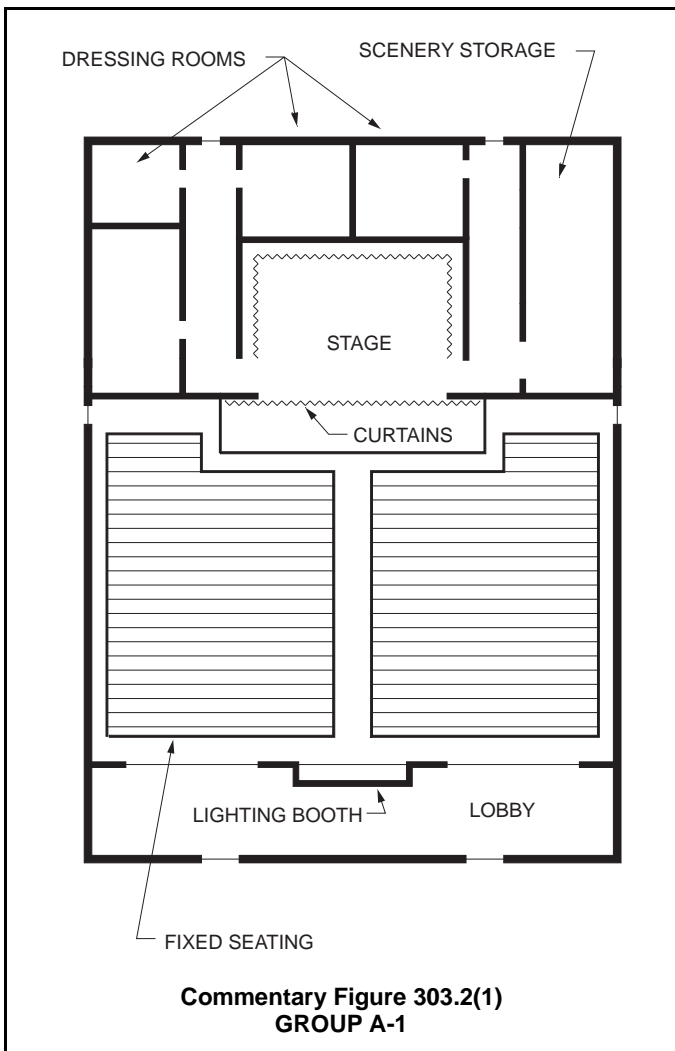


OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION AND USE



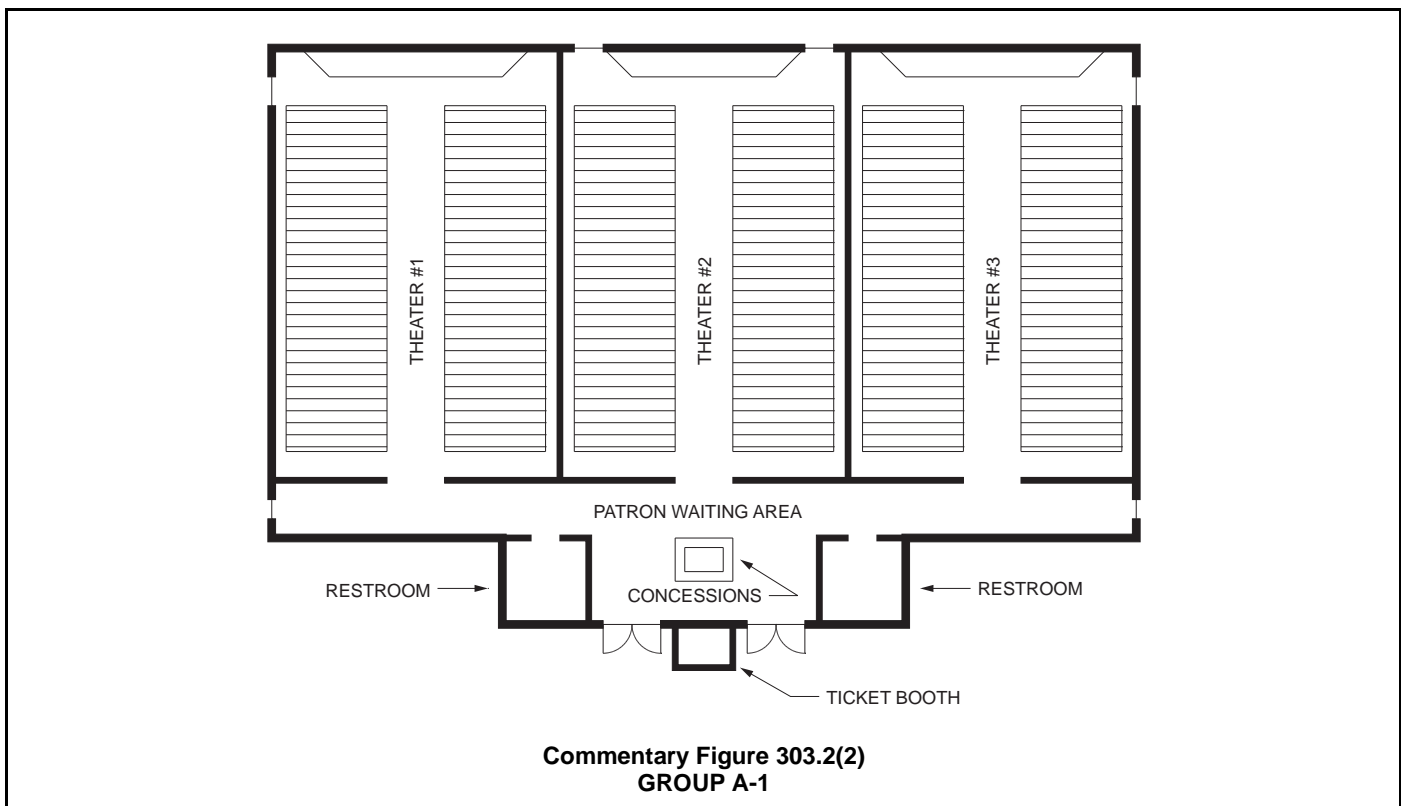
Group A-1 presents a significant potential life safety hazard because of the large occupant loads and the concentration of people within confined spaces. The means of egress is an important factor in the design of such facilities. Theaters for the performing arts that require stages are considered particularly hazardous because of the amount of combustibles such as curtains, drops, scenery, construction materials and other accessories normally associated with stage operation. As such, special protection requirements applicable to stages and platforms are provided in Section 410.

303.3 Assembly Group A-2. Group A-2 occupancy includes assembly uses intended for food and/or drink consumption including, but not limited to:

- Banquet halls
- Casinos (*gaming areas*)
- Nightclubs
- Restaurants, cafeterias and similar dining facilities (including associated commercial kitchens)
- Taverns and bars

❖ Group A-2 includes occupancies in which people congregate in high densities for social entertainment, including drinking and dancing (e.g., nightclubs, banquet halls, cabarets) and food and drink consumption (e.g., restaurants and bars). The uniqueness of these occupancies is characterized by some or all of the following:

- Low lighting levels.
- Entertainment by a live band or recorded music generating above-normal sound levels.
- No theatrical stage accessories.
- Later-than-average operating hours.



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- Tables and seating arranged or positioned so as to create ill-defined aisles.
- A specific area designated for dancing.
- Service facilities for alcoholic beverages and food.
- High occupant load density.

The fire records are very clear in identifying that the characteristics listed here often cause a delayed awareness of a fire situation and confuse occupants regarding the appropriate response, resulting in an increased egress time and sometimes panic. Together, these factors may result in extensive life and property losses. These characteristics are only advisory in determining whether Group A-2 is the appropriate classification. Often there are additional characteristics that are unique to a project, which also must be taken into consideration when a classification is made.

Not all restaurants have all of these characteristics. Most fast-food restaurants will have only two or three of these, yet they are appropriately classified as Group A-2.

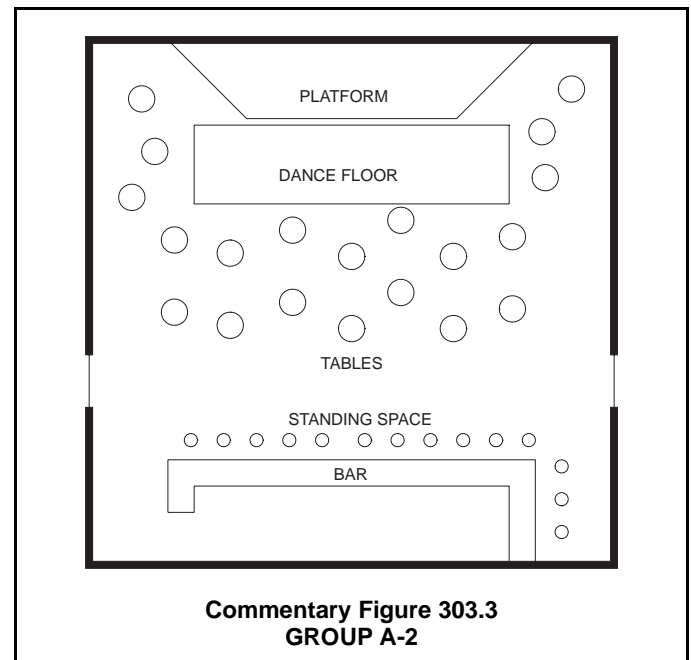
Example: The Downtown Club, a popular local nightclub/dance hall, features a different band every weekend [see Commentary Figure 303.3]. It is equipped with a bar and basic kitchen facilities so that beverages and appetizers can be served. There is a platform for a band to perform, a dance floor in front of the platform and numerous cocktail tables and chairs. The tables and chairs are not fixed, resulting in an arrangement with no distinct aisles. When the band performs, the house lights are dimmed, and spotlights are keyed in on the performers. The club is equipped with a sound system that can be used at loud levels. The club is open until 3:00 a.m.—the latest time the local jurisdiction will allow.

From this description of the Downtown Club, one can readily see that the appropriate classification is Group A-2. Sometimes, however, it is not this easy to determine the appropriate classification. In such cases, the building official must seek additional information regarding the functions of the building and each area within the building.

Two of the specific uses listed as Group A-2 occupancies are typically not considered as facilities primarily used for food and/or drink consumption; however, their classification as such has been deemed appropriate for varying reasons. The placement of casino gaming areas in the Group A-2 classification is because they share many hazard characteristics with nightclubs and, to some extent, the other uses in the category. The presence of distracting lights, sounds and decorations, along with the potential for alcohol consumption, create an assembly environment that is best addressed under the Group A-2 provisions. The classification is specific to the gaming areas of a casino; therefore, other related uses such as administrative, storage and lodging areas are to be individually classified based on their specific use.

Commercial kitchens, when associated with a Group A-2 dining and drinking establishment, are also classified as Group A-2. Although commercial kitchens

do not pose the same conditions and concerns as the other uses classified as Group A-2, their classification as such recognizes the relationship that exists between the dining and cooking areas. Providing a physical fire-resistive separation between the kitchen and the dining area that it serves is often found to be impractical. Assigning a single occupancy classification for both the commercial kitchen and its associated dining area eliminates any potential for an unnecessary mixed-occupancy condition. This single occupancy classification approach can also be applied where the occupant load of the dining area is below 50, allowing for a Group B classification. Under such circumstances, the kitchen would be considered an extension of the Group B dining facility. See also commercial kitchens in Group F-1 (see Section 306.2).



303.4 Assembly Group A-3. Group A-3 occupancy includes assembly uses intended for worship, recreation or amusement and other assembly uses not classified elsewhere in Group A including, but not limited to:

- Amusement arcades
- Art galleries
- Bowling alleys
- Community halls
- Courtrooms
- Dance halls (not including food or drink consumption)
- Exhibition halls
- Funeral parlors
- Greenhouses* for the conservation and exhibition of plants that provide public access
- Gymnasiums (without spectator seating)
- Indoor *swimming pools* (without spectator seating)
- Indoor tennis courts (without spectator seating)
- Lecture halls

