

SOUND OFF *John Foran*

What is a certificate of occupancy, and why is it necessary?

For the best possible answer to these questions, I went straight to the source here in Connecticut.

This is from the Connecticut General Assembly, as it pertains to Building Certificate of Occupancy: This document certifies a building or structure complies with the State Building Code and is suitable for occupancy or use. The certificate is required for (1) newly constructed buildings or structures, (2) an addition to an existing building or structure, or (3) a building or structure that undergoes a change of use (such as a change from a residential to an educational use).

COs are required in an effort to

provide a safe environment for, you guessed it, the occupants of a structure.

Has a new addition or new construction been erected properly, thus ensuring that the structure is safe and habitable? Were things like the electrical work/wiring, plumbing, HVAC system, etc. all performed to the required state standards?

The certificate of occupancy also serves as the means for beginning the inspection process by the local municipality, to make sure that the work done on a home meets the state (and town) requirements.

When building permits have been issued and construction has

begun, the building permit holder must make sure that the proper building inspections take place in a timely manner.

The CO certifies such building code compliance and again per the CGA document, "If a building must have a certificate of occupancy, the certificate certifies compliance and closes out the building permit."

Common questions asked, by both buyers and sellers, inquire about the need for COs in general, possible "grandfathering" of projects without COs, are they expensive, etc.?

The all-encompassing answer to these questions is, doing everything properly and by the book is

always the best course of action. That's being a good neighbor and it's sound business.

If there is any question about what this actually means for a given building project or scenario, it's always best to due your due diligence with your town.

Check/visit with the town building department, your Realtor, your attorney, etc.

The more research you do now, as either a seller or a buyer, the lesser your chances of having any complicated, expensive, deal-stifling surprises to deal with later.

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