

Requirements to Develop Commercial Property

Property Owner Responsibilities

Requests to develop a commercial property that is a change in use from the previous occupant, or that has been vacant for more than a one-year period, requires that a new Certificate of Occupancy (CO) be issued. Based on the size of the property, available parking and intended use, the zoning ordinance generally requires that building code issues, off-street parking and landscape standards be addressed prior to issuance of the CO.

The following checklist generally describes the process to develop property and obtain a CO:

Certificate of Occupancy Requirements:

1. A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) documents that a particular business use is legally being conducted on a property. New uses or changes in use on a property require that a new CO be issued. A CO application must be initiated prior to any renovations or re-occupancy of the site or building. All proposed improvements must be completed and the CO must be issued prior to any occupancy of the property. (Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 134-151, 134-152 and 134-153)
2. Please note there are differences between Zoning Ordinance use and Building Code use. A change in use from one perspective does not imply an acceptable change of use from the other. Changes in use must be reviewed for both zoning and building issues.
3. Verify that the zoning district allows the proposed commercial use. Generally, the allowed use is based on the primary type of business being conducted on the property and whether the size of the property and any existing buildings will support the intended use. It is wise to request a copy of the current CO from the owner or seller of the property. Alternatively, call the Development Zoning Department at 283-4200 for zoning information and/or verification of a current CO.

Property and Building Development Issues:

1. A pre-application meeting may be useful to obtain information regarding multiple City issues, such as building, zoning, planning, traffic, water and fire. Call 283-4751 for information as to whether a pre-application meeting is required or would be the most efficient use of your time.
2. Subject to the intended use of the property meeting zoning district requirements, a new site plan may be required to be submitted and approved to document how the owner intends to satisfy the site-specific parking and landscaping requirements.
3. Building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical permits may also be required for building alterations. Call 283-4200 for information regarding building permits.

Site Plan Requirements:

1. An accurate, scaled site plan is required from a design professional familiar with the City of Des Moines' Zoning Ordinance and Site Plan Ordinance standards. The site plan should address parking, maneuvering and landscaping standards.
2. Off-street parking and maneuvering standards must be met. The standards are based on the intended use of the property and a schedule of required standards in the ordinance. (Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 134-1376 and 134-1377)
3. The Landscape Standards are required to be met. However, should the site plan document that the parking requirement or building location present unreasonable space problems in meeting the landscape standards, some flexibility may be granted for portions of the landscape requirements. (Site Plan Ordinance)

Zoning/staff info/DZ policies.landscaping



PERMIT AND
DEVELOPMENT CENTER
ARMORY BUILDING
602 E. 1ST ST.
DES MOINES, IOWA 50309
(515) 283-4200

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