



## Community Development Department

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## Change in Use, Character, or Occupancy Classification

Changing the use or character of a building, space, or a portion of land may require a development permit. This is because each building has a designated occupancy type that corresponds to structural, life safety, and fire prevention requirements. Additionally, each parcel of land has a specific zoning designation that governs what uses can be established at that location. Even if a change in the use of your property seems minor, you should check with your architect and City staff at the Building & Planning Counter to find out if the change requires a building permit and to check zoning compliance.

Building code requirements are specific to the use and occupancy of buildings or spaces. When a change is proposed to the use, occupancy, or character of a space or building the related building code requirements must be satisfied. The associated Planning and Zoning requirements (such as a Conditional Use Permit) or prohibitions specific to the address and zoning district must be satisfied.

Where a change in occupant density or quantity is requested, a permit application is made to the Community Development Department, Building and Planning Permit Counter. Occupant loads are limited for spaces and rooms to ensure safe occupancy, exiting, and life safety systems. A permit is required to change occupant loads.

See this City website for general information: [Property / Land Use Permits – Petaluma](#)

- Make application for an alteration permit: [Building Permit Process - City of Petaluma](#)
- Review the permit handout for Commercial Tenant Improvements: [Commercial Tenant Improvement Information – Petaluma](#)
- Review the permit handout for Residential Addition and Remodels: [Addition/Remodel Info – Residential – Petaluma](#)
- The application provides construction or new use drawings establishing building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing code compliance for the new use(s), occupancy class, or occupant load.
- See the current edition of California Title 24 Building Standards Code available for viewing at the Building Standards Commission website: [Codes \(ca.gov\)](#)
- The City will route alteration plans to appropriate City agencies for review and approval for example, Water, Fire Prevention, Public Works, Building, and Planning.
- New and relocated businesses obtain business tax license from the City of Petaluma: [Business License & Tax - City of Petaluma](#)
- When a permit is approved and issued, inspections are made to confirm compliance with the Building Standards Code and approved plans.
- After all inspections are approved a Certificate of Occupancy may be issued, as applicable.