



Commercial Change of Use

BP-41

Department of Building and Planning

What is a Change of Use?

Every building is given an occupancy classification as determined by Chapter 3 of the *International Building Code (IBC)*, or other model code when it is originally built. Each classification has different code requirements based upon the type of hazards or uses within the building. A change of use is when there is a change in the authorized occupancy type of the building that would amend the way the IBC characterizes the use or occupancy type of the building or space.

Most often, buildings are constructed to the **minimum** code requirements that apply to the use for which the building was originally intended/proposed. Thus, there is a need to review plans and inspect the modifications made when the use of a building/space changes to ensure the building can support the life safety and parking requirements of the new occupancy type. For instance, there will be different exiting, fire wall/separation, and parking requirements that will need to be met to allow a day care facility or store to be placed in an office building. A less obvious example of a change of use is when a restaurant that has seating for less than 50 wants to increase the number of seats.

It is important to keep in mind that the legal use of the building may not be its most recent actual use. This means *that a change of use permit may be required even if you don't plan to make any changes to the building* or how the building is currently being used.

Does my project need a Change of Use Permit?

To determine if a change of use permit will be

required, you must first find out what the legal use of the building or space is. This information is identified on the building's or spaces Certificate of Occupancy (CO).

- If the Occupancy Group, Occupant Load, Exiting and Fire Sprinkler Requirements identified on the existing CO are identical to what is proposed. However, remodeling or alteration to the building or space is desired then a Tenant Improvement permit will be required (see BP-47 *Tenant Improvements*). For example, from a dentist office to an attorneys office (both group B Occupancy).
- If the CO is not consistent with the intended use then a Change of Use permit would be required. For example, a bank (Group B Occupancy) to a Retail Store (Group M Occupancy).

You may consult with Department staff regarding the various occupancy classifications and verify if the occupancy classification for your intended business is a change of use from what is already legally established for the building/space.

What should be considered before filing an application?

A change of use permit encompasses a variety of situations. Changing the use of a building or space may involve an extensive remodel or may require no physical changes at all. Changing the use may result in changes in the number of required parking spaces, changes to the building construction, number of exits, addition of fire sprinkler systems, and accessibility features.

Before you consider purchasing, renting or leasing a site for your business, we encourage you to contact the Departments listed below to help determine what modifications to the building/ space or site may be required. An even better option would be to schedule a Pre-Development Conference (see brochure BP-26 *PreApplication Conference Information and Guidelines*) to arrange a meeting with all of these departments at the same time.

■ **Department of Building and Planning**

(509) 477-3675

■ **Division of Engineering and Roads**

(509) 477-3600

■ **Spokane Regional Health District**

(509) 324-1560

Who can perform remodeling work on a commercial building?

If the Change of Use permit requires building code upgrades be advised: only building owners, full time employees of the building owners, and State Licensed Contractors may perform work on a commercial building. Contact the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries for additional information (509) 324-2640.

How do I apply for a permit?

To submit an application for a Change of Use permit the following information must be provided:

- Property address and space/suite number if applicable
- Parcel number of the proposed site.
- Legal description of the proposed site.
- Property address and space/suite number if applicable.

NOTE: *This information can be found on your property tax statement or may be obtained from the County Assessor's office, our website (www.spokane-county.org/bp) or Build Regional Spokane (www.buildregionalspokane.org).*

- Seven (7) copies of the site plan **if the project**

involves any site work, parking lot changes, exterior work (ramps, canopies).

- Two (2) sets of plans (three (3) sets for food establishments) that include a detailed floor plan of the building or space (e.g. dimensioned plan, room uses, exit locations, accessibility details, heating-lighting changes, plumbing changes, etc.) along with a master floor plan of the building identifying the location of the new tenant space if applicable, and the construction drawings for all proposed work (e.g. framing details for new walls, partitions, suspended ceiling details , etc.)
- The requirement for an Washington State architect's or engineer's stamp on tenant improvement drawings may be waived on drawings with sufficient clarity and detail, and that demonstrate compliance with RCW 18.08
- Additional information may be required depending on the scope of the proposed use.

How long will the application process take?

Proposals will be reviewed for compliance with applicable codes and routed to agencies with interest. Allow from one to three weeks minimum for review and response time or permit issuance.

Some items that LEAD TO DELAYS in the process are:

- Incomplete or illegible drawings, plans, or documents that do not illustrate compliance with minimum code requirements. (Providing complete and detailed site plans and construction drawings will greatly assist the review process).
- Accessibility issues that are not addressed
- Changes to space conditioning or lighting - NREC Plan Review /Inspection contracts are required.
- Critical materials lists where applicable.

Will I need other approvals in conjunction with the application?

Approvals or permits from other county departments, state, and local agencies may be required prior to the release of your building permit, including:

- If any food service, preparation or sales is involved, or if your project is such that a septic system may need to be enlarged or relocated approvals/permits are required from the Spokane Regional Health District ((509) 324-1560)
- Electrical permits for work in unincorporated areas of the county can be obtained from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries ((509) 327-2640)
- Prior to renovation or demolition an asbestos survey must be conducted by an AHERA Building Inspector. A Notice of Intent must also be filed with Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency prior to asbestos removal or demolition.
- If installing air pollution sources (e.g.: spray booth, boilers etc., contact the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency ((509) 477-4710).

How much will the permit cost?

Fees for all permits are based on Spokane County Building and Planning's "Cost Recovery Fee Methodology". The adopted fee schedules reflect the costs to the Department for processing the permit, providing land use review, plan review, and inspections of the project. Please refer to the current fee schedules, or consult with department staff.

Plumbing, mechanical and fire related permits are issued separately from the building permit for commercial projects and fees are in addition

to those of the building permit. Please refer to the appropriate plumbing, mechanical and fire permit fee schedules or consult with department staff.

Other brochures that may be helpful

- BP-1 *Commercial Permits*
- BP-4 *Permit Fee Schedule*
- BP-8 *Signs*
- BP-26 *Commercial Conference Information and Guidelines*
- BP-27 *Critical and Hazardous Materials*
- BP-31 *Rules, Regulations, and Red Tape*
- BP-33 *Commercial Site Plans and Construction Drawings*
- BP-39 *Addressing*
- BP-40 *Information Directory*
- BP-47 *Tenant Improvement*
- BP-48 *Non-Residential Energy Code*
- BP-52 *Permit Processing Time Savers*
- BP-53 *Project Planning Checklist*
- BP-55 *Certificate of Occupancy*

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>