

## CONVERTING FROM RESIDENTIAL TO COMMERCIAL

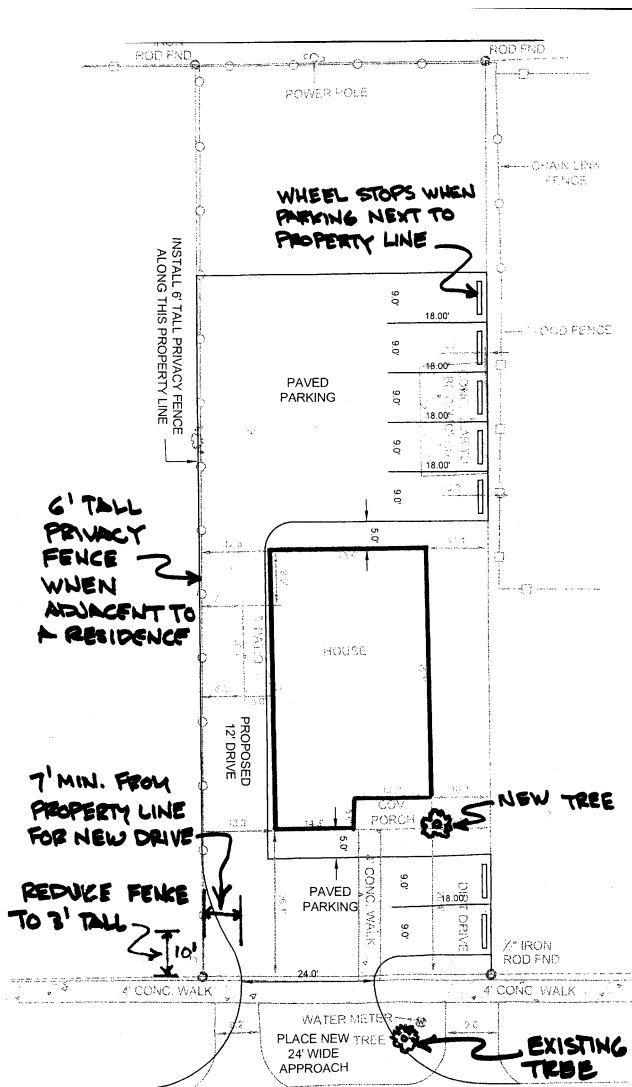


Converting a house into a commercial establishment can be a challenging venture. Usually, the first obstacle is the realization that habitations originally designed for a residential use often do not lend themselves to an easy conversion. This is because building and zoning codes are much more stringent for commercial uses than for single-family residential uses. With proper planning however, some conversions can be achieved with excellent results. This brochure was created as a general guide for citizens who are contemplating converting a house into a commercial establishment.



*Blue Skies. Golden Opportunities.*

Department of Community Development  
 Planning Division  
 1300 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Wichita Falls TX 76301



TYPICAL SITE PLAN

## ZONING

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If you are planning to convert an existing house into a commercial establishment, the first issue to consider is the zoning of the property. Be sure that the type of business you want to create is allowed in the zoning district in which the house is located. Many residential subdivisions in the city are residentially zoned or have deed restrictions that prohibit commercial activity, and houses in these districts cannot be legally converted to a business. However, residents are allowed a home based business if it is operated under the guidelines of the Home Occupation Regulations.

## SITE PLAN REVIEW

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Assuming the zoning is appropriate and there are no deed restrictions prohibiting a commercial use, the next step is to draw a workable site plan that meets all the site plan requirements:

Parking: New commercial establishments must meet the minimum on-site parking requirements. The required number of parking spaces is determined by the proposed use and square footage of the building. Drive and parking surfaces must be paved with concrete or asphalt.

Handicap Parking: New commercial establishments must provide handicap spaces as required by Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS). These can be included in the overall parking space count.

Landscaping: New commercial projects are required to provide landscaping trees. Existing trees may be counted if they meet the minimum standards and location. New trees must be properly irrigated.

Buffering: New commercial establishments locating next to existing residential or duplex uses or a residential zoning boundary must provide a six-foot tall privacy fence along the property line to serve as a buffer between the two uses.

Signs: Most signs associated with a commercial business require a separate review and permit.

## BUILDING CODE

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Converting a house into a business requires modifying the structure to meet the commercial building code. Some of these requirements can be costly and it is recommended that you get estimates before proceeding. The Building and Code Administration Division will need to review plans for the following:

- Electrical
- Mechanical
- Plumbing
- Energy Code
- Handicap Accessibility

- Exit Lights
- Occupancy Class Requirements
- Asbestos Survey

*Note:* If the conversion requires removal of or modification to existing interior or exterior walls, State law requires that an asbestos survey be conducted on the structural materials. Removal of materials testing positive for asbestos must be conducted by a licensed professional.

## FIRE CODE

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All new businesses must have a State licensed/certified fire extinguisher(s) at an approved location(s). Working smoke detectors are also required. In some cases they must be hard wired.

## CONTACTS

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For more information on zoning and site plan review, contact the Planning Division at **940/761-7451**.

For more information on building code requirements, contact the Building and Code Administration Division at **940/761-7459**.

For more information on fire code requirements, contact the Fire Marshal's Office at **940/761-7901**.

For more information on asbestos abatement, contact the Department of State Health Services at **800/572-5548**.