

RIGHTSTART

COMMERCIAL CHECKLIST

A Comprehensive Pre-Construction Checklist for Commercial Projects

This checklist covers the key prerequisites for responsibly planning a commercial project before a building permit is submitted. It applies to ground-up construction, tenant improvements, renovations, and change-of-use projects across commercial occupancy types.

Not all items apply to every project. Applicability depends on project type, scope, site conditions, and jurisdiction. This checklist defines planning prerequisites only; it does not include construction means, methods, procurement, or pricing.

RightStart ends with a permit-ready package. Permit submission and construction begin afterward.

Commercial projects involve multiple code disciplines, coordinated consultants, and jurisdictional approvals that must happen in sequence. Stellan Eoin Builders offers RightStart Agreements to manage this entire process—reducing the risk of missed steps, sequencing errors, and last-minute surprises. **Learn more at stellaneoin.com or contact us directly.**

ALL COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

1. Property & Land-Use Verification

- ☐ Confirm property ownership and legal description
- ☐ Verify zoning classification and permitted commercial uses
- ☐ Identify setbacks, height limits, lot coverage, and FAR
- ☐ Review overlay districts (historic, form-based, urban overlay, special use)
- ☐ Identify recorded easements (utility, drainage, access, shared parking)
- ☐ Determine whether variances, special exceptions, or rezoning required
- ☐ Review deed restrictions or covenants affecting use
- ☐ Identify landlord/tenant responsibilities (if TI or lease space)

2. Occupancy & Code Analysis

(Critical foundation for all commercial projects — determines code path.)

- ☐ Determine IBC occupancy classification(s) (A, B, E, F, H, I, M, R, S, U)
- ☐ Identify mixed-use or mixed-occupancy conditions
- ☐ Determine construction type (I-A through V-B)
- ☐ Calculate allowable building area (with modifications)
- ☐ Evaluate sprinkler trade-offs for area/height increases
- ☐ Identify fire separation requirements between occupancies
- ☐ Determine occupant load calculations
- ☐ Identify special use conditions (high-hazard, assembly, institutional)

3. Architectural Documentation

(Scope varies by project type — TI vs. ground-up vs. shell.)

- ☐ Floor plans with dimensions and room labels
- ☐ Reflected ceiling plans
- ☐ Exterior elevations (if applicable)
- ☐ Building sections
- ☐ Roof plan (if applicable)
- ☐ Wall types and fire-rated assembly details
- ☐ Door and hardware schedules
- ☐ Window schedules (if applicable)
- ☐ Finish schedules
- ☐ Partition types and details
- ☐ Architectural site plan (building placement, parking, access)

4. Structural Engineering

- ☐ Foundation design (new or modified)

- ☐ Structural framing plans
- ☐ Steel, concrete, or wood specifications
- ☐ Lateral force-resisting system
- ☐ Seismic design category determination
- ☐ Special inspections requirements identified
- ☐ Structural evaluation of existing construction (for TI/renovation)
- ☐ Equipment support and penetration coordination

5. MEP Engineering

Mechanical

- ☐ Heating and cooling load calculations
- ☐ HVAC system design (RTUs, split systems, VAV, etc.)
- ☐ Ductwork layout and sizing
- ☐ Ventilation requirements (outdoor air, exhaust)
- ☐ Building automation system (BAS) requirements
- ☐ Smoke control or smoke evacuation (if required)

Electrical

- ☐ Electrical service sizing and utility coordination
- ☐ Single-line diagram
- ☐ Panel schedules and load calculations
- ☐ Lighting plans and photometric calculations (often required for site lighting and parking)
- ☐ Emergency and exit lighting
- ☐ Lightning protection (if required)

Plumbing

- ☐ Plumbing fixture counts and layouts
- ☐ Domestic water sizing
- ☐ Sanitary and waste sizing
- ☐ Water heater sizing and location
- ☐ Grease interceptor requirements (if food service)
- ☐ Backflow prevention requirements

6. Fire & Life Safety

(Commercial projects require coordinated fire protection design.)

- ☐ Fire sprinkler system design (if required)
- ☐ Fire alarm system design
- ☐ Fire alarm notification and detection device layout
- ☐ Egress analysis and exit calculations
- ☐ Exit signage and emergency lighting plan
- ☐ Fire-rated assembly schedules
- ☐ Fire damper and smoke damper locations
- ☐ Fire department access and key box requirements
- ☐ Hood suppression system (Ansul) if commercial kitchen
- ☐ Standpipe requirements (if applicable)

7. Accessibility (ADA/TAS)

(All commercial projects must comply with accessibility requirements.)

- ☐ Accessible route from parking to building entrance
- ☐ Accessible parking calculations and layout
- ☐ Accessible entrance and door hardware
- ☐ Interior accessible route continuity
- ☐ Accessible restroom design and clearances

- ☐ Accessible signage (tactile, Braille, wayfinding)
- ☐ Service counter and transaction counter heights
- ☐ Accessible drinking fountains
- ☐ Threshold and level change compliance
- ☐ Accessibility narrative or compliance statement

8. Energy & Performance Compliance

- ☐ Energy code compliance path determined (prescriptive vs. performance)
- ☐ COMCheck or equivalent energy documentation
- ☐ Envelope performance specifications
- ☐ HVAC efficiency requirements
- ☐ Lighting power density calculations
- ☐ Daylighting and lighting controls (if required)
- ☐ Commissioning requirements identified (if applicable)

9. Administrative, Contractual & Financial Readiness

- ☐ Contractor licensing and insurance documentation
- ☐ Impact fees and connection fees identified
- ☐ Preliminary construction budget alignment
- ☐ Pre-construction schedule outline
- ☐ Third-party stakeholder requirements reviewed (lender, landlord, franchisor)
- ☐ Lease or development agreement requirements reviewed
- ☐ Document coordination and version control established

NEW SITE WORK — Ground-Up & Major Additions

These items apply when new ground is disturbed, new foundations poured, or new site infrastructure established.

10. Surveys & Site Data

- ☐ Boundary survey
- ☐ Topographic survey
- ☐ ALTA/NSPS survey (if required by lender or title)
- ☐ Existing conditions survey (structures, utilities, pavements)
- ☐ Utility location verification (water, sewer, gas, electric, telecom)
- ☐ Tree survey (where required)
- ☐ Flood elevation certificate (if applicable)
- ☐ Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (if required)

11. Utilities & Service Capacity

- ☐ Electrical service evaluation and transformer requirements
- ☐ Gas service availability and meter sizing
- ☐ Water service availability, tap size, and fire flow
- ☐ Sewer availability and capacity confirmation
- ☐ Telecom/data service availability
- ☐ Temporary utilities planning
- ☐ Utility provider pre-approval requirements identified
- ☐ Utility easement coordination

12. Geotechnical & Site Conditions

- ☐ Geotechnical / soils report
- ☐ Bearing capacity and foundation recommendations
- ☐ Pavement section recommendations
- ☐ Rock depth and excavation feasibility

- ☐ Groundwater and dewatering considerations
- ☐ Floodplain development compliance review (if applicable)
- ☐ Retaining wall requirements

13. Civil / Site Engineering

- ☐ Site plan / layout plan
- ☐ Grading plan
- ☐ Grading permit (where required)
- ☐ Drainage and stormwater management plan
- ☐ Stormwater detention/retention design
- ☐ Water quality treatment (if required)
- ☐ Erosion and sediment control plan
- ☐ Site utility plans (water, sewer, storm, gas, electric)
- ☐ Paving and striping plan
- ☐ Site lighting and photometric plan

14. Parking & Traffic

- ☐ Parking calculations per zoning/use
- ☐ ADA accessible parking count and layout
- ☐ Drive aisle widths and circulation
- ☐ Loading zone requirements
- ☐ Traffic impact study (if required by jurisdiction)
- ☐ Sight distance and access point evaluation
- ☐ Driveway permit applications

15. Site-Related Approvals

- ☐ Site plan or design review approval
- ☐ Third-party plan review (where required)
- ☐ Driveway or access permit
- ☐ Right-of-way or street cut permit
- ☐ Tree removal permit (where required)
- ☐ Signage permit (monument, building-mounted)
- ☐ Dumpster enclosure approval
- ☐ Landscape plan approval

EXISTING BUILDING — TI, Renovation & Change of Use

These items apply when work occurs within or modifies an existing structure.

16. Existing Conditions Assessment

- ☐ Existing building documentation review (original drawings, permits)
- ☐ As-built verification of existing conditions
- ☐ Structural condition assessment
- ☐ Existing MEP capacity verification
- ☐ Existing fire protection system evaluation
- ☐ Existing fire alarm system evaluation
- ☐ Roof condition assessment (if affected)
- ☐ Hazardous materials assessment (asbestos, lead-based paint)
- ☐ Existing accessibility conditions documented

17. Change of Use / Occupancy Analysis

(Required when changing occupancy classification or intensity of use.)

- ☐ Occupancy change determination (current vs. proposed)

- ☐ Code compliance gap analysis for new occupancy
- ☐ Structural adequacy for new use (loads, seismic)
- ☐ Fire protection upgrades required for new occupancy
- ☐ Egress upgrades required for new occupant load
- ☐ Accessibility upgrades triggered by scope
- ☐ Plumbing fixture count compliance for new use
- ☐ Parking compliance for new use

REGULATORY APPROVALS — All Projects, Varies by Scope

18. Jurisdictional Approvals

- ☐ Zoning verification or approval letter
- ☐ Variance or special exception approval (if required)
- ☐ Historic or overlay district approval (if applicable)
- ☐ Site plan approval
- ☐ Utility authority approvals (water, sewer, stormwater)
- ☐ Fire marshal plan review
- ☐ Health department review (food service, healthcare)
- ☐ Elevator permit (if applicable)
- ☐ Boiler permit (if applicable)
- ☐ State Fire Marshal plan review (certain occupancies)

Trade Permits *(State or local depending on jurisdiction.)*

- ☐ Electrical permit
- ☐ Plumbing permit
- ☐ Mechanical permit
- ☐ TN Dept. of Environment & Conservation (stormwater, if applicable)

USE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS — When Applicable

Include these items when the project involves the corresponding use type.

19. Use-Specific Requirements

Food Service / Restaurant

- ☐ Health department plan review and approval
- ☐ Commercial kitchen layout and equipment schedule
- ☐ Type I hood design and fire suppression (Ansul)
- ☐ Type II hood requirements (dishwasher, etc.)
- ☐ Grease interceptor sizing and location
- ☐ Three-compartment sink and handwash requirements
- ☐ Walk-in cooler/freezer requirements
- ☐ Food service ventilation and makeup air
- ☐ Outdoor seating approvals (if applicable)
- ☐ Alcohol/beverage license coordination (if applicable)

Medical / Healthcare

- ☐ Medical gas system design (if applicable)
- ☐ Imaging room shielding requirements (X-ray, CT, MRI)
- ☐ Special HVAC requirements (pressure relationships, air changes)
- ☐ Medical waste handling requirements
- ☐ Emergency power requirements
- ☐ State healthcare facility licensing coordination

Industrial / Warehouse

- ☐ Clear height and rack layout coordination

- ☐ Loading dock requirements and truck circulation
- ☐ Crane or hoist structural provisions
- ☐ High-pile storage requirements (if applicable)
- ☐ Hazardous materials storage requirements (H occupancy)
- ☐ Floor flatness and levelness requirements
- ☐ Heavy equipment floor load requirements

Assembly (A Occupancy)

- ☐ Occupant load calculations and posting
- ☐ Egress width calculations
- ☐ Panic hardware requirements
- ☐ Main exit and exit discharge requirements
- ☐ Accessible seating requirements (if fixed seating)
- ☐ Stage and platform requirements (if applicable)
- ☐ Sound system and emergency voice/alarm coordination

Retail / Mercantile

- ☐ Storefront design and glazing requirements
- ☐ Security system provisions
- ☐ Point-of-sale and display lighting
- ☐ Stock room and receiving area planning
- ☐ Franchise or brand standard compliance (if applicable)
- ☐ Franchise standards reviewed for code conflicts and constructability

Multi-Tenant / Shell Buildings

- ☐ Base building vs. tenant responsibility matrix
- ☐ Shell MEP stub locations and capacities
- ☐ Tenant improvement criteria or work letter
- ☐ Common area demising and corridor requirements
- ☐ Future tenant flexibility provisions

FINAL RIGHTSTART DELIVERABLES

20. Permit-Ready Package

- ☐ Coordinated architectural permit set
- ☐ Structural engineering package
- ☐ MEP engineering package
- ☐ Fire protection (sprinkler) drawings
- ☐ Fire alarm drawings
- ☐ Civil / site engineering package
- ☐ Utility confirmations and service applications
- ☐ Energy compliance documentation (COMCheck)
- ☐ Accessibility compliance documentation
- ☐ Completed jurisdictional approvals and sign-offs
- ☐ Special inspections agreement (if required)
- ☐ Permit application package assembled

RightStart ends here. Permit submission and construction contracting follow.

Commercial projects require coordinated expertise across multiple disciplines. A RightStart Agreement puts one experienced team in charge of managing the pre-construction process—so consultants stay coordinated, approvals happen in sequence, and the risk of items falling through the cracks is minimized.

Let Us Handle This For You

Through a RightStart Agreement, Stellan Eoin Builders, LLC takes responsibility for coordinating applicable prerequisites—code analysis, consultant coordination, fire and life safety, accessibility, and jurisdictional approvals—in the correct sequence, with experienced oversight.

You get: one accountable team, reduced risk of missed code requirements, no consultant finger-pointing, and a permit-ready package that's organized from day one.

The process culminates in a construction-ready proposal—a defined scope of work based on a final design shaped by real constraints and kept in budget alignment from the start.

Ready to Start Right?

Head over to **stellaneoin.com** and send us a line via the Contact Us button. Or email us directly at **quotes@stellaneoin.com**. You can also call us at **(615) 212-9005**—if we don't answer, leave a voicemail and we'll get back to you.

Stellan Eoin Builders, LLC • Tennessee License #BC 73150

Serving Middle Tennessee with professionalism, discipline, and integrated pre-construction leadership.