

Converting Existing Buildings Into Other Uses

Examples:

- An apartment added to a garage
- A barn converted to a business use
- A change from personal to industrial storage

Do Your Homework First

Converting a garage, barn or storage building to a residence or a business use may seem like a great way to create living or office space, but it's a good idea to do some *homework* first.

Know how your property is zoned

You will save time and money by knowing how your property is zoned before you begin a conversion project. Unincorporated areas of Larimer County are divided into zoning districts. The Larimer County Land Use Code defines uses allowed in each zoning district. Failure to understand your zoning could result in unexpected costs.

The Larimer County Planning Department can explain how your property is zoned, what uses are allowed in your zoning district and help you understand how Land Use Code regulations may affect your project.

For more information please contact the Planning Department at 970-498-7683.

One principal building per lot/parcel

Most zoning districts allow one (1) *principal* building per lot/parcel. For example, if you have an existing residence and want to build another residence on the same lot, the 2nd building would be considered an accessory use.

Accessory uses may be allowed in addition to the *principal* use of a property. Accessory uses require compliance with Land Use Code standards or may require County Commissioner approval. Refer to Land Use Code Section 4.3.10 for more information on accessory uses or contact the Planning Department at 970-498-7683.

Change in Use - Land Use Code

A Change in Use is a land use term that applies when there is a change in the use of the land. Land uses are regulated by zoning districts identified in the Larimer County Land Use Code.

Change in Occupancy - Building Code

The Larimer County Building Code classifies how a building is used. Different uses are categorized into Occupancy Groups (listed below).

When the character and occupancy of a building changes from the occupancy it was originally designed for, the Building Code requires the change be permitted and inspected. The permit is called a **Change of Occupancy** building permit which may involve new construction requirements for the new occupancy.

Building Code – Occupancy Groups

Group A	Assembly
Group B	Business
Group E	Education
Group F	Factory
Group H	Hazardous (Low, Med & High)
Group I	Institutional
Group M	Mercantile
Group R	Residential
Group S	Storage
Group U	Utility

Transportation Capital Expansion Fee

All building permits that create new dwelling units or result in a Change In Use/Occupancy are subject to Transportation Capital Expansion Fees (TCEF).

A handout that explains Transportation Capital Expansion Fees is available in the Planning & Building Department or on the web at:

www.larimer.org/engineering/Transportation/TCEFs/TCEFs.htm

For more information or an estimate of fees, please contact the TCEF administrator in the County Engineering Department at 970-498-5700.

Converting an Existing Building into a New Use/Occupancy? Frequently Asked Questions

(answers will depend on the specific project/property)

Please contact the planning and/or building department to ask questions about your specific project. Answers to critical questions will impact the cost and time required to complete a change to an existing building.

Land Use Code Questions

Planning Department 970-498-7683

- Q. How is my **property zoned**?
- Q. What **uses** are allowed in my zoning district?
- Q. Can I have **2 houses** on my property?
- Q. Is my existing building a **legal, non-conforming** structure?
- Q. Is a **commercial/business use** allowed in my zoning district?
- Q. Do I need approval to have a **home business** in a **residential** zoning district?
- Q. Why is **Site Plan** approval required before I can get a commercial building permit?
- Q. Is a **Plot Plan** different from a **Site Plan**?
- Q. Do I need **County** approval to convert my barn into a commercial use?
- Q. Do all commercial uses require **road access, paved parking** and **landscaping**?
- Q. How long does a **land use application** take to process?
- Q. When I built my house I paid **Transportation Capital Expansion Fees**; will I owe more fees for a Change of Use/Occupancy?

Building Code Questions

Building Department 970-498-7700

- Q. Will my converted building be classified under a **new occupancy group**?
- Q. Will the **wind** and **snow** load minimums for my existing building be different if I change the use/occupancy?
- Q. Will my local **fire district** require that my converted building have **fire protection**?
- Q. Is my current **water and sewer** adequate to handle the change in use/occupancy?
- Q. How can I check the size of my existing **septic system** to see if it is big enough for the new use?
- Q. Will the **original** building need to be brought up to **current building code**?
- Q. I'm changing a barn into a business, will I need to install **insulation** and **heating**?
- Q. Does a commercial building have to be **handicap accessible**?
- Q. Do I need to hire an **engineer, architect, electrician** or **plumber** for my project?
- Q. Can I get an **estimate of fees** for a Change of Occupancy building permit?
- Q. Do I need a **separate address** for a new use?