



TECHNICAL BULLETIN
Planning & Development Services
Building Inspection Division

TOPIC: Converting Residential Buildings to Commercial Use

This Technical Bulletin is intended to provide contractors, developers and business operators with information related to converting a Residential Building to a Commercial Use.

When a structure originally constructed to be used as a residential building is to be converted for commercial use, there may be extensive modifications needed in order for a Certificate of Occupancy to be issued. The building codes require the building to be modified to satisfy all code requirements for the proposed commercial use. The zoning ordinance will require the addition of adequate parking, associated landscaping, buffering and screening from any adjacent residential properties.

Please note: ***This guide is not intended to be all inclusive but rather a bullet point listing of some of the more common code items.*** Building and site modifications will require a building permit. The application and plan review process will specifically identify all development regulations and modifications necessary to convert a residential building to a commercial use.

1. Property must be platted. Purchasing additional property for inclusion in the site will require a replat.
2. Property must be zoned or rezoned for the proposed use:
 - Parking must be provided for the proposed use including handicap parking
 - All parking and maneuvering must be concrete or asphalt
 - Parking lots require landscaping
 - Parking lots with maneuvering and access aisles are required
 - Parking lots are required to be provided with minimum lighting levels for safety
 - Drive approach may require modification due to location and width
 - Location for dumpster and screening must be provided
 - Screening and buffering from adjacent residential properties may be required
 - Substitute Landscape Plan and/or Planned Development may be required to facilitate the conversion
3. Building Code Issues:
 - Accessible routes to building and public right of way must be provided
 - Engineered site grading plans required to ensure that surface water is directed properly

- Building type of construction may require some fire resistive modifications based on the classification of the occupancy type
- Exterior building walls and openings (doors and windows) may now be too close to the property lines and require additional fire resistive modifications
- Building entrances must be retrofitted for accessibility requirements
- Building restrooms must be retrofitted for accessibility requirements to include
 - Elongated open front seat front for public water closets
 - Handicap accessible fixtures
 - Nonabsorbent surfaces on floors and walls
 - Turning radius/clear floor space
- Building means of egress system (exiting system) must be retrofitted for new occupancy type
- New exhaust and fresh air make up requirements for the non-residential occupancy
- Air conditioning system may require modifications
- Overhead electrical service drops may have to be raised over areas now subject to vehicular traffic
- Food service establishments have additional retrofit requirements such as:
 - Backflow protection on incoming water supply
 - Grease Interceptors on sewer line
 - Test well on sewer line
 - Commercial kitchen exhaust hood requirements
- Energy codes may establish restrictions on lighting and glazing areas
- Newly calculated occupant load based on proposed occupancy type may require the installation of fire sprinkler/fire alarm systems

The general development process steps, as applicable:

1. Plat the property
2. Rezone (if necessary)
3. Apply for Commercial Site Plan Approval
4. Apply for Commercial Building Permit
5. Apply for Certificate of Occupancy

For any information, please visit the One Start Counter on the 2nd floor of City Hall where you may walk in and visit with a Planner, Engineer, and Plans Examiner without any appointments.

For further information regarding platting or zoning for your property, please contact the Planner of The Day at (817) 459-6502; or, go to the Planning Division web page at <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/pds/platting/> for Platting <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/pds/zoning/> for Zoning.

For information regarding building codes or permits, please contact the Plans Examiner of The Day at (817) 459-6502; or, go to the Building Inspections Division web page at <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/pds/building-inspections/>.