



Change of Use – What is it & Why is a permit required?

Each building has a specific occupancy as determined by the Alberta Building Code. The Occupancy as determined from the Alberta Building Code ensures that structure is used and approved for that specific purpose and ensures code requirements specifically related to that use are met. For example, a home does not have the same code requirements or restrictions as a gas station. A dentist office has different code requirements or needs than a learning center. A change in a building from one approved use to a different use *may* trigger the need for a building permit, *if* the occupancy under the Alberta Building Code changes. The change in classification is determined by a Safety Codes Officer in accordance with the Alberta Building Code 2014, T3.1.21.

If renovations or alterations are taking place that impact the building's structure or changes to the physical components of a building such as changing rooms or spaces, enlarging windows etc - a building permit **is** required. Cosmetic items such as flooring, painting and decorating do not require a building permit and are not defined as a structural alteration. The undertaking of such cosmetic work does not affect health and safety and a permit is not required. (Permit Regulation 6(3))

However - when the building occupancy changes and structural work is NOT taking place - a building permit **IS** still required. In such an instance, the Building Permit serves several purposes. Some examples are:

- 1) The permit serves as a record and tracking of the history of that property. It assists to show the various uses of that building and establish the history of work that has been undertaken which can be reviewed at future dates when concerns or queries regarding the building or its use arise.
- 2) The building permit it is a requirement within the Permit Regulation 6(1)b) A permit in the building discipline is required for the following.....a change in the occupancy classification of a building.
- 3) The building permit ensures that the code requirements and life safety components are met in accordance with the new use or change in the occupancy classification. This includes such items as fire safety and management components, exits-number of them and location of them, washrooms if needed and minimum number of them and more. This ensures the minimum requirements for your new business or building are met and you and your clients or customers are safe.
- 4) Permits and records of inspections conducted may be asked in establishing insurance overages or resale of properties. Obtaining a permit when the use of your building can be of benefit with other parties and future transactions.