



## Planning and Public Works

6000 Main St SW  
Lakewood, WA 98499  
(253) 512-2261

### Visit our office:

Tues. – Thurs. 9am – 12pm

### Contact us:

Permit Center  
[permits@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:permits@cityoflakewood.us)

Rental Housing Safety  
Program  
[rentals@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:rentals@cityoflakewood.us)

Business Licensing  
[businesslicensing@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:businesslicensing@cityoflakewood.us)

Engineering  
[publicworksengineering@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:publicworksengineering@cityoflakewood.us)

Planning  
[planning@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:planning@cityoflakewood.us)

# Commercial Tenant Improvement

### Code References:

- Lakewood Municipal Code (LMC) sections 15.05.060
- International Building Code 105.1
- International Existing Building Code (IEBC) 105.1

### Definitions:

- **ALTERATION:** Any construction or renovation to an existing structure other than a repair or addition.
- **REPAIR:** The reconstruction, replacement or renewal of any part of an existing building for the purpose of its maintenance or to correct damage.
- **EMERGENCY REPAIRS:** Where equipment replacements and repairs must be performed in an emergency situation, the permit application shall be submitted within the next working business day to the city.
- **ADDITION:** An extension or increase in floor area, number of stories, or height of a building or structure.
- **MAJOR IMPROVEMENT:** Means all improvements to a structure (excluding normal maintenance and repair and life/safety improvements) which within a 72-month period exceeds a cumulative value of 50 percent of the current county assessed value of the structure. The value of improvements shall be as determined by the building official.

### What is a Tenant Improvement Permit?

A Tenant Improvement (TI) Permit is a Building Permit required for repair, alteration of a space within an existing building, or relocation of existing building, install, add, alter, remove, convert or replace any gas, mechanical or plumbing system. It is also required when you change of occupancy, change-of-use of the building or space.

## Major vs. Minor Tenant Improvement

There are two types of Commercial Tenant Improvements: **Major and Minor**.

Examples of **Major**:

- Structural alterations include (plans & calculations prepared by WA state licensed professional engineer):
  1. existing structural elements carrying gravity loads (walls, beams, columns),
  2. existing structural elements resisting lateral loads (wind & earthquake),
  3. adding or replacement of roofing in which the addition of a second layer of roofing covering weighs 3 PSF or less over an existing single layer of roofing covering.
- Addition or replacement of equipment causes an increase in dead load, live or snow load including drift effects of more than 5 %.
- Life safety design changes, change of use (construction documents prepared signed and stamped by WA licensed architect in accordance with WAC 308-12-340).
- Accessibility design changes (construction documents prepared signed and stamped by WA licensed architect in accordance with WAC 308-12-340).

Example of **Minor**:

- Moving of non-load bearing walls.
- Moving of anchorage (approved by engineer of record).
- Glazing sizes or locations, insulation values.
- Heating equipment.

## What is a Change of Use?

A change of use is when you change the business operation that was previously there. For instance, your business is a clothing department store (classified as Mercantile “M” occupancy) and the previous business was a bank (classified as business “B” occupancy).

Changing the use may require changes to the number of parking spaces that are required and changes to the building to meet additional building and fire code requirements. If you are a new tenant, check to see if the use you are proposing is allowed in the zone. See LMC 18A.40. If any food service preparation or sale is involved, check with the [Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department](#).

## Emergency Repairs

Where equipment replacements and repairs must be performed in an emergency, the permit application shall be submitted within the next working business day to the city.

## Other Permits May Be Required

Additional permits required may include:

- Mechanical Permit
- Plumbing Permit
- Installation or revision of a fire sprinkler system<sup>i</sup>
- Installation or revision of a fire alarm system<sup>i</sup>
- Fire Code Construction or Operational Permit (required based on what you are doing or using in your business)<sup>i</sup>
- Commercial kitchen hood/fire suppression system are typically required in food service uses
- Sign Permit
- Electrical Permit from Washington State Department of Labor and Industries and/or your electrical services purveyor.
- Storage racks that exceed 5'9" high.
- Traffic Mitigation Fee Application, if located within the Central Business District (CBD) zone.

## What is a Certificate of Occupancy?

After the building and fire inspectors inspect the building or structure and do not find violations of the provisions of building and fire codes or other laws that are enforced by the department, the building official shall issue a certificate of occupancy that contains the following in accordance with IBC 111.2:

- The permit number.
- The address of the structure.
- The name and address of the owner or the owner's authorized agent.
- A description of that portion of the structure for which the certificate is issued.
- A statement that the described portion of the structure has been inspected for compliance with the requirements of this code.
- The name of the building official.
- The edition of the code under which the permit was issued.
- The use and occupancy, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 3.
- The type of construction as defined in Chapter 6.
- The design occupant load.
- Where an automatic sprinkler system is provided, whether the sprinkler system is required.
- Any special stipulations and conditions of the building permit.

**For more information, contact us:**

- Schedule a virtual or in person appointment with our Tech of the Day [HERE](#)
- Visit us Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 12pm in the office at  
6000 Main St SW Lakewood, WA 98499
- Call us at (253) 512-2261
- Email us at [permits@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:permits@cityoflakewood.us)
- Visit our website [HERE](#)

---

<sup>i</sup> Contact [West Pierce Fire and Rescue](#)