



City of Greensboro: Development Services
Residential Change of Use
300 W. Washington St.
Greensboro, NC 27405
Building Inspections (336) 373-2155
Fax (336) 333-6056
Commercial Plans Coordinator (336) 373-2598



For review status:
www.greensboro-nc.gov/planreview

Each application is different with regard to compliance with building codes and city ordinances. This list is intended to cover the most common items needing attention when a building is changed from a dwelling or residence to a commercial use. Close attention should be paid to Zoning and Planning ordinances and to parking requirements.

The Plans Coordinator in the Building Inspections office can provide preliminary guidance and suggestions before the permit application is started.

Building Inspections

1. Means of Egress – Evacuation Safety

- Exits: The minimum number varies with the use of the building and its size. A second floor may require a **fire protected exit**.
- Lighted exit signs will be required
- Corridors must be a minimum of 36 inches wide
- Steps and landings require guardrails and handrails

2. Floor Loads

- The floors and floor supports must be in sound structural condition. The building inspector may require an inspection and certification by a professional engineer.

3. Plumbing and Toilet Facilities

- An RPZ (Reduced Pressure Zone) backflow prevention device will be required within 10 feet of the water meter in an above-ground enclosure. Contact Water Resources (Ken Jackson) at 373-2055. Show the RPZ and its location on the site plans.
- In buildings with fewer than 25 occupants, one toilet room with a toilet and lavatory is acceptable. Show toilets and fixtures on the plans.
- A drinking fountain is required for 15 occupants or more. This is a bi-level fountain with high and low units. Show on plans.

4. Electrical System

- The electrical system must be in good working order. New work must comply with the current code.

5. HVAC and Mechanical Units

- Outdoor air ventilation is required.
 - For mechanical ventilation, show the HVAC unit's ventilation capacity.
 - For natural ventilation, show the openable area to the outdoors – doors, windows, louvers. The openings must be at least 4 percent of the floor area.

6. Accessibility for the Disabled

Accessibility is required in all commercial buildings. The changes required will depend on the amount of construction work required by the new user. The code does not require changes whose cost would exceed 20 percent of the total construction cost. The order of priority for making the building accessible is the following:

- Accessible parking: level 8 foot parking space plus 8 foot access aisle, signage
- Accessible entry: 48 inch accessible ramp, 32 inch clear opening at front door
- Accessible toilet(s)

Site Planning

1. **Planning and Zoning:** A site plan must be drawn to scale and accurate. Show the following on the site plan:
 - All existing and proposed buildings on the site
 - Proposed use of each building
 - Existing paved parking and proposed additional paved parking
 - Flood hazard if in the 100 year flood plain
 - Setbacks from adjacent property lines
 - North arrow
 - Vicinity map
 - Existing easements
2. **Transportation:** Show the following on the site plan:
 - All adjoining streets
 - Location of street centerlines
 - Location and dimensions of existing and proposed driveway(s)
 - Location of parking with dimensions of spaces, aisle width and turnaround areas
3. **Fire Department**
 - Show the distance to the nearest fire hydrant. The distance must be measured along an all-weather route for a large fire truck.

Application for Building Permit

1. **Plans:** Submit 3 sets of plans with an application to the Building Inspections office. The plans must show the name and address of the person who prepared them. Payment for the permit is due at the time the application is submitted.
2. **Permit Fees:** The permit fees will be determined at the time the application is submitted. Call the Plans Coordinator for a quote on the permit fees.
3. **Building plans:** Include the following drawings and details
 - Floor plan(s) for each floor with room dimensions, door locations and swing direction
 - Decks, porches and outside steps
 - Plumbing fixture types and locations
 - HVAC equipment and ventilation method with ventilation rates
 - Any structural alterations or additions. If an engineering investigation has been done, attach a sealed copy to each set of plans.
4. **Site plans:**
 - Submit accurate plans as described above in Section II

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

- **Who decides how many occupants the building must accommodate?** The building inspector will decide, based on the size and use of the building. This affects toilets, exits and parking.
- **Are any other approvals required?** Privilege licenses, health department approval, historic district certification, day-care licensing and other approvals may be required, depending on use and location of the building.
- **What about any alterations?** Any new work or alterations must comply with either the Building Code or the NC Rehab Code.
- **Who can prepare the plans?** The plans must be prepared in a professional manner. An architect or engineer is not required for a permit unless unusual conditions exist.