

Section 1. Purpose and Intent

1.1 The purpose of this ordinance is to establish clear procedures and minimum standards for converting existing commercial buildings from single-occupant to multi-occupant use, in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

1.2 This ordinance is intended to work in conjunction with the City's zoning ordinance, building codes, fire code, and other applicable regulations, and shall not be construed to reduce any requirement imposed by those codes.

Section 2. Definitions

For the purposes of this ordinance:

2.1 "Commercial building" means any building or structure used primarily for business, office, retail, service, or similar non-residential purposes.

2.2 "Single-occupant building" means a commercial building designed, approved, and occupied by a single business or user under one certificate of occupancy.

2.3 "Multi-occupant building" or "multi-tenant building" means a commercial building designed, approved, or occupied for use by two or more separate businesses, tenants, or users, whether or not they share common areas.

2.4 "Common areas" means corridors, lobbies, restrooms, mechanical rooms, stairways, elevators, loading docks, parking areas, and other spaces intended for joint use by multiple occupants or the public.

2.5 "Change of occupancy" and "change of use" have the meanings established in the adopted building code and fire code.

Section 3. Applicability

3.1 This ordinance applies to:

- Any existing commercial building approved as single-occupant that is proposed to be subdivided into two or more separately leasable or occupiable spaces; and
- Any alteration that changes exits, fire-resistance features, shared utilities, or life-safety systems to serve more than one occupant.

3.2 This ordinance does not apply to:

- New ground-up multi-tenant construction (which must comply with all current codes); or
- Situations where multiple departments of a single legal entity occupy the building under one certificate of occupancy and are not separated into distinct tenant spaces.

Section 4. Permit and Approval Requirements

4.1 Change-of-Use/Change-of-Occupancy Permit.

No person shall convert a single-occupant commercial building to multi-occupant use without first obtaining a building permit and any required change-of-use or change-of-occupancy approvals from the Building Official.

4.2 Site Plan and Floor Plan Submission.

Applicants must submit, at minimum:

- A site plan showing property lines, parking, driveways, sidewalks, accessible routes, loading areas, and fire lanes.
- Scaled floor plans showing tenant suite boundaries, common areas, exits, fire separations, restrooms, mechanical/electrical rooms, and accessible features.
- Occupant load calculations for each tenant space and for common areas.
- A code analysis identifying the occupancy classification(s), construction type, fire-resistance requirements, and method of mixed-occupancy compliance, if applicable.

4.3 Certificates of Occupancy.

(a) A new certificate of occupancy is required for the building when it is converted from single-occupant to multi-occupant.

(b) A separate certificate of occupancy shall be required for each tenant space prior to use or occupancy.

(c) Certificates of occupancy shall be posted in a conspicuous place within each tenant space or as otherwise required by the Building Official.

Section 5. Building and Fire Code Compliance

5.1 Occupancy Classification and Mixed Use.

The building and individual tenant spaces shall comply with the adopted building and fire codes, including:

- Proper occupancy classifications for each use.
- Mixed-occupancy provisions where two or more occupancy types are present in the building.
- Any required fire-resistance-rated separations between different occupancies and between tenant spaces and common areas.

5.2 Exiting and Egress.

Conversion to multi-occupant use shall not reduce the level of life-safety from that required by the adopted codes. At a minimum:

- Number, location, and width of exits shall comply with current code, based on calculated occupant loads.

- Exit access travel distances, dead-end corridors, and exit signage/emergency lighting shall comply with the adopted building and fire codes.
- Each tenant space shall have the required number and arrangement of exits or direct access to required exits through common corridors designed for multi-tenant use.

5.3 Fire Protection Systems.

Where required by the adopted codes, the building shall be provided with:

- Automatic fire sprinkler systems, standpipes, and fire alarm/detection systems sized and zoned for multi-occupant use.
- Fire department connections, fire hydrant spacing, and fire lanes as required by the Fire Code Official.
- Fire-resistance-rated tenant and corridor separations, shaft enclosures, and firestopping of penetrations, as applicable.

5.4 Structural Integrity.

Any alterations affecting structural elements, floor openings, or new penetrations for stairs, shafts, or mechanical systems shall be designed and sealed by a licensed professional engineer or architect where required by state law.

Section 6. Accessibility

6.1 All newly created tenant spaces, common areas, parking, and routes to public entrances shall comply with applicable federal and state accessibility laws and the City's adopted accessibility standards.

6.2 At a minimum:

- There shall be at least one accessible route from accessible parking to the primary building entrance and to accessible tenant spaces.
- Common restrooms and shared facilities provided for multiple tenants shall be accessible and sized for the occupant load they serve.
- Any change in level, ramps, stairs, and door hardware shall conform to accessibility requirements.

Section 7. Parking, Loading, and Site Requirements

7.1 The change to multi-occupant use shall comply with off-street parking and loading requirements in the zoning ordinance, based on the combination of uses and calculated parking demand.

7.2 Where additional parking or loading is required, the applicant shall demonstrate compliance through:

- On-site reconfiguration or expansion, if feasible; or

- Shared-parking, off-site parking, or other arrangements approved under the zoning ordinance.

7.3 Bicycle parking, landscaping, screening, and lighting shall be provided in accordance with current development standards to the extent triggered by the scope of work or required by the approving authority.

Section 8. Utilities and Building Services

8.1 Separate Metering.

Where multiple tenants will occupy the building, electrical, gas, and water service shall be metered or sub-metered in accordance with applicable codes and utility policies. The City may require separate meters for each tenant space where practical.

8.2 Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing Systems.

Shared systems shall be designed for the combined loads of all tenant spaces and shall meet current code requirements for:

- Ventilation and indoor air quality.
- Energy code compliance where applicable alterations occur.
- Backflow prevention, grease interceptors, and special waste requirements for restaurants, salons, and similar uses.

8.3 Access to Shutoffs and Panels.

Tenants shall have safe, code-compliant access to electrical panels, gas shutoffs, water shutoffs, and similar equipment serving their space, subject to any security and fire-code requirements.

Section 9. Management, Maintenance, and Common Areas

9.1 The property owner or designated building manager shall be responsible for:

- Maintenance of common areas, building structure, roofs, exterior walls, parking, and site improvements.
- Maintenance and testing of fire-protection and alarm systems, emergency lighting, and exit signage.
- Keeping all means of egress free and clear of obstructions, including storage in corridors and exit stairways.

9.2 Lease agreements shall not assign or transfer the owner's obligations under this ordinance to tenants in a way that diminishes code compliance or enforcement against the owner.

Section 10. Inspections and Enforcement

10.1 The Building Official, Fire Code Official, and other authorized inspectors may enter and inspect the building and tenant spaces at reasonable times to verify compliance with this ordinance and other applicable codes.

10.2 A building or tenant space found in violation may be posted as unsafe or unfit for occupancy, and the certificate of occupancy may be suspended or revoked as provided by the building code and municipal code.

10.3 It is unlawful for any person to occupy, or permit occupancy of, any tenant space or multi-occupant building created under this ordinance without the required permits, approvals, and certificates of occupancy.

Section 11. Penalties

11.1 A person who violates this ordinance commits a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$_____ per day, as provided in the City Code.

11.2 Each day a violation continues constitutes a separate offense.

Section 12. Conflicts and Severability

12.1 In the event of a conflict between this ordinance and any other ordinance or regulation of the City, the more restrictive provision shall control, unless otherwise required by state or federal law.

12.2 If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance is held invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance.

Section 13. Effective Date

13.1 This ordinance shall take effect on _____, after publication as required by law.

PASSED AND APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 20.

Practical Rules and Regulations Checklist

When you actually implement or apply this ordinance, you typically need to make sure:

- The proposed multi-tenant layout fits within the existing zoning district (use allowed, intensity, parking, buffering).

- A design professional prepares a code summary: construction type, occupancy groups for each tenant, occupant loads, mixed-occupancy strategy, fire-separation needs, and egress plan.
- Fire marshal reviews sprinkler/alarm upgrades, fire lanes, hydrants, and fire-department access.
- Building department verifies exits, exit signs, emergency lights, accessibility, structural changes, and MEP modifications.
- New or revised certificates of occupancy are issued for the building and each tenant before anyone moves in.
- Owner sets up a management/maintenance plan for shared systems and common areas.

If you tell me the city (or if this is for an internal policy for a company or landlord), I can tighten this language further and add any special local requirements you may need.