many times can I apply to extend the validity period of my approved building plans?

- The Municipal Planning By-law allows one extension of validity for an application.

22. For how long can I extend the validity of my planning approval?

- The Municipal Planning By-law allows the extension for a maximum of five years.

23. How do I find out whether my neighbour has an approved plan for their building work?

- Contact the relevant district [Development Management Information Hub](#) with the property details. They can confirm if there is an approval on record for any building work.
- If there is no approved building plan on record – you can request a building inspector to conduct a site inspection.
- If illegal building work is identified, the inspector will issue the relevant notices for compliance.
- Alternatively, complete a [BDM contravention form](#)

24. When can I start building?

- You may only start building once your local authority has approved your plans and you have passed a commencement inspection by the building inspector.
- If you start earlier than that, you may be served with a stop order requiring you to undertake potentially expensive corrective work or even demolition and may also face prosecution or a fine.

25. Do I need to contact my neighbours before I start building?

- If your application includes a deviation from the zoning scheme regulations, you will have to consult with your neighbours prior to submitting your building plans.
- Apart from that, you have no legal duties to inform your neighbours of the commencement of any building work, although it is considered neighbourly to do so.

26. When does the building inspector conduct their inspections?

Three inspections are conducted:

- One: after the foundation trenches have been dug to check that the building will be positioned as indicated on the approved plans
- Two: after the drainage has been installed, to perform a drainage test
- Three: after all the building work has been completed, including all finishes

27. How do I request a building inspection?

- A building inspection request can be submitted via the DAMS e-services portal. A step by step user manual will be available shortly, to guide you through the process.

28. How do I know who the building inspector is for my area?

- Building inspectors are not allocated work per area – but work on a schedule. Always contact the [District Information Hub](#) for enquiries.

29. What is an occupancy certificate?

- An occupancy certificate is issued by the Development Management Branch to confirm that all building work has been carried out in accordance with the approved building plans.

30. How do I apply for an occupancy certificate?

- Once all building work has been completed a request to obtain an occupancy certificate must be submitted via the DAMS e-services portal. A step-by-step user manual will be available shortly, to guide you through the process.
- Complete the application form ensuring that you supply all necessary approval certificates, which could include:
 - electrical compliance
 - mechanical ventilation system compliance
 - structural system compliance
 - fire protection system compliance
 - fire installation compliance
 - energy efficiency compliance

31. What if the City refused to issue a Certificate of Occupancy?

- You will be provided with reasons for the refusal.
- Contact your building inspector to discuss how to address the reasons.

32. What is an administrative penalty?

- An administrative penalty is an acknowledgement of wrongdoing and does not correct the contravention for which it was issued.
- Contravention could involve building works, land use or conditions of approval.
- An owner can apply to the City for the necessary approvals.
- Before the City can consider any such application, the Municipal Planning Tribunal must first consider whether an administrative penalty is to be paid and if so, determine the amount to be paid.
- The tribunal will take into account several factors that are identified in the Municipal Planning By-law when making its decision.

33. How do I report suspected unauthorised building activity?

- [Submit a complaint](#) in writing to Development Management for investigation
- Provide the physical address or the erf number (if available) of the property to be investigated
- Provide the following, required information when completing the report:
 - Your name and address (no anonymous complaints are accepted as complainants must be contactable for evidence)
 - The name and address of the alleged offender
 - A detailed description of the alleged contravention, include details such as the date of activity, times, frequency, extent, etc.

Note: When reporting a complaint it is important to submit as much information as possible. You may also be requested to give evidence in court, if the case proceeds to criminal prosecution.

34. How do I follow up on a complaint?

- Contact the relevant Development Management Information Hub on:

[Blaauwberg](#) [Northern](#) [Cape Flats](#) [Table Bay](#)

[Helderberg](#) [Tygerberg](#) [Khayelitsha](#) [Southern](#)

Provide a reference (Case ID number, Erf number, Physical Address, Property ownership)



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Land Use Management

Frequently asked questions

Land Use Management (LUM)

1. What is land use management?

- Land use management is the process of ensuring that the development of properties occurs in terms of the guidelines prescribed by the Development Management Scheme (DMS) and that the use of such properties are within the rights ascribed to the zoning of such property.
- The deviation from such rights and guidelines triggers a land use application.

2. Why is advertising important and how is it done?

- The City has a duty to consult the public by advertising a land use proposal to all interested and affected parties before assessing and deciding on an application.
 - Consultation and advertising may take various forms, including:
 - registered notices to surrounding property owners or community organisations
 - a notice in the press
 - a notice put up on site

Also note that all documents submitted along with your application are considered public record, which means that the public will be able to view and inspect them. Personal data such as ID numbers and property ownership information is redacted in terms of POPIA.

3. Where do I submit my land use application?

- Register for e-services on the City of Cape Town's website - to access a username and password
- Activate the BDM service. Once activated you can submit your building plan application.

Access the online guideline booklet '[How to register for e-services and submit an application using the Development Application Management System \(DAMS\)](#)' to find out more.

4. How do I book a pre-submission consultation meeting?

- A pre-consultation meeting is a mandatory requirement for certain application types. To book your meeting, a request can be submitted via the DAMS e-services portal. A step-by-step user manual will be available shortly, to guide you through the process.

5. How do I request a zoning extract?

- To obtain a zoning certificate, submit a request via the DAMS e-services portal. A step-by-step user manual will be available shortly, to guide you through the process.

6. What is the timeframe for processing of land use applications

The time taken to process your application will depend on a number of criteria:

- The nature, extent and complexity of your proposal
- How much public participation is required
- Whether decision-making powers have been delegated to officials or whether the Municipal Planning Tribunal needs to decide
- Whether or not any appeals are received

7. What is a departure?

A departure is a deviation from the land uses or development rules prescribed in the Development Management Scheme, granted by the City on a temporary or permanent basis.

8. What is a temporary land use departure?

- A temporary departure approval is for a set period of time up to a maximum of five years after which the temporary right lapses if not implemented.
- Once it has expired, you will need to apply and motivate for a new departure.
- Temporary land use departures are normally unique in each instance.

9. What is zoning?

- Zoning means what land uses are permitted in a specific area, such as residential or commercial.

10. What does rezoning mean?

- Rezoning means the process to permanently change a property's zoning in terms of the law, such as from 'single residential 1' to 'general business'.
- This process starts with an application to the City.

11. Is there a difference between land use and zoning?

- Each property within the bounds of the City of Cape Town is subject to a set of regulations that control development on that property. These regulations are set out in the Development Management Scheme, which forms part of the Municipal Planning By-law. Each land unit in the City has a zoning, the zoning prescribes what land uses are allowed on the land unit. In this sense, the zoning of a property is a category attached to that land unit, and land use is the context within that zoning category that specifies how the property may be developed and used.

12. What is the difference between a zoning certificate and a rezoning?

- A zoning certificate will confirm the current zoning of a property.
- A rezoning means the property zoning is in the process of being changed permanently in terms of the law, such as from 'single residential 1' to 'general business'.

13. What is the application process to obtain a zoning certificate?

- A zoning certificate or zoning extract confirms the current zoning of a property. While it is not a formal application type, a request form LUM12 is available on the City's website that must be completed and submitted to Development Management for action. The zoning certificate can then be collected or emailed to the customer.
- The LUM12 form can also be used to request other electronic data or maps as required. It is important to note that each service request is linked to an applicable tariff, available on the City's website.

14. What is an additional use right?

It is a use indicated in the Development Management Scheme as a use only allowed on a property if certain criteria are met.

15. How do I find out what my property is zoned for?

You can search for your property on the planning viewer available on the City of Cape Town's website.

16. How do I find out what my existing land use and development rights are?

To identify the zoning allocated to your property, look at the existing zoning map on the [City's website](#).

17. How do I obtain an official zoning certificate?

Contact the relevant district office [Development Management Information Hub](#) to make a request.

18. Can I run a business from my home?

- A property zoned for single residential 1 allows for a single dwelling house to be built.

- It also allows for additional uses such as working from home, a bed and breakfast establishment with no more than six paying guests and no more than three rooms being used for guests and a home childcare facility of up to six children.
- If you want to operate a place of worship, a small business such as a house shop, a guest house or crèche with more than six guests or children, you will need to apply for and be granted a consent use or temporary departure.
- Contact the relevant district office [Development Management Information Hub](#) to confirm what land uses are allowed on your property. If necessary, they can give guidance on application requirements.

19. I want to run a childcare facility, have a home occupation, run a professional practice from home or work from home - do I need planning approval?

- In some zones, you are allowed to run a small home industry, professional practice or occupation from a property zoned 'single residential', without needing the City's approval.
- Where this is the case, your industry, occupation or practice must still comply with certain restrictions that are aimed at limiting its size, potential nuisance to neighbours, and impact on the surrounding environment.
- Contact the relevant district office [Development Management Information Hub](#) to confirm what is applicable to your property.

20. What does single residential zoning mean?

- The single residential zonings are designed to provide locations for predominantly single-family dwelling houses in low-to-medium-density neighbourhoods, with a safe and pleasant living environment.
- There are controlled opportunities for home employment, additional dwellings and low-intensity mixed-use development on a single residential property.

21. What does general residential zoning mean?

- The general residential zonings are designed to provide a healthy, safe and pleasant environment for urban living at higher densities, in order to promote efficient urban development, manage the pressure of urban growth and reduce urban sprawl.
- Different zonings and subzonings permit different levels of development intensity, particularly relating to height and floor space.
- Within these zonings there are controlled opportunities for home employment and low-intensity mixed-use development.

22. What does community zoning mean?

- Community zonings are intended for social uses directed at community needs, such as educational, religious, welfare or health services.
- Community buildings are important social and urban design focal points, and prominent architectural forms should be encouraged.
- There are two community zonings, with CO1 serving predominantly local community needs, and CO2, which caters for a wider community and potentially a greater intensity of development.

23. What does local business zoning mean?

- A business zoning creates a suitable interface between business districts and adjacent residential areas, where low-impact offices and associated uses are permitted, but where higher-impact retail uses are controlled.
- Local business zoning 2 is appropriate for local neighbourhood shops, and allows for a range of compatible land uses.

24. What does general business and mixed use zoning mean?

- The general business zonings are designed to promote economic development in business districts and development corridors, and include a wide range of land uses such as business, residential and community uses, although industrial development is restricted.
- By contrast, the mixed-use zonings are suitable for completely mixed areas in terms of land use, including industrial, business and residential development.
- Such mixed-use zonings need to be applied with care to ensure that conflict between residential and industrial development is minimised.

25. What does industrial zoning mean?

- The industrial zonings are designed to accommodate manufacturing and related processes ranging from general industrial uses which may have some impact on surrounding areas, to hazardous or noxious uses which have a potentially high impact and must be carefully managed.
- Industrial development has particular requirements for road and waste infrastructure, and industrial-zoned land should generally be reserved for industrial purposes to optimise this infrastructure and mitigate potential impacts.
- In the general industrial zoning two different subzonings accommodate variations of built form, and opportunities are provided for consent uses associated with industrial areas, such as factory shops.
- A specific zoning is provided for noxious and risk industries.

26. What does utility, transport and national port zoning mean?

- Government facilities, whether national, provincial or municipal, should be zoned according to their use, not ownership.
- For example, municipal offices should be zoned an appropriate business zoning. However, certain government activities cannot be classified into other zonings, and can be included in the utility zoning.
- Utility zoning also accommodates uses and infrastructure required for utility services that are not necessarily owned by an organ of state.
- Transport zonings are designed to facilitate efficient operation of the various transport systems.
- There is a close relationship between transportation and development, and appropriate development can help to promote public transport. Provision is made for controlled mixed-use development in certain transportation zones, provided the operation of the transport system is not compromised
- At times transport systems run along defined corridors but at different height levels, and there are opportunities for air rights and underground rights, whereby appropriate development can be constructed at a different level to the transport system without compromising the operation thereof.
- The national port zoning has been included to provide for the provisions contained in the National Ports Act, 2005 (Act 12 of 2005).

27. What is an EIA?

An environmental impact assessment is a study that evaluates the likely environmental impact of a proposed project or development and identifies options to minimise environmental change.

28. What is an HIA?

A heritage impact assessment is a study to evaluate the impact that the proposed development will have on the cultural heritage resources in the area, and to recommend an overall approach to the conservation of those resources.

29. What is a TIA?

A traffic impact assessment is a study that assesses the traffic and safety implications relating to a specific development, such as whether existing roads would be able to accommodate the additional traffic volumes generated by the new development.

30. What is a building envelope?

A building envelope is the total three-dimensional size of all built structures on a property without any departures, taking into account building lines, site coverage, floor factor, and all other requirements.

31. What is a building line?

A building line is a line on a property within which all buildings must be contained.

32. What is bulk/floor factor?

The bulk/floor factor is used to calculate the maximum permissible floor space of a building, usually by multiplying the floor factor by the total property area.

33. What is a cadastral boundary?

A cadastral boundary is the legal outer limit of a property as it appears on a survey diagram or Surveyor-General plan.

34. What does environmental impact mean?

Environmental impact is the degree to which the environment is changed or affected - either positively or negatively - as a result of development.

35. What is a heritage resource?

A heritage resource is any place or object that is high in aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic, or technological value and needs to be protected for future generations.

36. What is a non-conforming use?

An existing land use that does not comply with the uses prescribed in the Development Management Scheme, but has been allowed for an extended period of time or permitted under previous zoning schemes.

37. What is an overlay zone?

An overlay zone means a zoning with additional land uses and development rules over and above the land uses and development rules of the base or underlying zone. These additional land uses and development rules may be stricter or less strict than those of the base zone to achieve a specific objective, such as to protect a unique local area or a place of particular natural beauty.

38. What is a primary land use?

A primary land use means the collection of land uses and activities allowed in terms of a property's existing zoning, without the landowner or developer having to apply to the City for any further approval. In the zoning 'single residential', for example, the primary land use is usually a dwelling unit.

39. What is a title deed restriction?

- Title deed restrictions are detailed conditions in a title deed that may limit the way in which a property may be used or developed, usually to protect the character of the area.
- Title deed restrictions must be complied with in addition to the land uses and development rules in the Development Management Scheme.

40. How do I report suspected unauthorised land use activity?

- [Submit a complaint](#) in writing to Development Management for investigation
- Provide the physical address or the erf number (if available) of the property to be investigated
- Provide the following, required information when completing the report:
 - Your name and address (no anonymous complaints are accepted as complainants must be contactable for evidence)
 - The name and address of the alleged offender
 - A detailed description of the alleged contravention, include details such as the date of activity, times, frequency, extent, etc.

Note: When reporting a complaint it is important to submit as much information as possible. You may also be requested to give evidence in court, if the case proceeds to criminal prosecution.

41. How do I follow up on a complaint?

- Contact the relevant Development Management Information Hub on:

[Blaauwberg](#) [Northern](#) [Cape Flats](#) [Table Bay](#)

[Helderberg](#) [Tygerberg](#) [Khayelitsha](#) [Southern](#)

Provide a reference (Case ID number, Erf number, Physical Address, Property ownership)



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Development Application Management System (DAMS)

Frequently asked questions

Development Application Management System (DAMS)

1. What is the Development Application Management System?

- DAMS is an online service allowing for the submission of building plan and land use applications.
- Users must register on the City's e-services portal and activate DAMS to use the service. ,

2. How do I find out more information about registering on e-services?

- Access the online guideline booklet '[How to register for e-services and submit an application using the Development Application Management System \(DAMS\)](#)' to find out more about:
 - Activating your profile
 - Activating Development Management services
 - Registering as an individual or as an organisation
 - Understanding the status of your building plan application
 - Understanding the status of your land use application
 - How to make payment on your application

3. Why are you making changes to DAMS?

- All systems must undergo continuous maintenance and upgrade to newer technology.
- DAMS was first implemented in 2014 and with advancements in technology as well as the changing needs of users, this has been a driving force behind the changes to the current DAMS system.

4. Why could the City not accept development applications during the migration process?

- All systems require maintenance from time to time. Originally launched in 2014, DAMS has since undergone some minor changes and enhancements, these enhancements offer significantly enhanced functionality.

During the migration process, all live cases had to be migrated into the new system, to ensure that this is done smoothly, it must place a hold on the submission of new cases, and cease activity on the live cases. This was a vital step to ensuring data integrity.

5. What changes were made and how do I benefit?

- Property owners and authorised persons will be able to request a copy of existing building plans online, and track the progress of their request.
- Online capturing of information to reduce time spent completing forms.
- Online bookings for pre-consultation meetings.
- Introduction of a "My Application" tab to check all your submitted applications.
- Online bookings for services such as, building inspections, request for occupancy certificates.

6. How does the City communicate changes that affect development and how can I stay informed?

- In July 2020, Development Management launched a newsletter called Plan and Build It Right. Applicants within DAMS were invited to subscribe and the newsletter rolled out with information important to the submission of building plans and later land use applications.
- Plan and Build It Right is also used to keep applicants informed of any issues related to the availability of services as well as changes that impact development applications.
- Subscribe to Plan and Build It Right to keep informed.

PlanandBuilditRight@capetown.gov.za

7. What, if anything do I need to do, as an applicant, to prepare for the changes?

- Check and update your contact details, as provided on your business partner registration by contacting 0860 103 089 or send an email to accounts@capetown.gov.za

8. What, if any, support will be provided to applicants to assist with the new system?

- Manuals will be made available shortly to guide users
- Video's outlining the changes, benefits and impact will be available shortly. Subscribe to PlanandBuilditRight@capetown.gov.za to stay informed.

9. Who do I contact if I need help?

- A dedicated team are available through the [Development Management Information Hubs](#) to guide and assist you where necessary.

10. I still see the old Development Application Management e-services portal, how do I navigate to the new site?

- Login to the e-services portal using your registered credentials. On the Home tab, select new e-Services Portal
- Once the new screen is open, select your username (top right hand corner of the screen) and the drop down option to 'check for updates'. If updates are available, it will list as an option to 'show those updates', select ok and any applicable updates will run.
- You should now see the new portal screen and the available tiles for selection.