What is a Certificate of Occupancy?
A Certificate of Occupancy is issued to identify that a building (or portion thereof) has been inspected by the building official for the intended use and no code violations have been found.

Most new buildings and structures, including single family residences and duplexes, require a Certificate of Occupancy when they are complete, ready for and prior to occupancy of the building.

For new construction, a Certificate of Occupancy is issued after the completion of the building and site improvements when the building passes final inspection.

For commercial and industrial buildings constructed before all tenants are known (speculative building) or before all inside improvements are completed (shell building), a Certificate of Occupancy is required for the primary structure of a speculative building and separate permits and Certificates of Occupancy for each tenant space as they are occupied.

Shell buildings will receive a “letter of completion” for the primary structure, and as with speculative buildings separate permits and Certificates of Occupancy are issued for each tenant space as they are completed and prior to occupancy.

Note: All permits/safety inspections must be issued prior to work commencing or occupancy of the space or building. Issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy is not considered as an approval of a violation of the provisions of the building codes and/or other ordinances and regulations of Spokane County.

What if I am moving into a space that was occupied by another tenant?
A permit is required if you are moving into an existing space that has a Certificate of Occupancy although under some circumstances a safety inspection permit is only necessary. If you want to qualify for this provision, the space must retain the same occupancy classification and use designated on the original Certificate of Occupancy and no work requiring permits is done. The space configuration and exiting must also remain the same. For more information contact our office at (509) 477-3675. If you need an updated Certificate of Occupancy under these circumstances, a safety inspection permit is required. After the safety inspection, a revised Certificate of Occupancy can most likely be issued reflecting the new tenant’s name.

Change of use and building additions
The Building Code classifies all buildings by type of “occupancy” or use. There are many classifications in the code, but all buildings fall into 10 general categories:

- A – Assembly
- B – Business
- E – Educational
- F – Factory & Industry
- H – Hazardous
- I – Institutional
- M – Mercantile
- R – Residential
- S – Storage
- U – Utility

If you are changing the use of a building or tenant space, adding onto a building or modifying the construction of an existing space, you may need to fulfill permitting requirements not discussed in this brochure. Changing the use may result in changes in the number of required parking spaces or changes to the building to meet additional building and fire code requirements. Requirements for permits for new
construction, alterations and additions are described in Brochure BP-1 *Commercial Permits*. Parking requirements are included in the International Building Code (accessibility) and Zoning Code. Other zoning requirements such as landscaping are also found in the Zoning Code. (See BP-41 *Commercial Change of Use*)

**Other considerations**

If you are a new tenant, check to see if the business use you are proposing is allowed in the zone. Call the Spokane County Department of Building and Planning for zoning information at (509) 477-3675. (See BP-47 *Tenant Improvements*)

**Other brochures that may be helpful**

BP-1 *Commercial Permits*
BP-26 *Preapplication Conference Information and Guidelines*
BP-31 *Rules, Regulations, and Red Tape*
BP-32 *Safety Inspections*
BP-33 *Commercial Site Plans and Construction Drawings*
BP-40 *Information Directory*
BP-41 *Commercial Change of Use*
BP-47 *Tenant Improvements*
BP-52 * Permit Processing Time Savers*
BP-53 *Project Planning Checklist*
BP-79 *Speculative Buildings and Shell Buildings*

**For more information or an appointment contact:**

Spokane County Public Works
Department of Building and Planning
1026 W. Broadway Avenue
Spokane, WA 99260-0050
(509) 477-3675  bp@spokanecounty.org
http://www.spokanecounty.org/bp

Please note that while every effort is made to assure the accuracy of the information contained in this brochure it is not warranted for accuracy. This document is not intended to address all aspects or regulatory requirements for a project and should serve as a starting point for your investigation. For detailed information on a particular project, permit, or code requirement refer directly to applicable file and/or code/regulatory documents or contact the appropriate division or staff.