

# INSPECTIONS

## What You Should Know Before You Buy or Lease a Building for Commercial Use

### First Things First

There's more to it than what you might think and it's more than the proper zoning. The nature of your building's needs guides the 'occupancy type' requirements.

The occupancy types determine what building code requirements and City ordinances are applicable and must be met.

Every building at the time of its initial construction has three (3) characteristics which mandate what function it can be used for:

- Occupancy Group Type
- Construction Type
- Maximum Occupancy Load

A few occupancy group types are:

- Residential (single family/multi-family)
- Assembly (church, restaurant, theaters)
- Mercantile (stores)
- Business (offices, banks)



What it was initially built for may later want to be converted into something else.

For example, a building initially built for a residence, later wishes to be converted to an office or small church.

A use or ownership of a building may change without a change in the 'occupancy type.' A building may house a restaurant or clothing store for many years but may have had several owners or tenants. The hazards remain the same.

On the other hand the 'occupancy type' may change during the life span of a building which could involve a modification in the potential hazard. In such an event, the building must be reclassified accordingly, and comply in all respects with the new classification, possibly highly impacting what you had budgeted.

When this occurs many factors may come together such as the possible need for additional – but not limited to:

- Exits
- Bathrooms
- ADA requirements
- Fire protection
- Parking spaces

The maximum occupancy load requirements may change as well.

This is especially true for 'assembly type' groups. For example, what was once initially a store or an office with an occupancy load of 10 persons. . . now wants to be used or converted to an 'assembly use' with double the number of occupants – the potential hazard has changed with possible 'Life Safety' issues.



### Most Importantly

Our main goal is to ensure that your location is safe, for you and for everyone in it.

So, before you make a final decision on a building for your endeavors make sure you have all of the facts. . . before you sign on the dotted line.

### A Team is Here to Help You

In an effort to be 'pro-active' the City has implemented the "Business Assistance Team."

The team is compiled of representatives from the:

- Zoning Office (LCPC)
- Fire Marshal's Office
- Hinesville Downtown Development Authority
- Inspections Department
- Business License Office

Appointments to meet with the Business License Assistance Team may be scheduled upon request.

They can review and analyze your potential location and inform you of what modifications may or will be required based on the potential use, all of which could significantly impact your budget.

For Business Assistant Team appointments please contact the Inspections Department at (912) 876-4147.