

# City of Cleveland | Plans Review Guidelines



City of Cleveland  
Development and Engineering  
Building Division  
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**Overview**

The following guidelines are the specific plans review requirements for commercial projects in the City of Cleveland.

These guidelines should serve as the starting point for all commercial projects, but the building official may request additional information if necessary for a particular project.



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## Design Professional Requirements

Plans and specifications for all structures classified as *assembly, educational, and institutional* must have plans prepared by a Tennessee registered design professional. Unless specifically exempted below or elsewhere in these guidelines, all other structures also require the appropriate Tennessee registered design professional to prepare the required plans.



The following structures are not required to be prepared by a registered design professional unless required by the building official due to project specific criteria:

- Structures classified as *business, factory-industrial, hazardous, mercantile, residential, and storage* occupancies that are both (1) less than three stories in height, and (2) less than 5,000 square feet in total gross area.
- One-family and two-family dwellings and domestic outbuildings
- Farm buildings not designed or intended for human occupancy

## Design Professional Requirements (cont.)

### Tenant Spaces Less Than 5,000sf

For alterations to tenant spaces classified as *business, factory-industrial, hazardous, mercantile, residential, and storage* that are less than 5,000sf in area, drawings by a registered design professional are not required when:

- The tenant shell is not required to be altered
- The tenant space is separated from other tenant spaces by the minimum fire-rated separation required by the 2012 International Building Code for the proposed use.
- The egress requirements are not being altered
- The fire protections system is not being altered
- There are no structural alterations
- Not otherwise required by the building official

## Design Professional Requirements (cont.)

### Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing

In general, when plans are required to be prepared by a registered design professional, a full set of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing plans are also required to be submitted bearing the stamp appropriate registered design professional.

In instances where no work is being performed in one of these disciplines, the designer of record for the project shall submit a signed letter making a statement to that effect.

The following exceptions apply to structures over 5,000sf in area or over two stories in height that are classified as *business, factory-industrial, hazardous, mercantile, residential, and storage* occupancies:

#### Mechanical

- Existing interior space, where the occupancy or floor plan is not altered, but cosmetic or minor work is performed such as finishes are altered or prefabricated partitions are rearranged.
- Mechanical equipment is replaced with like equipment of a like size.

#### Plumbing

- Minor plumbing upgrades and the addition of up to three fixture unit valves, which does not alter the waste, vent, or supply system.

#### Electrical

- Minor electrical additions, such as receptacles, lighting, or other circuits not exceeding 20 amperes provided that such work does not require additional distribution panel(s) and/or the need for upgrading, resizing, or enlarging branch circuits and main feeders. The work must be performed by an appropriately licensed individual who shall submit a written statement that such work has been evaluated in relation to the current electrical code for compliance with the number of circuits added and the revised loads on the existing panel(s).

## Commercial Kitchen Hoods

A commercial kitchen is defined as a kitchen that produces food for sale.

Drawings or specs from the manufacturer or designer must be submitted for commercial kitchen hoods and duct systems along with a **Mechanical Permit Application**. There are two types of commercial hoods: Type I and Type II. A State of TN licensed mechanical contractor is required for all Type I hood installations.

A Type I hood shall be located over any appliance with the *potential* to produce grease. Examples of these types of appliances include but are not limited to: Open burner stoves and ranges, deep fat fryers, griddles (flat or grooved), tilting skillets or woks, braising and frying pans, barbecue equipment, char broilers

A Type II hood is used for the removal of heat and steam only.

**All commercial kitchens with an appliance that produces grease, heat, or steam, will be required to have either a Type I or Type II hood**, unless a specific appliance does not require a hood per the manufacturer or building official approval.

The drawings or specs shall:

- Show the kitchen layout, showing the location and type of cooking equipment
- Indicate whether the hood is Type I or Type II. Include the specifications from the manufacturer and indicate that the appliance is listed and labeled or equivalent per the 2012 International Mechanical Code.
- Demonstrate that the hood has been sized appropriately to accommodate the appliance(s) served
- Include the information about how much air is being exhausted out, and what is required to be brought in to make-up for this exhausted air. A balancing report will be required at the time of the final inspection.
- Address all fire protection requirements such as automatic fire-extinguishing system and manual pull system activation location, fire alarm system activation and monitoring, and extra hazard fire extinguisher location. All fire protection requirements shall be coordinated with the fire inspector prior to installation.

All commercial kitchen hoods will be required to have an inspection. All Type I hoods shall have either a light or smoke test of the duct system, and all equipment shall be on site, provided by the contractor, and ready for inspection at the scheduled time. For a light test, the room shall be sufficiently dark for inspection. All fire protection system inspections shall be coordinated with the fire inspector.

## Signs

In general, all signs must have plans prepared by a design professional registered in the State of Tennessee. Signs that do not exceed either of the following limits are exempt from this requirement:

- Signs where any portion of the sign is twenty feet (20') or more above the ground level; or
- Any portion of the sign is fifteen feet (15') or more above the ground level, if the sign has more than one hundred twenty square feet (120 sq. ft.) in total sign face area.



## Additional Requirements and Exceptions

In some instances, drawings prepared by a design professional may be requested even when not otherwise required due to the particular nature of such work. An example for this would be the mechanical system in a nail salon. Due to the involved nature of such a ventilation system, mechanical drawings prepared by a licensed design professional may be required.

When plans are not required to be prepared by a registered design professional, drawings must still meet all requirements as detailed in these guidelines. For more information, see *Plan Requirements and Standards*.

# New Construction Plans Requirements and Standards

## Plans Submittal Requirements

All new commercial projects must submit a New Commercial Building Permit Application as well as a digital set of plans. Permit applications are available online at [clevelandtn.gov/building](http://clevelandtn.gov/building) and may be submitted via the website or in person. Instructions for uploading digital plans are included on the application. The plan review fee is due upon submission of the permit application and may be paid on the website.

The registered design professional must submit a completed copy of the *Letter of Assurance* found in Appendix A of this manual. This form is also available to be submitted electronically via the website.

The plans review process may take up to 10 business days to complete. If additional information is required, the process may take longer.

For projects that require a registered design professional, a full set of drawings shall be submitted and include the following:

- **Site Plan** - including exit discharge from building, required parking, Fire Department access, accessibility from exterior exit discharge to a public way, fire hydrant locations with hydrant test data, and property lines.
- **Life Safety Plan** - Floor plan of each level showing use of each space with occupant load factors; show exiting paths with exit occupant load and capacity of the exit door or exit stairway; show common path and travel distance; show the ratings of all walls (i.e. smoke partitions, smoke barriers, fire-resistance rated partitions, and fire walls) with appropriate legend.
- **Architectural**
  - Cover sheet with all applicable code data
  - Floor plans, roof plans, sections, elevations
  - Sufficient detail to explain all project specific criteria – including UL fire assembly details, wall rating details, other rating details as required
  - Accessibility information, including dimensioned bathrooms showing the location of all applicable fixtures
  - Door, window, and finish schedules
  - All stair dimensions and applicable details
- **Structural**
  - Foundation plan and details
  - Building framing plans and details
  - Location and details of any rated walls
- **Mechanical** – drawings and details as required, including fire, smoke, and combination fire/smoke damper locations, gas furnace/boiler combustion air, fire resistance rated wall limits and legend which coordinate with the architectural drawings, UL firestopping details for penetrations through rated assemblies, commercial kitchen hood information

## New Construction Plans Requirements and Standards (cont.)

### Plans Submittal Requirements (cont.)

- **Plumbing** - drawings and details as required which include fire resistance rated wall limits and legend that matches the architectural plans and UL firestopping details for penetrations through rated assemblies.
- **Electrical** - drawings and details as required which include emergency lighting, exit signs, smoke duct detectors for HVAC fan shut down, complete fire alarm system (when required), fire resistance rated wall limits & legend which coordinate with the architectural drawings & UL firestopping details for penetrations through rated assemblies.
- **Fire Protection** (if applicable)
  - Automatic Extinguishing Systems
  - Standpipe
  - Sprinkler Systems
  - Fire resistance rated wall limits and legend which coordinate with the architectural drawings and UL firestopping details for penetrations through rated assemblies.
- **Specifications** – either on the drawings or as a separate document

## Plans Not Prepared by an Architect or Engineer

Projects that do not require plans to be submitted by a registered design professional, as outlined in this manual under the section *Design Professional Requirements*, still require the submission of a set of drawings for review. The plans shall be prepared by an individual with sufficient knowledge to produce a set of plans that demonstrate the project meets all applicable code requirements. The preparer must be capable of meeting all the requirements as outlined in this section.

All commercial projects must submit either a New Commercial Building Permit Application or a Commercial Addition or Alteration Permit Application as well as a digital set of plans. Permit applications are available online at [clevelandtn.gov/building](http://clevelandtn.gov/building) and may be submitted via the website or in person. Instructions for uploading digital plans online are included on the application. The plan review fee is due upon submission of the permit application and may be paid on the website.

When plans are not prepared by a registrant, they shall adhere to the following requirements:

- Drawings must be either in ink or electronically prepared, and of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature, and extent of work proposed.
- Drawings must be to a standard architectural scale and dimensioned as necessary.
- When necessary, standard architectural symbols should be used and identified in a legend.
- The plans must be signed by the person who prepared them.
- Provide the following general information on the first page of the drawings:
  - Job site address
  - The printed name and signature of the person preparing the plans
  - A detailed description of the proposed use of the building, and the previous use of the building if the building is existing (indicate if there is no change of use in the building)
  - State if there is work that will affect the site.
  - List the building materials used for construction (example: wood studs, metal studs, etc.)
  - Is there or will there be a sprinkler system?
  - Number of stories, and/or height of building
  - Total square footage of building
  - Is this building part of a larger building?
- Commercial buildings are required to be accessible and meet the federal ADA guidelines. The city has adopted the ICC A117.1-2009 code to meet these requirements and can provide details that show these required dimensions and clearances. Your signature on the front sheet shall indicate that you acknowledge that these requirements must be met. Please request any information as necessary from the City in advance of submitting your drawings and it will be provided to you.
- At a minimum, all submittals must include a life safety plan. This is a floor plan of each level showing use of each space; show exiting paths with travel distances from the farthest part of the building to the door; show the ratings of all walls if there are any (i.e. smoke partitions, smoke barriers, fire-resistance rated partitions, and fire walls) with appropriate legend.

## Existing Buildings

### Plans Submittal Requirements

All additions, alterations, or repairs requiring a permit to an existing commercial building must submit a Commercial Addition or Alteration permit application as well as a digital set of plans. Permit applications are available online at [clevelandtn.gov/building](http://clevelandtn.gov/building) and may be submitted via the website or in person. Instructions for uploading digital plans are included on the application. The plan review fee is due upon submission of the permit application and may be paid on the website.

The plans shall be prepared by a registered design professional as required in the section of the manual, *Design Professional Requirements*.

Furthermore, if an addition to a structure results in said structure exceeding the limits of work exempt from the registered design professional requirements outlined in that section (such as total building square footage), then plans prepared by a registered design professional shall be required regardless of the size of the addition. Any alteration to a building exceeding the limits of work exempt from the registered design professional requirements as outlined in that section shall require the submission of plans prepared by a registered design professional.

## Existing Buildings (cont.)

### Change of Occupancy or Use

When a structure, building, or tenant space undergoes a *change of occupancy or use*, then it must be brought up to all current applicable codes for the new occupancy classification or use.

The building official may exempt this requirement if the change of occupancy or use is considered a less hazardous classification than the current occupancy or use of the building. Examples of this might include reduced occupancy load or reduced fire protection requirements. In cases where the building official makes this determination, the project shall be treated as an *alteration*, rather than a *change of occupancy or use*.

## Existing Buildings (cont.)

### Additions

All additions must meet all applicable current code requirements for the occupancy classification or use. The addition must be fully accessible in that it conforms to all current handicap accessibility codes. The existing building does not need to be brought up to current code, with the following exceptions:

- Additions that result in a substantial improvement (the cost of the addition is greater than 50% of the value of the existing structure).
- If the addition affects existing structural elements, the affected portions of the structure must meet all current codes regarding design load values.
- When an addition to a structure includes a *primary function* of the building, the addition shall include an accessible restroom that meets all current accessibility codes. If this is not provided in the addition, the existing restroom must be brought up to meet all current accessibility codes. This does not apply to structures not requiring a restroom.
- If the addition contains a primary function to the building, the existing portions of the building must be altered as necessary to provide a handicap accessible route to the portion of the addition containing the primary function.
- When an addition is made to a structure containing individual sleeping or dwelling units, the existing building shall be provided with *smoke alarms* in accordance with Section 1103.8 of the *International Fire Code*.

## Existing Buildings (cont.)

### Alterations

All new work performed while making an alteration to an existing structure shall conform to all current codes for the occupancy classification or use. The unaffected portions of the existing building need not be brought up to current code, with the following exceptions:

- Alterations that result in a substantial improvement (the cost of the alteration is greater than 50% of the value of the existing structure).
- If the alteration affects existing structural elements, the affected portions of the structure must meet all current codes regarding design load values.
- If the alteration affects a *primary function* of the building, then the building must be brought up to current accessibility code requirements to the extent *technically feasible*. The altered primary function areas must be located on an accessible route. A handicap restroom must be provided by either altering the existing or adding a new family restroom. For projects where meeting current accessibility code requirements is not technically feasible, alternatives must comply with 2012 IBC Section 3411.8.
- When an alteration is made to a structure containing individual sleeping or dwelling units, the existing building shall be provided with *smoke alarms* in accordance with Section 1103.8 of the *International Fire Code*.

## Existing Buildings (cont.)

### Historic Buildings

Alterations to historic structures are exempt from many of the code requirements required for other types of existing buildings. In order to be classified as historic, the structure must meet one of the following criteria:

- Structure is certified on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Has proven eligibility to be certified on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Has been designated as historic under an appropriate state law.
- Has been designated as historic under an appropriate local law.

The requirements in this manual found in the sections regarding *change of occupancy*, *additions*, and *alterations* to existing buildings shall not be mandatory for historic buildings where such buildings are judged by the building official to not constitute a distinct life safety hazard.

For projects that qualify as historic and do not constitute a distinct life safety hazard, the following requirements shall apply:

- All new work shall meet current codes
- A minimum level of accessibility requirements shall be met including:
  - Must have one accessible route in to the building
  - Must have one accessible entrance
  - Must have access to all public spaces on the level of entrance
  - Must have at least one handicap restroom