

## CUSTOMER INFORMATION BULLETIN

# CONVERTING HOUSES TO NONRESIDENTIAL USES

### Planning Division

1055 South Grady Way - Renton, WA 98057  
(425)-430-7200 | [www.rentonwa.gov](http://www.rentonwa.gov)

This publication is offered as a general guideline to the permit process involved in converting single family dwellings to offices, retail stores, restaurants or other similar non-residential uses.

Actual projects may involve special circumstances not covered here; please discuss the particulars of your project with City staff.

### PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Your first inquiries concerning conversions of residential buildings to nonresidential uses should be directed to the Customer Service Counter (425) 430-7200.

Planning staff will help you determine if the proposed use is allowed by Zoning Regulations, the required amount of on-site parking and whether landscaping or other site improvements need to be incorporated into the project. The Planning Department also administers the City's sign regulations.

If you plan to conduct a business from your home and the residence remains the primary use, you may be considered as a "home occupation". Home occupations do not require a full-use conversion process; please contact Planning staff for additional information.

### PUBLIC WORKS REQUIREMENTS

Public Works (425) 430-7266 is responsible for reviewing water use, sewer connections, lot drainage, access to the site from streets, and for regulating utility easements. Water meters are normally required when dwellings are converted to nonresidential uses and transportation impact fees may be due. Public Works should be consulted to determine if changes to site drainage, driveways, easements or utility services will be necessary for your project.

### HEALTH DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS

Please contact King County Environmental Health (206) 296-4920 for an explanation of pertinent health regulations if you are contemplating serving or preparing food in a converted dwelling. Building permits for dwelling conversions involving food service to the public cannot be issued until the Health Department has reviewed and approved the project.



## **FIRE DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS**

The Fire Department will review your application for compliance with the Uniform Fire Code. Please contact Fire Prevention Bureau (425) 430-7000 to discuss Fire Code requirements that may apply to your project. At the very least you will be required to install portable fire extinguishers.

## **BUILDING REQUIREMENTS**

The Building Division (425) 430-7200 is responsible for ensuring that building projects comply with the Uniform building, Plumbing and Mechanical Codes, the National Electrical and the State's Non-Residential Energy Code and Barrier-free Accessibility regulations. A building plans examiner is usually available to discuss your project with you Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Dwellings must usually be altered to one degree or another to make them suitable for commercial use, and permits are required. Brochures explaining the permit process are available on the literature rack in Development Services; please feel free to help yourself to these.

Providing barrier-free access and meeting fire protection standards are the two Building Code requirements responsible for the majority of necessary building alterations:

## **BARRIER-FREE STANDARDS**

Barrier-free parking and barrier-free access to the building must be provided when converting a dwelling to another use. Usually a ramp must be constructed to provide access to the building. New or remodeled restrooms must meet barrier-free standards, as must entry doors and service counters. Information explaining barrier-free requirements is available at the Development Services customer counter.

## **FIRE PROTECTION STANDARDS**

Exterior walls may require modifications to provide one-hour fire protection, depending upon both how far the building is from property lines and its intended post-conversion use. Some one-hour exterior walls require parapets and protected openings; in some circumstances openings in exterior walls must be filled in.

Food service establishments often require special fire safety hoods at stoves and other kitchen equipment.

Finally, basements and attics are generally required to be separated from other building areas with one-hour construction.



## **BUSINESS LICENSE REQUIREMENTS**

You will also need a City of Renton Business License. Please call (425) 430-6851 for further information or visit the City's web site at [www.rentonwa.gov](http://www.rentonwa.gov) and click on "site index" and then "Business Licenses".

