

Permit & Development Center

809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI 53202 | (414) 286-8210 | milwaukee.gov/permits | DevelopmentCenterInfo@milwaukee.gov

When you establish your business, church, agency, school or organization in a new or existing building, you are required to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy **before** you open your doors. Certificates of Occupancy also are required for parking structures, lots and commercial storage buildings. Under most circumstances, they are not required for one- and two-family homes.

If you want to find out if there is a Certificate of Occupancy on file for your business, you may inspect the property record files at the Milwaukee Permit & Development Center, first floor, 809 N. Broadway. Call (414) 286-8207 for more information on this process.

If you believe a certificate was issued since 1998, you can check permit files at milwaukee.gov/LMS.

Applications for Certificates of Occupancy are available thru the Permit & Development Center. Applications are accepted in person or by mail. Visit milwaukee.gov/LMS to apply online.

The fee for a Certificate of Occupancy varies depending on the proposed use, the size of the space occupied, the amount of time the space was vacant, and other variables. You may contact the Permit & Development Center Plan Examination staff at (414) 286-8210 to determine the fee for your specific situation. There is an additional 1.6% IT and Training Surcharge and \$10 processing fee for each Certificate of Occupancy application.

When you apply for a Certificate of Occupancy:

- Staff will verify the City's zoning ordinance to determine whether the use you plan for the property is permitted at that address. If the use is not permitted, or if it is classified as a special use, you must seek authorization from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA). This process generally takes about 6-8 weeks.
- In most cases, the application triggers inspection of the property by plumbing, construction, and electrical inspectors to determine whether the space has code violations. When applicable, sprinkler, elevator, hazardous and boiler inspectors also make inspections. Information about scheduling these inspections is found in the information sheet, "Occupancy Inspections."

- Different requirements of the State building code apply to different property uses. For instance, a day care center inspection differs from an office or factory inspection, because the code has different requirements for all these uses.
- If inspectors find the property does not comply with the applicable building codes, inspectors will issue orders to make needed repairs. Inspectors must return to approve the work.
- Once all necessary work has been completed, when the inspectors give their OK, and after the Board of Zoning Appeals has acted (if required), Permit & Development Center staff issue the Certificate of Occupancy and mail it to the applicant. If you wish to pick up your certificate in person, please call in advance to make sure it is ready. Call (414) 286-8207.

Occupancy of the premises before approval of the Certificate of Occupancy may result in fines of \$150 to \$5,000 per day and an order to vacate the premises per section 200-19 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.