

MARCH 2023

AGENCY LETTER OF APPROVAL -  
APPLICATION REFERENCE GUIDE:

BUILDING CODE SERVICES



## Purpose

This guide applies to the Agency Letter of Approval (ALA) application review and inspection, by City of Ottawa Building Code Services service area.

## Description

Establishments that serve or sell alcohol for on-site consumption, include (but are not limited to) restaurants, bars, breweries, cafes, distilleries, and retirement homes require a Liquor Sales Licence issued by the AGCO. Included in the list of documentation required to obtain said licence is an ALA from the following municipal service areas:

- Building Code Services,
- Ottawa Fire Services, and
- Ottawa Public Health

For Building Code Services service area purposes, a site plan and floor plan must be submitted with the ALA application, to facilitate the review of Ontario Building Code (OBC) and City of Ottawa Zoning By-Law requirements.

## Ontario Building Code review

### Occupant Load

A requested occupant load of the interior and exterior floor areas is required for the review of exits and washrooms. Occupant load is based on the number of fixed seats, the number of persons for which the area is designed, or the number of persons determined using Division B Table 3.1.17.1, which assigns a minimum area per person based on the type of use. It's important to note that if working with existing exit and washroom conditions, these factors may limit the number of occupants permitted. Additionally, where applicable the capacity of the septic system can impact the occupant load and may be a limiting factor in determining the final occupant load.

### Exits

The number of exits, door swing, exit width and door release hardware are dependent on occupant load, travel distance, floor area and sprinklering.

### Washrooms

The minimum number of required toilets and sinks is based on occupant load. Tables based on use can be found in Division B 3.7. of the OBC . To note, toilets are captured as water closets and sinks are captured as lavatories, in the OBC.

(see Application Submission Requirements section below for more details)

### New construction and change of use

Any proposed construction requires a separate building permit, prior to work taking place. The final inspection must pass, prior to issuance of the ALA. Items such as plumbing, interior/exterior alterations, grease interceptors and elevated patios suspended by posts, beams, and joists, are to be captured by way of building permit.

Where the existing use of a building or suite is changing to an assembly or mercantile occupancy, a building permit/change of use permit is required prior to work taking place, to establish the new use.

Please see the City of Ottawa [building and renovating](#) landing page for details regarding the submission process, application form, timelines, fees, permit approvals and inspections.

### **City of Ottawa Zoning By-Law review**

The ALA application may be reviewed by a Zoning Plan Examiner to confirm that the use (e.g., restaurant, bar, café, retirement home, etc.) is permitted in the proposed zone, the patio meets the residential setback requirements and minimum parking is provided, where applicable.

A Development Information Officer (DIO) can advise on zoning regulations impacting your property with respect to use. Please contact 613-580-2424 ext. 23434 or [dioinquiry@ottawa.ca](mailto:dioinquiry@ottawa.ca)

### **Encroachments onto City of Ottawa property**

Where a patio extends beyond the property line, onto road allowances or rights-of-way (ROW), a right-of-way permit is required. There are two designated patio seasons in the City of Ottawa: a summer season (April 1 to October 31) and a winter season (November 1 to March 31). A ROW permit is required for each season the patio is proposed to be on the ROW.

Please contact [rowpatio@ottawa.ca](mailto:rowpatio@ottawa.ca) for further detail.

### **Municipal Information Form (MIF)**

A completed MIF is required to be provided to the AGCO when applying for a Liquor Sales Licence. The required form is to be signed by the City of Ottawa Office of the City Clerk. Council, By-Law and Regulatory Services, ROW, and Ottawa Police Service are subsequently notified of the proposed Liquor Sales Licence. A copy of the form can be found here [MIF](#)

### **Confirmation of Septic Capacity**

Where the proposed establishment is serviced by a septic system the capacity of the septic system will be required when determining an occupant load. Confirmation of the existing or new septic system's capacity will be required. Please contact The Ottawa Septic office at (613)-692-3571 (and press 4) or [septic@rvca.ca](mailto:septic@rvca.ca)

## **Agency Letter of Approval – Application Submission Requirements**

An ALA application must be submitted via [My ServiceOttawa](#). A legible site plan and floor plan drawn to scale are to be included. Professional involvement requirements vary based on application scope.

The application form and applicable fee can be found on the City of Ottawa Building and Renovating [forms, applications and fees](#) page. Note that the ALA application is also circulated to Ottawa Fire Services and Ottawa Public Health. Separate fees may apply.

Plans shall include the following:

### Site Plan (only required where exterior space is part of ALA application)

- lot lines including dimensions
- location of existing or proposed building, dimensioned to other buildings on the lot and all lot lines
- any proposed grade changes (grading approval may be required)
- lot area and main building area
- municipal address
- parking, where applicable

### Floor Plan (interior and/or exterior)

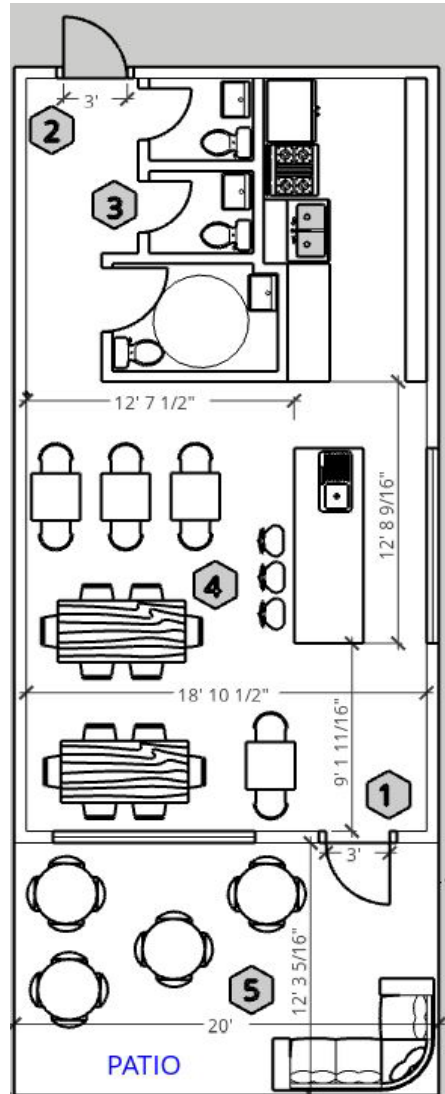
- all floor areas to be fully dimensioned
- proposed licensed areas clearly outlined
- where proposing to license ancillary areas (e.g., washrooms, hallways) with no increase in overall occupancy, the areas must be identified or outlined in a different colour or dotted line
- seating plan, indicating all tables and chairs
- location of washrooms, number and allotment of toilets, urinals (where applicable), and sinks
- location, width, and direction of door swing for all exits
- proposed occupant load, for each separate floor area

### Occupant Load Calculations (capacity)

As per the AGCO, an occupant load is required for each proposed licensed area. This table captures the sample floor plan layout below. On My ServiceOttawa, requested occupant loads are required to be provided with the application.

Floor Area	Interior or Exterior	Estimated Occupant Load
Bar	Interior	3
Dining Room	Interior	20
Patio	Exterior	16

Sample floor plan



1. Exit width dimensioned
2. Direction of exit door swing
3. Toilets and sinks
4. Interior and exterior seating plan
5. Interior and exterior floor areas fully dimensioned

For food establishments in particular, the City of Ottawa has resources to assist business owners who are starting to plan and operate a new food establishment. A Business Information Officer (BIO) acts as a single point of contact to get all the information needed to apply for the required licenses and permits, including a Liquor Sales Licence.

Contact [bio1stop@ottawa.ca](mailto:bio1stop@ottawa.ca) for further detail.

The Ontario Building Code outlines the minimum requirements for various elements (e.g., minimum washroom requirements) and can be found on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-building-code>

## **Additional Information**

### Outstanding orders or building permits

The ALA cannot be issued until:

- all outstanding building code orders are resolved
- all outstanding building permits have been closed
- current construction requiring a building permit is complete / final inspection has been passed

### **Required Building Code Services Inspections**

Once an ALA application is received, a building official will be assigned, and their contact information will be provided to the client via email. When ready, the client is to arrange for an inspection with Building Code Services service area. The building official will:

- confirm the layout matches the plan submitted,
- complete calculations for interior/exterior occupant loads,
- identify the most restrictive occupant load limiter,
- review number of toilets/sinks, number of exits, exit width, and
- identify any deficiencies and request a re-inspection, where necessary
- determine whether renovations or change of use has occurred that requires a building permit.
- review septic system capacity to determine occupant load where applicable.

The building official will bring a copy of the submitted site plan and floor plan to site at time of inspection. To ensure the availability of a building official, inspections should be scheduled 48 hours in advance.

### **Other Inspections**

In addition to Building Code Services service area, other service areas involved in inspecting the establishment include:

#### Ottawa Fire Services (OFS)

Once a [My ServiceOttawa](#) request is completed, the inspection assignment is sent to a fire prevention officer. The officer will contact the client to set up an appointment for the fire inspection, when the space is ready. All existing building permits must be closed, and occupancy must be granted prior to the inspection.

If there are 30 seats or more, a completed fire safety plan is required. The fire safety plan can be provided at time of ALA application or on site, to the fire prevention officer. The fire inspection will not pass without the fire safety plan.

For any questions, please contact [fireprevention@ottawa.ca](mailto:fireprevention@ottawa.ca) or 613-580-2424 x.15371 (to leave a message).

#### Ottawa Public Health (OPH)

When requesting approval from Ottawa Public Health, applicants should use the online City Portal ALA request, to arrange for an inspection. This can be accessed through [Business ambassador | City of Ottawa](#). Applicants should have their application form available for the inspector to sign following the onsite inspection. For general questions or inquiries regarding the process, please contact [healthsante@ottawa.ca](mailto:healthsante@ottawa.ca)