

General Guidelines For Newly Proposed Businesses in the City of Sierra Vista

Below are some basic guidelines that may be applicable to any prospective business planning to start up and move into an existing space or building. In order to obtain a **Business License** and **Certificate of Occupancy**, each occupancy space and tenant improvement must be evaluated independently based on the type of use, proposed improvements and building construction.

1. Prior to moving into a tenant space, a zoning compliance application is required to be completed and submitted to the office of Community Development and be signed by a representative of the Zoning, Fire, Building and Public Works Divisions. This typically requires an inspection of the property with the owner or owner's representative and the prospective user to determine the proposed use and potential renovations, if applicable.
2. If the prospective tenant is not proposing any renovations to the existing space and there is no change of the use, division, or classification of occupancy, the inspections are still necessary to determine if the existing structure is safe and meets the code requirements under which it was originally designed. Any unsafe or obvious code violations would still have to be addressed prior to obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy.
3. The Building Administrator may require that a dimensioned floor plan and a basic code analysis be submitted for evaluation if such building or space has no recorded history of:
 - Past modifications
 - Has been modified from its original layout
 - Changed from its Intended use
 - Has been vacant for an extended period of time
4. Prior to any renovations to the proposed tenant space, detailed construction plans and a building permit application shall be submitted for review and approval with the Building Department. Once the building documents are approved, a building permit can be issued and renovation can begin.

5. Depending on the extent of the renovation work, construction documents may be required to be prepared by a design professional registered in the state of Arizona.
6. A local amendment requires that all tenant spaces shall be separated by a minimum of a 1-hour fire partition at tenant separation walls extending to the roof sheathing/roof decking. All tenant separation walls must be clearly identified on the floor plan.
7. Another local code amendment to the IBC allows for one public/employee restroom to be permitted where the occupant load does not exceed 50. Occupant loads are determined by Table 1004.1.1 of the IBC. The table specifies the floor area required per occupant and is based on use and classification.
8. Chapter 34 of the 2006 International Building Code requires that at least 20% of the total cost of improvements be put toward ADA improvements. This may include: upgrading a handicap ramp at the entry door, interior accessible route to any primary functions, ADA compliant toilet room(s) etc. and is dependent on the overall scope of the project.
9. Section 3406 specifies that “No change shall be made in the use or occupancy of any building that would place the building in a different division of the same group or occupancy or in a different group of occupancies, unless such building is made to comply with the requirements of the code for such division or group of occupancy”. Example; if a previous retail space is now going to be converted to a restaurant; this would be considered a complete change of use and would require all aspects of the space to meet the code requirements for a restaurant or A-2 occupancy classification.

It is our hope that this information will be of assistance to you, to help guide you through the process of obtaining a Business License and Certificate of Occupancy. This is not an all inclusive list of requirements, but is provided to help you further understand what may, or may not be, required before signing a lease agreement and opening your business. If you have further questions, please feel to contact us at the Department of Community Development at 520-458-3315.

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