Expedited Permit and Inspection Certificate for small commercial businesses

Existing tenant space less than 5,000 sq. ft.

Applications should be submitted electronically via the citizen portal at
https://planningandpermitting.frederickcountymd.gov/

Purpose

As part of the County's commitment to assist small businesses, the Department of Permits and Inspections offers an *Expedited Permit and Inspection Certificate* (**EPIC**) process for small commercial business occupancies which involve minor interior construction or do not involve construction for existing tenant space. This process provides a number of benefits to small businesses and commercial property owners and it allows Frederick County to assist applicants by expediting all necessary reviews and approvals. It is an accelerated permit review, approval and inspection process that is designed to allow applicants to submit an application via our portal and to receive a building permit within one week or often just a few business days. It also provides for a predictable and timely inspection process needed for occupancy. This **EPIC** process is available to anyone whose project meets the established criteria however, be advised the County will determine final eligibility based on project, workload and availability of staff.

Eligibility Guidelines

Most small tenant occupancy applications that involve minor interior construction or no construction are eligible for the *EPIC process*, if the application is for occupancy that:

➢ Is for a proposed use with an existing and valid site development plan approval, or is for a proposed use that is determined by the Zoning Administrator to be permitted due to its similarity to an approved use permitted within the zoning district. If the proposed use is not listed in the Use Table of the Zoning Ordinance, it is recommended that the Applicant obtain prior verification from the Zoning Administrator that the proposed use is permitted within the specific zoning district.

➢ Does not involve a change in use that is not allowed by the Zoning Ordinance.

➢ Does not result in an increase in density or intensity of the site that would require APFO testing. If there is any question relating to a potential increase in density or intensity of the site or in regards to an APFO impact, it is recommended that the Applicant obtain prior verification from the County Traffic Engineer.

➢ Does not propose or require any change, exterior to the tenant space, unit or suite (i.e. to the site) including changes to the required parking.

➢ Overall square footage does not exceed 5,000.

➢ Does not have any outstanding violations or outstanding conditions of prior approval attached to the tenant space, unit or suite requesting alteration or occupancy that would be required to be addressed prior to permit issuance.

➢ Does not change the International Building Code (IBC) occupancy classification

➢ Is located within a municipality and the applicant has an approved zoning certificate from the municipality.

Notes:

(1) If the commercial interior alteration or occupancy has a complex design or requires structural modifications, it may require a more extensive review. These projects may not be eligible (as decided on a case by case basis) to be expedited and will be processed through the regular commercial plan review process.

(2) If the commercial occupancy is for a specialized use or has other unique circumstances, it may require a more extensive review. These projects may not be eligible (as decided on a case by case basis) to be expedited and will be processed through the regular commercial plan review process.

(3) If the proposed occupancy or construction involves food service to the general public, an additional separate review process is required by the Frederick County Health department (FCHD)-Environmental Health Services.

Submittal Requirements

1. Application submission via our [application portal](#) for Non-Residential Tenant Occupancy.

2. A site plan, plot plan or sketch plan that shows the existing building and site conditions. If there are multiple tenant spaces for the building, indicate the location of the proposed tenant space.

3. Scaled, labeled and dimensioned plans including a key plan indicating where the proposed tenant space is within the building.

   a. **Minor construction**- Construction plans, signed and sealed by a Maryland Registered Architect/Engineer. Signed and sealed plans are not required if alteration or repair of existing building is limited to one of the following: (1) Minor interior alterations or cosmetic or similar repairs; and fixtures, cabinetwork or furniture, where the estimated cost including labor and materials does not exceed $25,000. (2) Storefronts, facades or similar replacements; exterior stairways, landings, decks or ramps; joists; or a mechanical, electrical, or plumbing system where the estimated cost including labor and materials does not exceed $10,000.

   b. **No construction**- Proposed floor plan of the tenant space. The drawing does not need to be done by an Architect.

4. When plumbing is involved, and the property is served by Frederick County Water and Sewer, the following is required for the Division of Water and Sewer Utilities (DWSU) review agency:

   a. Construction drawings
      i. Complete plumbing plan w/riser diagrams
      ii. Fixture schedule
      iii. Floor plan
      iv. Kitchen equipment layout and schedule, if applicable

      For swimming pools, please contact DWSU.

   b. Completed Industrial Waste Survey, signed by proposed Tenant/Occupant. This form is available on the County's website at https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1092/Industrial-Waste-Survey?bidId=

      Please note that submittals for DWSU may be made in advance of the building permit application by either sending directly to DWSU via e-mail to DUSWMSubmittals@frederickcountymd.gov. Submitting all of the items required by DWSU in advance would allow you to find out the capacity fees ahead of time. The capacity fees need to be paid before the building permit can be issued. Questions should be directed to 301-600-1179.

5. If the property is located within a municipality, paperwork is needed from the municipality that approves the use and occupancy (zoning) requested. Contact the municipality for details, [municipal contact information](#).

6. Once your application is processed by our intake staff, payment of fees will be required. Fees can be paid electronically via your portal account by check or credit cards (a separate processing fee will apply). To make cash or check payment in person, you may make payment via the Treasury drive thru window located at 30 N. Market Street, Frederick, MD 21701. Checks should be made out to the Treasurer of Frederick County.

Process

1. **Application submission:** Log into your [application portal](#) to begin the application submission process. If you do not already have an account, one must be created. Once you have an account you may log in and select *submit an application/request* link located at the top of the webpage. Select *building permits* and then select the type of application.

2. **Application:** Once your application submission is made via our [application portal](#), a permit technician will review the application to ensure all submittal requirements have been satisfied. If there is any missing information the technician will provide the applicant with details and instructions on how to obtain any missing information. Upon approval of the application, the application fees must be paid. *Please be advised that the plan review does not begin until the application fees are paid.*

3. **Reviews:** Applicant will be reviewed by a *Zoning Planner* for review of the use that is proposed. Additionally a *Building Plans Examiner*, who will review the submitted plans to evaluate code compliance with both the building code and life safety code. If plan revisions are not significant, the plans will be released with appropriate conditions of approval noted on the plans. If reviews are required by either the Division of Water and Sewer Utilities or Environmental Health the agencies will be routed plans electronically.

4. **Permit issuance:** Upon successful completion of the reviews, the plans and permit issuance documents will be released and available for download within the attachments folder on your portal account.

5. **Inspections:** We offer next day inspections if the request is received by 2:00 p.m. on the business day prior to the date when the inspection is needed. Inspection requests can be submitted via your application portal by using the look up feature.

   For **commercial occupancies that involve construction,** the normal inspection process can   be followed. General [inspection procedures](#) can be found on the permits and inspection webpage.

   For **commercial occupancies that do not involve construction,** a single combination inspection will be performed to confirm the minimum occupancy requirements have been met.

FAQ's:
When are Expedited Permit Applications accepted?

- All applications must be made electronically via your [application portal](#), which is accessible 24/7.

Who may apply for the permit?

- The property owner, licensed contractor, design professional, or the owner's agent. An owner's agent other than a licensed contractor or design professional, (such as the proposed Tenant), must be authorized by the owner to make application.

What are the fees?

Commercial occupancies that involve interior alterations (minor construction)

- Filing fee $ 32.00
- Building Review & Inspection fee $ .27/SF, (Minimum $61.00)
- Life Safety fee $ .15/SF, (Minimum $147.00)
- Zoning fee* $ 56.00
- Automation Enhancement fee $ 11.00
- **If property is served by well or septic and there is proposed plumbing involved, there is a Health Review fee of $75.00.**
- **If a Capacity Permit is required for County water and sewer, Capacity Permit fees must be paid prior to Building Permit issuance.**

Commercial occupancies that do not involve construction

- Filing fee $ 32.00
- Life Safety fee $147.00
- Zoning fee* $ 56.00
- Automation Enhancement fee $ 11.00

*If the property is within a municipality, the Zoning fee does not apply.

What is needed for Occupancy?

- Upon completion of the inspection process, a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued, usually within 24 hours. Receipt of this document concludes the process and allows for legal occupancy of the space.

Helpful contact information:

- **Food Service:** When Food Service is involved, contact Environmental Health Services Food Control Office at 301-600-2542 for additional requirements and inspections to be obtained prior to occupancy. Visit their web page at www.frederickcountymd.gov/index.aspx?NID=2435.

- **Business License:** The Clerk of the Circuit Court issues business licenses. For information, contact their office at 301-600-1976.

- **Liquor License:** The Liquor Board issues liquor licenses. When a proposed Tenant or Occupant has an existing liquor license or is requesting a new liquor license, approval from the Liquor Board is required in most cases before any alterations are made to the establishment. For more information, visit their webpage: www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/index.asp?NID=1291 or phone 301-600-2984.

- **Plan Review – 301-600-1086:** Contact the Plan Reviewer if you have any questions regarding the Building Code requirements or building plans.

- **Zoning Review – 301-600-1143:** Contact the Zoning Planner if you have any questions regarding setbacks to property lines for your property, the use of a structure, or other Zoning regulations.

- **Customer Service Supervisor – 301-600-1095:** Contact the Customer Service Supervisor if you have questions about the application form, processing of the permit, permit procedures in general, or if you would like to discuss any part of the application process that you would like to see improved.

Updated 2/1/2026