CITY OF CONWAY, ARKANSAS
Building Permits and Inspections
1111 Main Street Conway, Arkansas 72032 Phone
501-450-6107 Fax 501-450-6144

INFORMATION APPLICABLE TO THE CONVERSION OF AN EXISTING RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE TO A COMMERCIAL USE

The items listed below are noted as concerns, questions and/or request for additional information common to the codes evaluation necessary to convert an existing residential structure to a commercial use.

A change in building code occupancy classification requires the space where the change in occupancy (use) occurs to meet the current code requirements for the new occupancy (use).
A building permit is required to construct, alter, repair, or change the occupancy of the building. This list is somewhat generic but intended to give you and the licensed professionals you use to evaluate the building and building systems an overview of common issues related to the type of project being proposed. The following list of items is intended to assist you in addressing these common code issues but is not intended to be construed to be all-inclusive.

Plans will be required at the time of application for building permit and the specific conditions of the building will be reviewed for code compliance to insure minimum life, safety and accessibility standards are met.

A. General

A1. Fire Department approval shall be required prior to occupancy of the building. You may contact Fire Marshall Kenny Wiedower @ 501-450-6148.

A2. Planning Department approval may be required to verify the appropriate land use and adequate parking requirements, prior to the occupancy of the building for commercial use. You may contact Mr. Bryan Patrick at 501-450-6105 to determine if the proposed conversion will require this approval.

A3. If located in one of the Cities' Historic Districts, Historic District Commission approval may be required. You may contact Mr. Bryan Patrick at 501-450-6105 to determine if the proposed conversion will require this approval.

A4. Change of occupancy in the building from a code classification of Residential, Group R-3, to a Business Group B, requires the inspection and evaluation of the structure for compliance with the currently adopted codes and standards applicable to the Group B-Business occupancy. Such inspection, evaluation and subsequent recommendations for code compliance shall be performed and submitted by licensed professionals.

A5. A building permit shall be required to construct, alter, repair, or change the occupancy of the building (104.1)

A6. Three copies of drawings shall be submitted to indicate the nature and character of the work. Plans shall be drawn to scale, complete, legible and of adequate detail to verify code compliance. (104.2.1)

B. Building

B1. The conversion of the building from a residence to an office requires the structure to be evaluated to meet the minimum design loads specified for the new Business occupancy. Residential Occupancies are required to be designed using only a minimum 40 psf floor load in living areas and 30 psf in sleeping rooms. Business Offices require a minimum 50 psf floor load. Verification of the structures ability to withstand the new floor loading as well as other design loading criteria is required. Such evaluation and verification is required to be done by a licensed professional.

B2. Interior finishes on walls and ceilings shall have a Class C flame spread. (Tbl. 803.3)

B3. Verify that landings are located outside the exterior egress doors. Such landings shall be equal in size to the width of the door and at the same elevation as the finished floor level inside the space. (1012.1.3)

B4. Stairs or steps require treads with a minimum 11” depth and riser heights shall not exceed 7”. Minimum risers shall be not less than 4”. (1007.3)

B5. All stairways or steps shall have handrails located not less than 34” nor more than 38” above the leading edge of the tread. (1007.5)

B6. Porches and landings are required to be provided with proper guardrails if the height of the porch exceeds 30” above grade. (1015) Guardrails are required to prohibit passage of a 4” sphere. (1015.3)

B7. Egress doors are required to provide a clear opening of not less than 32”. (1012.1.1) B8. Required exit doors may be required to be identified with approved exit signs. (1016.3)

B9. Directional exit signs may be required where exit signs or the exits themselves are not visible from the exit approach. (1016.3.4)

B10. Door handles, pulls, latches, locks and other operating devices shall be capable of operating with one hand and shall not require tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting to operate. (1012.1.7)

B11. Required exit doors shall be openable from the inside without use of a key, tool, special knowledge or effort. (1012.1.8)

B12. Glass located in hazardous locations shall be tempered safety glazing.

B13. Emergency lighting is required to be provided to illuminate the egress paths from the building.

C. Plumbing

C1. A drain pan is required under the water heater if the water heater is located in an area where damage to the building could occur due to a leak. (504.8)

C2. The water heater drain pan is required to be drained by a minimum 1” indirect waste pipe and shall discharge over an indirect waste receptor, floor drain or to the exterior of the building. (504.8)

C3. A backflow prevention device shall be required in all new commercial buildings and in each individual tenant space. (608.1)

C4. A mop sink is required to be provided in buildings with a calculated occupant load in excess of 15 persons.

C5. A water fountain or bottle water dispenser is required.
C6. The plumbing system is required to be evaluated by a licensed professional to verify the condition of the system and the continued safe use of such system for a business office.
C7. A plumbing permit is required for any additions or modifications to the plumbing systems. Plumbing permits may only be obtained by a properly licensed plumbing contractor.

D. Mechanical

D1. The mechanical system is required to be evaluated by a licensed professional to address the safe utilization of the systems for the proposed use.
D2. Gas fired water heaters and/or gas fired appliances require verification by a licensed professional to confirm the installation of adequate venting and combustion air.
D3. If cooking equipment is to be used, such equipment is required to be provided with an acceptable hood and duct and an appropriate fire suppression system.
D4. Toilet room exhaust vents are required to discharge to the exterior of the building.
D5. A mechanical permit is required for any additions or modifications to the mechanical systems. Mechanical permits may only be obtained by a properly licensed mechanical contractor.

E. Electrical

E1. Electrical outlets shall be properly grounded.
E2. The electrical system is required to be evaluated by a licensed professional to verify the safe utilization of such system for the proposed use.
E3. An electrical permit is required for any additions or modifications to the electrical systems. Electrical permits may only be obtained by a properly licensed electrical contractor.
E4. An electrical load calculation and riser diagram is required to verify the electrical system is adequate to accommodate any new outlets and/or equipment.

F. Handicap Accessibility

F1. Provide handicap access into the building. Handicap ramps shall have a maximum slope of 1/12, shall be 4’-0” wide and shall be provided with a level landing at the door.
F2. Provide a handicap parking space at 12’-6” wide with an adjacent 5’ wide loading space and shall be clearly designated as handicap van accessible.
F3. Provide 18” of clear floor space at the strike side of all interior passageway doors.
F4. Provide 24” of clear floor space at the strike side of all exterior passageway doors.
F5. All passageway doors shall afford a 32” clear opening.
F6. Provide a 5’ area of clear floor space in the handicap toilet room to provide maneuverability for the wheelchair handicapped.
F7. Toilet room doors shall not encroach more than 12” into the 5’ clear floor space in the handicap toilet room.
F8. Provide handicap grab bars in the handicap toilet room. Such grab bars shall be 1 ½” in diameter mounted at 33” above finish floor. Such grab bars shall be mounted and capable of supporting a 250 lb. load in any direction.

F9. All control devices for light, power, heat, alarms, and etc. shall be mounted no higher than 48” from the floor for front access or 54” for side access.

G. Gas

G1. All gas lines shall be inspected and tested by a licensed professional to verify a safe condition.

G2. A plumbing permit is required for any additions or modifications to the gas lines. Fuel gas permits may only be obtained by a properly licensed plumbing contractor.

Licensed professionals are required to evaluate the conditions of the existing structure and systems.

Plans will be required at the time of application for building permit and the specific conditions of the building will be reviewed for code compliance to insure minimum life safety and accessibility standards are met.

This information is provided as an effort to assist the applicant in addressing the most common and cost recognizable code issues normally associated with this type of change in occupancy.

If you have questions regarding the above list of requirements, please call the Office of Permits and Inspections at 501-450-6107.

Respectfully,

Kenny McCollum,
Director of Building Permits and Code Enforcements
City of Conway Arkansas