



PROSSER *Washington*
INCORPORATED 1899

Change of Occupancy



City of Prosser

Building Department

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Introduction

Starting your own business or moving to a new location is an exciting endeavor for a business owner, before deciding on a location you should first make sure that the building is the best fit for your type of business. Not all buildings are designed equal, this is especially true for older buildings which may be over a hundred years old. The International Existing Building Code provides various requirements for things such as building accessibility, egress, and many other factors, which make up a safe building.

Typically there are little to no changes required when a new occupancy (i.e. business) wishes to move into a building which previously housed an occupancy class/type that is the same. For example, a restaurant moving into a building that was home to a previous restaurant, or an office moving into a space, which was previously home to another office.

The City of Prosser requires all business owners who wish to occupy an existing building and intend to utilize the building for a use that is different than the previous occupant(s), to apply for a change of use and comply with the International Existing Building Code 2015 (IEBC 2015).

Occupancy Classifications

The International Building Code defines many different types of occupancy classifications as well as their corresponding uses. Below are just a few of the examples of occupancy classifications, each business can be categorized with one of the occupancy classifications, and use associated with that classification.

- ASSEMBLY GROUP A
- BUSINESS GROUP B
- EDUCATIONAL GROUP E
- FACTORY GROUP F
- HIGH-HAZARD GROUP H
- INSTITUTIONAL GROUP I
- MERCANTILE GROUP M
- RESIDENTIAL GROUP R
- STORAGE GROUP S
- UTILITY & MISC. GROUP U

Common Changes Required Before Occupancy

Every building is very different and unique, it would be impossible to list every requirement possible based on every situation. However, below you can find a short list of the most common changes that business owners are required to make prior to occupancy of a building.

- Barrier Free Access
- Minimum Plumbing Facilities
- Exit Facilities (Life Safety)
- Fire Resistive Elements (Fire Safety)
- Parking Requirements
- Landscaping Requirements
- Signage Regulation

Barrier Free Access

Changes that allow access to the new use by those in wheel chairs or otherwise physically challenged is required under state and federal law. Upgrades could include ramps, wider doors, restroom upgrades, parking areas, signage.

Minimum Plumbing Facilities

The minimum number of plumbing facilities is determined based on the occupant load of the occupancy. Additional restroom facilities must meet the requirements for new construction.

Fire Resistive Elements

Depending on the location of the building on the site, exterior walls and opening in exterior walls may require fire protection that was not previously required. In addition, a fire suppression system (sprinklers) may be required or modified to fit the proposed use.

Parking Requirements

The zoning code contains specific requirements for the amount and location of parking required for each land use zone. Paving of parking areas or adding additional parking may be required.

Landscaping Requirements

Required landscaping must be installed to meet the criteria established by the zoning code.

Signage Regulation

Review of all signage is required. Proposed signs should be submitted by separate permit to the City of Prosser Building Department.

Approval by the Building Official

A change of occupancy classification or change of occupancy of any building requires the approval of the Building Official according to section 1001.2, International Existing Building Code 2015 Edition. In order to secure that approval, several areas of the building may need structural changes, additional fire protection, or zoning code upgrades as required by the code for the proposed occupancy.

Don't hold up your business license approval by not submitting an application for a change of occupancy classification and making the necessary changes to your building. During the business license approval process the Building Official will verify that the building for the new business has either submitting, and completed the necessary work to bring the building into compliance per the International Existing Building Code, or that the building already meets the requirements for the business.

Applying for a Change of Occupancy

Business owners are encouraged to contact the City of Prosser Building Department with any questions regarding a change of use or occupancy classification. Otherwise the business owner can fill out a Change of Occupancy Classification which is available in person at City Hall, or fill out the application online via the [Building Department Page](#) on the City of Prosser website.

The applicant must secure the services of a person or firm familiar with the current edition of IEBC, IBC, IMC, UPC, IFC, (including pertinent State amendments), and the Washington State Energy Code to inspect the building and prepare plans showing compliance with current code requirements for the proposed use. In buildings that are over 4000 square feet in area the plans are required to be drawn by a Washington State Licensed Architect.

The applicant will apply for a change of occupancy or change of occupancy classification permit for the proposed change of occupancy. If no construction is required for the conversion only plans demonstrating compliance are required. If construction is required to convert the building for the proposed change of occupancy a complete set of construction drawings are required as well as plans demonstrating compliance with all current codes for the proposed use in the unmodified areas of the building.