



Change of Use Permits

This information guide answers common questions about Tenant Improvement-Change of Use permits.

Apply On-Line at [MyBuildingPermit.com](https://www.kingcounty.gov/permits)

Select: King County | Building | Nonresidential | Tenant Improvement-Change of Use



What is a Change of Use permit?

- A Change of Use permit is a type of building permit that is required when you are changing the occupancy and/or land use in the nonresidential tenant space or building. This occurs when you either:
 - Change from one occupancy classification to another in the International Building Code (IBC) (Refer to “What is a Certificate of Occupancy?” section on pg. 2 for more detail)
 - Change the from one permitted use table to a separate permitted use table in King County Code (KCC) 21A.08. (Refer to the [Zoning Code Permitted Use Tables \(Bulletin 18A\)](#) and [Zoning Code – Overview and Summary \(Bulletin # 17A\)](#) for additional details about the permitted use tables add zoning review.)
- Change of Use permits require King County to evaluate the new use that is being proposed to assess whether this is subject to a change in applicable codes. The standards that are evaluated at the time of a new use proposal include, but are not limited to, new development conditions (property specific (p-suffix) or Special District Overlays (SDOs)), setbacks, parking and circulation, building fire sprinkler and alarms, accessibility, landscape, floor-area-ratio (FAR), base density, critical areas, and shoreline code.

How is a Change of Use permit different from a Tenant Improvement permit?

- A Change of Use permit typically includes all aspects that a Tenant Improvement to ensure building compliance, but it also includes an expanded review of the use and site to determine whether the new use can meet current code standards.
- It is important to recognize that the new use may trigger the need for site improvements. Sometimes required improvements require the expertise of specific design professionals and add cost to the project. *(A common example of this is an expanded parking lot to service the new use, which could trigger stormwater or critical areas review depending on the extent of the change and characteristics of the site).*
- It is important to understand that the current standards are not waived just because there is an existing building and site layout. Please evaluate whether the change in use is feasible early in the planning process based on the changes it may trigger.

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Permitting process:

- Prior to applying for a Change of Use permit,
 - Confirm the proposed use is allowed per the permitted use tables in KCC 21A.08, and
 - Identify any site changes that are required to meet current zoning standards.
- Submit application documents through MyBuildingPermit.com.
- Your application submittal will be screened for completeness.
- Plan review will be completed by applicable disciplines such as building, zoning, engineering.
- You may receive a request for information from review staff. Your revised documents should be uploaded through the MyBuildingPermit.com portal.
- Once plans are approved, a notice is sent to the applicant.
- Fees are paid and any conditions required prior to issuance must be satisfied.
- A permit issued to authorize work to proceed as shown on the plans.
- Inspections are required as work progresses.
- When work is completed and a final inspection is approved you may be issued a Certificate of Occupancy.

What is a Certificate of Occupancy?

The International Building Code (IBC) classifies all buildings by type of “occupancy” or use. There are many classifications in the IBC, but they all fall into 10 general categories, which are further divided into sub-categories:

- A—Assembly
- B—Business
- E—Educational
- F—Factory and Industrial
- H—High Hazard
- I—Institutional
- M—Mercantile
- R—Residential
- S—Storage
- U—Utility

A Certificate of Occupancy is issued to identify a building or individual tenant space has been inspected by the building official and no code violations have been found.

Note: Issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy cannot be construed as approval of a violation of the provisions of the building codes and/or other ordinances and regulations of King County.

Application submittal requirements:

1. Application completed on the [MyBuildingPermit.com](https://mybuildingpermit.com) web portal.
2. **Construction Documents / Complete Set of Plans (pdf) including:** (See [Electronic Plan Requirements](#))
 - (a) **Cover sheet** with the following information:
 - A clear statement describing the scope of the work to be done
 - List applicable codes
 - Indicate Existing Building Code (IEBC) Compliance Method (Prescriptive, Work Area, or Performance Method)
 - The tenant’s or building owners name and contact information

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- The applicant's name and contact information
- Property Tax Account Number
- The permit or application number for any permits related to the tenant space or shell
- The building construction type and occupancy classification and mixed occupancy compliance method, if more than one occupancy in the building
- The specific fire safety information about the building (whether it is sprinklered, alarmed, monitored, or has fixed systems, etc.)
- The square footage of the tenant space
- Required setbacks (KCC 21A.12.030-040 or KCC 21A.12.220)
- Parking Calculations, including accessibility, electric, compact, car/vanpool, loading and or drive-through stalls that are required. (KCC 21A.18)
- Bicycle Parking Calculations (KCC 21A.18)
- Existing and proposed impervious surface (KCC 21A.12.030-040)
- Floor-area-ratio (FAR) (KCC 21A.12.040)
- Rate of storage space (the area where each space is located) for recyclables and garbage provided for the site. (KCC 21A.14.210), and

(b) Site plan drawn to scale, with dimensions indicated that matches the legal description, including the following:

- Location of all property boundary lines, buildings, parking, bicycle parking, walkways, setbacks, garbage and recyclable storage points, driveways, and general landscape areas.
- Location and type of impervious surfaces identified
- Landscape
- North Directional Arrow
- Scale Bar
- Location of the tenant space within the building

(c) Architectural* plans drawn to scale, with dimensions indicated, and as a group showing the following:

- The drawing scale
- The floor plan of existing space when demolition is proposed
- The floor plans of proposed space (including walls, doors, door swings, fixed equipment, and fixtures) that differentiate those proposed from the existing construction
- The uses of all areas identified, including the uses of adjacent tenant spaces
- The room and floor finishes (carpet, vinyl, paint, etc.)
- The size of doors and proposed fire-resistive rating when rating is required
- The section through corridor construction when corridor is required to be one-hour fire resistive
- The details or cross-sections of walls and ceilings
- The barrier-free accessibility to and within the space
- Location and height of all shelving / racking
- The uses, storage, or processing of flammable or combustible liquids or hazardous materials
- When modifications are made that effect the building thermal envelope, plans should include:

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- Window and door schedules, with u-values and solar heat gain coefficients (SHGC)
- Wall and/or building sections with insulation values
- Provide means of egress plan with occupant loads, exit signs, and egress illumination
- Illustrate size and location of portable fire extinguishers
- Identify fire-resistance rated construction locations and assemblies

(d) Structural plans

- Foundation plan(s).
- Structural framing plans for all floors and roofs.
- Construction details with section cuts identifying where they can be located on the plans.

(e) Mechanical and/or plumbing plans**

- Plan views with existing and proposed equipment/appliances, ductwork, and fixtures clearly labeled
- Ventilation and exhaust airflow rate calculations for all spaces altered
- Equipment schedules
- Energy code compliance notes, including commissioning requirements as applicable

(f) Electrical plans*** showing compliance with the Washington State Energy Code (WSEC) and King County amendments. Includes lighting schedules, lighting plans and controls, power plans, controlled receptacles.

(g) Civil plans* Civil plans will be required if the proposal includes or requires a change that:

- **Clearing/Grading:** Refer to page 1 of the [Clearing and Grading Permits Information](#) handout to determine if civil plans related to clearing/grading are required.
- **Drainage Civil Plans:** Refer to “Section 1.1.1 Projects Requiring Drainage Review” of the [2021 Surface Water Design Manual \(page 1-12\)](#) to determine if drainage is required.

*** If required, please refer to pg. 9 of 13 of the [Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits \(Bulletin # 8\)](#) for specifics on what will be needed on the Civil Engineer Site Plans*

*** Please note that the project may require a separate [Right-of-Way Use \(ROW\)](#) permit application if any of the required on site improvements require work within the ROW.*

(h) Landscape plans*, by a certified landscape architect

- Landscape plans and a Landscape [Bond Quantity Worksheet Form](#) will be required if the proposal includes or requires a change that to the existing on-site landscape.

*** Please refer to pg. 8 of 13 of the [Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits \(Bulletin # 8\)](#) and the [Zoning Code: Landscaping Requirements \(Bulletin # 22\)](#) for specifics on what is required as part of the landscape plans.*

- **Alternatives to New Landscape Plan:** If you feel that the existing landscaping for the site is sufficient and exceeds that required by King County Code of KCC 21A.16, you have the option of submitting a landscape memo from a certified landscape architect that demonstrates how the existing landscape exceeds that of the KCC 21A.16 and provide sufficient documentation to support this claim.

3. Structural Calculations

- Engineering calculations for gravity and lateral loads (wind and/or seismic) and special connections.

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- The plans and calculations must specify all design parameters as listed in International Building Code (IBC) Section 1603.
 - The plans and calculations must specify all special inspection, structural observation, and quality assurance requirements of IBC Sections 1704 and 1705.
4. **Energy code compliance forms:**
 - Building Envelope Summary, for projects with alternations to building envelope
 - Lighting Budget Calculation Form, where the use in a space changes from one use to another use in the lighting power allowance tables of the energy code
 5. **Mechanical equipment specifications and installation instructions**, unless mechanical will be under a separate permit.
 6. **Critical Areas Assessment**
 - A Critical areas review will be required if the proposal includes or requires a change that expands the on-site development or impervious surface when the site has or is within proximity to an ecological or geological critical area(s). If this is the case, a critical areas assessment or report will be required. This will require you to hire a certified ecologist and/or geologist to conduct this critical areas assessment.
 - ** *For additional details about critical areas, please refer to information handouts related to critical areas on the [King County Permitting Division Information & Forms webpage](#).*
 - ** *A [Critical Areas Designation \(CAD\)](#) approved by the King County Permitting Division can be provide in place of a critical areas assessment.*
 7. [Sewer Availability Certificate](#) or [Application for Health Department Approval of Building Permit](#) is using an existing on-site septic system
 8. [Water Availability Certificate](#) or [Application for Health Department Approval of Building Permit](#) is using an existing on-site or community well.
 9. **Contractor's valid Registration Number will be required.**
 10. **A portion of the fees will be due at application and the remainder when the permit is issued.**

Food handling establishments

Proof of Public Health approval or an application submittal to Public Health is required with a building application submittal if it is for a food handling establishment within one of these categories: schools, churches, restaurants, groceries, mini-markets, hospitals, taverns, or nursing homes. A menu and full set of plans are also required when food service preparation or sales occur.

Other requirements

- A licensed architect is **required** when tenant improvements take place where the work area exceeds 4,000 sq ft. In smaller work areas within buildings greater than 4,000 sq ft, an architect **may** be required if the work affects structural systems, fire-resistance rated construction, or other life safety elements ([RCW 18.08.410](#)). Consult plans examination staff with questions. If a project does not require a design professional, it is still highly recommended.

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- Compliance with **plumbing and ***electrical provisions of **energy code only** is reviewed by Permitting.

What Other Permits May Be Required?

Other permits that may be required include the following:

- [Mechanical](#) permit
- [Sign Permit](#)
- Installation or revision of a [sprinkler system](#) and/or [fire alarm system](#)
- [Hood permits](#) and fire suppression system permits for hoods (often required in food service uses).
- [Electrical Permit from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries](#) ; 206-835-1000
- [Plumbing Permit from the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health](#) ; 206-477-0850

Additional Resources

King County [Department of Local Services, Permitting Division](#)

- [Property Research Guide](#) and [Property Research Video](#)
- [Energy Codes](#) webpage
- [Building and Fire Codes](#) webpage
- [Fees](#)