



Tenant Improvements

What is a Tenant Improvement permit?

- A Tenant Improvement permit is required to make changes to the interior space of an existing nonresidential structure but does not include creating any new floor area or changing the use of a space.
- May include structural work and/or exterior changes but may not include any new floor area or building additions. If scope of exterior changes is extensive, additional reviews, fees and/or permits may be required.

Apply On-Line at [MyBuildingPermit.com](https://www.mybuildingpermit.com)

Select: King County | Building | Nonresidential | Tenant Improvement



The permitting process includes the following steps:

- Application documents are submitted and evaluated to determine if it includes all the necessary information.
- Complete applications are reviewed to verify code compliance.
- Approved permits are issued to authorize work to proceed as shown on the plans.
- Inspections are required as work progresses.
- When all work is completed and a final inspection is approved, a Certificate of Occupancy is issued if needed.

What is a Certificate of Occupancy?

The International Building Code (IBC) classifies all buildings by type of “occupancy” or use. There are many classifications in the IBC, but they all fall into 10 general categories, which are further divided into sub-categories:

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|----------------------------|-------------------|
| ○ A—Assembly | ○ I—Institutional |
| ○ B—Business | ○ M—Mercantile |
| ○ E—Educational | ○ R—Residential |
| ○ F—Factory and Industrial | ○ S—Storage |
| ○ H—High Hazard | ○ U—Utility |

A Certificate of Occupancy is issued to identify a building or individual tenant space has been inspected by the building official and no code violations have been found.

Note: Issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy cannot be construed as approval of a violation of the provisions of the building codes and/or other ordinances and regulations of King County.

Tenant Improvement Permits, continued

What if a new tenant is moving into a space that was occupied by another tenant?

- A Tenant Improvement Permit may not be required if a new tenant is moving into an existing space that has a Certificate of Occupancy for their proposed use.
- To qualify for this provision, the use and the occupancy classification on the Certificate of Occupancy must remain the same.
- The space configuration and exiting must also remain the same.
- If a prospective tenant wants to change the current use, they should check to see if their proposed use is allowed in the applicable zone.

Change of use and building additions

- If a building or tenant space is undergoing a change of use, or new floor area is added, additional requirements not outlined in this information sheet may be required.
- Changing the use may result in changes in the number of required parking spaces and changes to the building to meet additional Building and Fire Code requirements.
- Parking requirements are included in Chapter 21A.18 of the King County Code (KCC), and other zoning requirements may be found in subsequent Chapters of Title 21A of the KCC.

Food handling establishments

Proof of Public Health approval or an application submittal to [Public Health](#) is required with a building application submittal if it is for a food handling establishment within one of these categories: schools, churches, restaurants, groceries, mini-markets, hospitals, taverns, or nursing homes. A menu and full set of plans are also required when food service preparation or sales occur.

What is required to apply for a Tenant Improvement permit?

1. Application. This is completed on the [MyBuildingPermit.com](#) web portal.
2. Construction Documents / Complete Set of Plans (pdf) including: (See [Electronic Plan Requirements](#))

(a) Cover sheet with the following information:

- A clear statement describing the scope of the work to be done
- List applicable codes
- Indicate Existing Building Code (IEBC) Compliance Method (Prescriptive, Work Area, or Performance Method)
- The tenant's name and contact information
- The applicant's name and contact information
- Property Tax Account Number
- The permit or application number for any permits related to the tenant space or shell
- The building construction type and occupancy classification and mixed occupancy compliance method, if more than one occupancy in the building
- The specific fire safety information about the building (whether it is sprinklered, alarmed, monitored, or has fixed systems, etc.)
- The square footage of the tenant space; and

Tenant Improvement Permits, continued

(b) Site plan drawn to scale, with dimensions indicated, that matches the legal description, including the following:

- Location of all property boundary lines, setbacks, buildings, parking, and driveways.
- North Directional Arrow
- Location of the tenant space within the building

(c) Architectural* plans drawn to scale, with dimensions indicated, and as a group showing the following:

- The drawing scale
- The floor plan of existing space
- The floor plans of proposed space (including walls, doors, door swings, fixed equipment, and fixtures) that differentiate those proposed from the existing construction
- The uses of all areas identified, including the uses of adjacent tenant spaces
- The room and floor finishes (carpet, vinyl, paint, etc.)
- The size of doors and proposed fire-resistive rating when rating is required
- The section through corridor construction when corridor is required to be one-hour fire resistive
- The details or cross-sections of walls and ceilings
- The barrier-free accessibility to and within the space
- Location and height of all shelving / racking
- The uses, storage, or processing of flammable or combustible liquids or hazardous materials
- When modifications are made that effect the building thermal envelope, plans should include:
 - Window and door schedules, with u-values and solar heat gain coefficients (SHGC)
 - Wall and/or building sections with insulation values
- Provide means of egress plan with occupant loads, exit signs, and egress illumination
- Illustrate size and location of portable fire extinguishers
- Identify fire-resistance rated construction locations and assemblies

(d) Structural plans

- Foundation plan(s).
- Structural framing plans for all floors and roofs.
- Construction details with section cuts identifying where they can be located on the plans.

(e) Mechanical and/or plumbing plans**

- Plan views with existing and proposed equipment/appliances, ductwork, and fixtures clearly labeled
- Ventilation and exhaust airflow rate calculations for all spaces altered
- Equipment schedules
- Energy code compliance notes, including commissioning requirements as applicable

(f) Electrical plans*** showing compliance with the Washington State Energy Code (WSEC) and King County amendments. Includes lighting schedules, lighting plans and controls, power plans, controlled receptacles.

3. Structural Calculations

Tenant Improvement Permits, continued

- Engineering calculations for gravity and lateral loads (wind and/or seismic) and special connections.
 - The plans and calculations must specify all design parameters as listed in International Building Code (IBC) Section 1603.
 - The plans and calculations must specify all special inspection, structural observation, and quality assurance requirements of IBC Sections 1704 and 1705.
4. Energy code compliance forms:
 - [Building Envelope Summary](#) for projects with alterations to building envelope
 - [Lighting Budget Calculation Form](#) for projects with alterations to building envelope
 5. Mechanical equipment specifications and installation instructions unless mechanical will be under a separate permit.
 6. If customers are applying for a Tenant Improvement application that includes structural work, the plans should reflect sufficient structural details for the proposed work.
 7. Contractor's valid Registration Number will be required.
 8. A portion of the fees will be due at application and the remainder when the permit is issued.

Other requirements

- A licensed architect is **required** when tenant improvements take place where the work area exceeds 4,000 sq ft. In smaller work areas within buildings greater than 4,000 sq ft, an architect **may** be required if the work affects structural systems, fire-resistance rated construction, or other life safety elements ([RCW 18.08.410](#)). Consult plans examination staff with questions. If a project does not require a design professional, it is still highly recommended.
- Compliance with **plumbing and ***electrical provisions of **energy code only** is reviewed by Permitting.

What Other Permits May Be Required?

Other permits that may be required include the following:

- [Mechanical](#) permit
- [Sign Permit](#)
- Installation or revision of a [sprinkler system](#) and/or [fire alarm system](#)
- [Hood permits](#) and fire suppression system permits for hoods (often required in food service uses).
- [Electrical Permit from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries](#) ; 206-835-1000
- [Plumbing Permit from the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health](#) ; 206-477-0850

Additional Resources

King County [Department of Local Services, Permitting Division](#)

- [Property Research Guide](#) and [Property Research Video](#)
- [Fees](#)
- [Energy Codes](#) webpage
- To contact us email permitquestions@kingcounty.gov or call 206-296-6600.