



## Change in Use or Occupancy

The purpose of this handout is to assist the public in navigating the requirements and the permitting process related to a change of use or occupancy. The information provided is intended to offer an overview of the most common items that should be considered by the applicant when undergoing a change in use or occupancy.

**Occupancy classification** is the formal designation of the primary purpose of the building, structure or portion thereof. Structures are classified into one or more of the occupancy groups based on the nature of the hazards and risks to building occupants associated with the intended use of the building or structure.

Occupancy classification per the California Building Code	Group	Examples of occupancy
Assembly	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5	Gathering of persons for purposes such as civic, social or religious functions; recreation, food or drink consumption or awaiting transportation
Business	B	Office buildings, banks, restaurants with less than 50 occupants
Educational	E	Schools; use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, by six or more persons at any one time for educational purposes through the 12th grade.
Factory and industrial	F1 & F2	Assembling, disassembling, fabricating, finishing, manufacturing, packaging, repair or processing
Hazardous	H1, H2, H3, H4, H5	Manufacturing, processing, generation or storage of materials that constitute a physical or health hazard in quantities in excess of those allowed in control areas
Institutional	I1, I2, I3, I4	Facilities where care or supervision is provided to persons who are or are incapable of self-preservation without physical assistance or in which persons are detained for penal or correctional purposes or in which the liberty of the occupants is restricted.
Mercantile	M	Retail stores, markets, sales rooms
Residential	R1, R2, R3, R3.1, R4	Apartments, condos, single family homes, work-live units
Storage	S-1, &S-2	Storage that is not classified as a hazardous occupancy
Utility	U	Carports, private garages, sheds, retaining walls

The [Business and Professions Code section 5538](#) requires a licensed design professional to prepare plans that includes a code analysis, identifies existing conditions and proposed alterations necessary to address the code requirements for the change in occupancy to bring the building into full code compliance.

## Things to consider when undergoing a Change in Use or Occupancy

Different occupancy groups represent varying levels of hazard and risk to building occupants and adjacent properties.

- When a change of occupancy results in a structure being reclassified to a higher risk category, the structure shall conform to the seismic requirements for a new structure of the higher risk category.

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- The various building occupancies and intended use have different requirements for the number of required exits, the number of restrooms, and fire sprinklers.
- Type of construction.
- Fire resistance of exterior walls and wall opening protection based on proximity to property lines.
- Allowable floor area, allowable maximum height, maximum number of stories permitted and automatic fire-sprinkler requirements.
- Occupancy separation requirements; the concept of occupancy separation is to separate occupancy groups with a lower fire load from those with higher fire loads.
- Disabled access requirements:
  - When the adjusted construction cost of alterations, structural repairs, or additions to existing buildings and facilities **EXCEEDS** the current years valuation threshold (2024= \$203,399) an accessible path of travel to the specific area of alteration or addition shall be provided. All elements along the path of travel shall meet full compliance with the current edition of the California Building Code.
  - When the adjusted construction cost of alterations, structural repairs, or additions to existing buildings and facilities **DOES NOT** exceed the current years valuation threshold (2024= \$200,399), the cost of compliance shall be limited to 20% of the adjusted construction cost of alterations, structural repairs or additions.
- For more information on the circumstances under which a certificate of occupancy is issued, please refer to our [Certificate of Occupancy Issuance](#) form on the Building Division webpage.

Change in use or occupancy projects that meet all of the following conditions are not required to submit plans prepared by a licensed engineer or architect.

1. Projects with no physical alterations or new construction of permanently installed fixtures and equipment.
2. Projects where the occupant load; the anticipated number of people in the space will stay the same or decreases.
3. Projects where the occupancy classification remains the same. This classification defines the requirements for fire and life safety, such as the number of required exits.
4. Projects that comply with items 1-3 above are still required to obtain a business license.
  - A business license is issued once the Change of Use is inspected and occupancy is granted by both the Fire Department and Building Division.

## Submittal Requirements

### SITE PLAN

- Site address and tenant suite number.
- Property lines, streets and alleys, location of buildings on the site.
- Outline of the building with area of tenant space highlighted and suite number noted.
- Show all existing buildings. Indicate the use, type, number of stories and number of dwelling units for all buildings. Show lot size, streets, alleys, loading zone and parking areas
- Parking lot areas, including number of parking stalls, stall width, length, and angle of parking. Indicate standard, compact and accessible parking spaces. Provide parking analysis (if additional parking is required).

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- Exterior accessible path of travel including existing and proposed accessible parking stalls, ramps, crosswalks at vehicular drive aisles, pedestrian access from the public street/sidewalk, building entrance, signage, etc.
- Indicate how Trash and Recycling are handled by the building owner and show trash enclosure and dumpster locations.
- Location of existing and proposed signs relating to the tenant space.

### ARCHITECTURAL PLANS

- Specify building type of construction. (e.g. Type VA, VB, IIIB, etc.)
- Specify occupancy(ies) within the tenant space, adjacent tenant spaces and common areas. (e.g. B, M, A2, A3, S1, etc.)
- Note if the building/tenant space is provided with a fire sprinkler system and/or fire alarm system.
- Note the total square footage of tenant space and number of employees.

### FLOOR PLAN

- Show existing and proposed area of remodel. Indicate use of all areas and rooms
- Show all building entrances, exits, corridors, hallways, doors (including size and direction of swing), and windows.
- Show all existing and proposed partitions.
- Wall locations (load bearing and non-load bearing).
- Show locations of all fire rated construction, such as: fire area, fire barrier walls, fire doors, etc.
- Seating plan
- Show location of the fire alarm panel, pull stations, fire extinguishers.
- Show all fixed equipment: counters, shelving, racks, tables, seats, plumbing fixtures, etc.

### Storage Racks and Shelving

Height of highest beam (1)	Permit	Layout plan (3)	Seismic Anchorage	Plans & structural calculations
Up to 5'-9"	Not required (2)	Required	Not required	Not required
Over 5'-9" to 8'-0"	Required	Required	Required (4)	Not required
Over 8'-0" (6)	Required	Required	Required (5)	Required (5)

#### Footnotes:

1. Height of racks is measured from floor to the top of highest beam.
2. A separate permit is not required for racks up to 5'-9", however if being installed as part of a tenant improvement, the architectural floor plan for the T.I. shall show the rack layout/location.
3. A scaled, complete floor plan with dimensions showing layout and type of storage racks, aisle widths, and existing elements.
4. Detail and specify seismic anchorage to be used. Detail anchor diameter, embedment, quantity, and manufacturers specifications.
5. Structural plans, calculations, and anchorage details must be prepared by a licensed engineer or architect for racks over 8'-0". (ASCE 7 Section 15.5.3). Complete rack engineering is required, including beam to post, post to base plate, longitudinal and transverse diagonal braces, bolted and welded connections, and anchorage to concrete floor. Submit rack installation drawings including floor plan, rack framing system, member connections, and anchorage details.
6. Storage Rack Height 12' and greater (High Piled Rack Storage shall): In addition to items above, High Piled Rack Storage shall comply with the 2022 CBC, Section 910.2.2 and the 2022 California Fire Code.

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