



Community Development Department - Planning Division

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REGULATIONS GOVERNING CHURCHES & PUBLIC ASSEMBLY USES

The Uniform Building Code (UBC), Uniform Fire Code (UFC) and Zoning Ordinance have different standards for churches and public assembly uses than they have for traditional retail and office uses. These standards were established by federal, state and local regulatory bodies in order to guarantee that buildings used as gathering places for groups of people are safe and accessible and have adequate air and light, sanitary facilities and off-street parking.

While every project needs to be evaluated separately, there are some general rules that apply to all new locations.

1. **Land Use Permits:** All churches and public assembly uses must apply for a conditional use permit which is considered by the Planning commission at an advertised public hearing. The Commission reviews each application to determine that it has adequate facilities, is compatible with surrounding land uses and meets the city's standards for parking and circulation. Conditional use permits are not approved automatically and some applications are denied. There is a nonrefundable fee for processing an application approximately \$9,500, depending on the details of the particular project. Processing time is approximately 4-5 months. **Operation of such facilities cannot be initiated until and unless the permit is granted.**
2. **Construction Permits:** The UBC and UFC establish physical standards for public assembly uses. Those standards include installation of fire sprinklers, handicap accessible restrooms, emergency exits and entrances, air conditioning and upgraded air, light and ventilation. *These standards apply both to new construction and to the conversion of an existing building to a public assembly use.*

All construction, whether it involves a new building or conversion of an existing building, must be done by a licensed contractor under a current building permit. **The building cannot be occupied until it conforms to all these standards.**

3. **Due Diligence:** Failure to obtain the necessary land use and building permits puts an applicant's entire investment at risk. The Planning commission is not allowed to consider "self-imposed hardship" when it makes a decision and the Building and Safety Department has very little flexibility in enforcing the UBC. So please hire a contractor and work with the City before you start your project. Let us help. It's what we're here for.