

Guidelines for Commercial Fast Track

About Commercial Fast Track

What is the Commercial Fast Track permit process?

The Commercial Fast Track permit process is a quicker plan review service for small-scale interior alterations of existing commercial buildings. While standard commercial building permit applications can take four weeks to complete the first set of reviews, a complete and compliant Commercial Fast Track permit application will receive comments, or be ready for permit issuance, within **3 business days** from initial intake or processing of the permit application.

If the plans submitted meet the Commercial Fast Track guidelines, and are compliant with all applicable codes, you will be able to obtain an approval. If the plans cannot be approved completely, they will be returned to the applicant with partial approvals and, if applicable, notes on what needs to be corrected via our ePlans system. (Note: construction is not permitted to begin until all reviews are approved the permit has been issued.)

What is the cost for a Commercial Fast Track permit?

Commercial Fast Track permits use the same fee schedule as standard commercial interior alteration building permits and are based on the value of construction for the project. There is no additional fee to use the Commercial Fast Track process. Further, there is no construction cost documentation required for review of the valuation, as would be for a standard interior alteration commercial building permit.

The applicant should provide an estimate of the value of the project which includes labor and materials for all disciplines – including mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work. Construction cost documentation is not required for the project valuation, as would be for a standard interior alteration commercial building permit. There is an initial filing fee at plan submittal, and this filing fee will be deducted from the final permit fee which is collected just prior to permit issuance.

Please visit the [Commercial Fast Track web page](#) for additional information and complete eligibility criteria, as well as the [DPS webpage](#) for [current codes and County amendments](#).

COMMERCIAL FAST TRACK is available via **ePlans & eServices**

There are many requirements for complete building, mechanical, electrical, and fire code compliance. This guide is meant to assist the applicant in successfully preparing their plans for the Commercial Fast Track permit process.

Although this guide covers many required parts of a complete Commercial Fast Track application, as well as some of the items commonly missed or found incomplete, it is not intended to represent all the minimum requirements for a successful Commercial Fast Track application.

Projects that Qualify for Commercial Fast Track

The Commercial Fast Track permit process is available for projects involving small-scale interior alterations of existing commercial buildings. Projects in the following IBC use groups qualify for the Commercial Fast Track permit process, except as noted:

Business Occupancies (IBC “B” Use)

- Exceptions:
- Alterations on more than one floor.
 - Medical facilities or offices, to include dental, psychiatric, nursing, obstetrical, or surgical care. Dry cleaning facilities.
 - Business occupancies that are part of a mixed use space (IBC non-separated mixed use).

Mercantile Occupancies (IBC “M” Use)

- Exceptions:
- Alterations on more than one floor.
 - Mercantile occupancies that are part of a mixed use space (IBC non-separated mixed use).

Fire Damage Repair (All IBC Use Groups, up to 25% of the value of the structure)

- Exceptions:
- Projects that involve the repair of fire damaged structural components
 - Projects that alter the structure from its original pre-fire condition.

Projects that DO NOT qualify for Commercial Fast Track

The following projects that do not qualify for the Commercial Fast Track process (this list is not to be considered all-inclusive and is subject to change):

- ☐ Any work in IBC use groups **other than those listed above**, including work in mixed use tenant spaces (non-separated mixed use per the IBC).
- ☐ Any **change in IBC Building Occupancy Classification**, to include tenant spaces that do not have an existing Use and Occupancy Certificate or are a first tenant.
- ☐ Any **change in IBC Construction Type Classification**, or projects in or involving Type IV (Heavy Timber and Structural Composite Lumber construction).
- ☐ Any **increase in gross floor area** (as defined in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance), including new buildings and additions to existing buildings.
- ☐ Alterations on **more than one floor**.
- ☐ Any **exterior alterations** or site changes, including changes to required parking.
- ☐ Any project with a **pending zoning “Special Exception”**.
- ☐ Any project involving a **commercial kitchen**.
- ☐ Any project involving a **medical facility or office**, to include dental, psychiatric, nursing, obstetrical, or surgical care;
- ☐ Projects with spaces that have **vertical floor openings**, multiple-floor shaft penetrations, or involve the creation or alteration of **core corridors**.
- ☐ Any space or tenant that stores, uses, or dispenses **hazardous materials or hazardous chemicals**, including laboratories and gas stations.
- ☐ Any project or tenant space that uses or requires **specialized ventilation equipment**, including nail

- salons (exhaust for manicures/pedicures), and smoke control/management systems.
- ☐ Installation of **more than one new transformer** over 30kVA, and/or **more than one new electrical panel**, and/or **new circuits in more than 8 different existing panels** and/or **more than 30 new circuits**
- ☐ **Trailers**, such as those for sales or construction.
- ☐ Installation of floor mounted/suspended equipment greater than **350 lbs.**, **water heaters** with a capacity of greater than 30gallons, and **high density (mobile) filing/storage systems**.
- ☐ Installation of new roof mounted/suspended equipment greater than **300 lbs.**, or creation of new **roof framing penetrations over 6" x 6"**.
- ☐ Any **fire damage repair more than 25% of the value** of the structure, the **repair of fire damaged structural elements**, or alterations **beyond restoring a structure to its original pre-fire condition**.
- ☐ Alterations that cannot be reviewed in the time allotted for Commercial Fast Track plans because of **complexity of design or structural modifications**. The manager or plans examiner will make this determination of complexity.
- ☐ Any revision to a commercial building permit that was not previously processed as Commercial Fast Track.

Requirements for Commercial Fast Track Permit Applications

The following are the minimum requirements for submitting a Commercial Fast Track permit application:

- ☐ A completed **commercial interior alteration building permit application** and filing fee.
- ☐ A complete set of plans, submitted electronically through our online ePlans system. Add/Alternates are not permitted.

Each drawing sheet must be signed and sealed by a Maryland Registered Architect or Professional Engineer, as required by Maryland law, including the required Titleblock Certification. Digital signatures are accepted for plans submitted electronically.

- ☐ All plans sealed by an Architect shall have the following statement on each sheet and the requested information filled in. *"Professional Certification. I certify that these documents were prepared or approved by me, and that I am a duly licensed architect under the laws of the State of Maryland, License No._____, Expiration Date:_____."*
- ☐ All plans sealed by a Professional Engineer shall have the following statement on each sheet and the requested information filled in. *"Professional Certification. I hereby certify that these documents were prepared or approved by me, and that I am a duly licensed professional engineer under the laws of the State of Maryland, License No._____, Expiration Date:_____."*

The plans submitted with a Commercial Fast Track application shall include the following:

- ☐ **Architectural drawings** which include scaled and dimensioned floor plans, elevations, sections, and details (as appropriate). All plans shall have a code analysis, a list of current and applicable codes, a scope of work a drawing index, appropriate schedules (door, window, hardware, etc.), a key plan showing the entire floor, and wall type/legends (see attached sheets for examples). Clearly indicate

what is new and what is existing.

- ☐ **Electrical and mechanical drawings** which identify the electrical panels and mechanical systems that are existing; show power/light plans with applicable schedules; and show locations of supply and return registers. If new systems are to be installed, then provide complete electrical riser diagram, panel schedules, and locations; and/or complete mechanical plans with all applicable schedules, ductwork, and register layout. Provide the weight of all new and relocated equipment greater than 100 lbs. Clearly indicate what is new and what is existing.
- ☐ **Structural drawings**, if applicable, to include structural floor plans, sections and details, general structural specifications and load criteria and computations as appropriate. Clearly indicate what is new and what is existing.
- ☐ **Supporting documentation**, to include a completed DPS Maryland Accessibility Compliance Form. For fire damage repair projects, provide insurance documentation indicating the scope and value of the repairs.

Code Analysis	ACCEPTABLE*		UNACCEPTABLE**	
	Existing Building	Proposed Alteration	Existing Building	Proposed Alteration
IBC Occupancy Classification	B	B	Professional Office	Beauty Parlor
NFPA 101 – Occupancy Classification	Business	Business		
Type of Construction	2-B	II-B	Wood	
Number of stories above grade	2	2	> 5	> 5
High Rise (Y/N)	N	N	N	N
Covered mall (Y/N)	N	N	?	?
Fully Sprinklered (Y/N)	Y	Y	?	NFPA 13
Fire Alarm (Y/N)	Y	Y	?	?
Floor area of renovation	12000	5000	About 5000	5500 or so

* All existing and proposed design information must be completed in the code analysis, as it is described in the appropriate sections of the IBC (International Building Code). Information must be accurate such that required fire ratings, occupant loads, maximum travel distance, etc., can be determined by the plans examiner quickly and accurately.

** Descriptions like beauty parlor or auto shop do not accurately describe the “use group” as defined by IBC and may cause confusion that may result in your plan being disapproved. The code review is based on building design information, and accurate and complete code information is necessary to conduct a code review.

Wall Legend, Wall Schedule, & Key Plan

Wall Legend

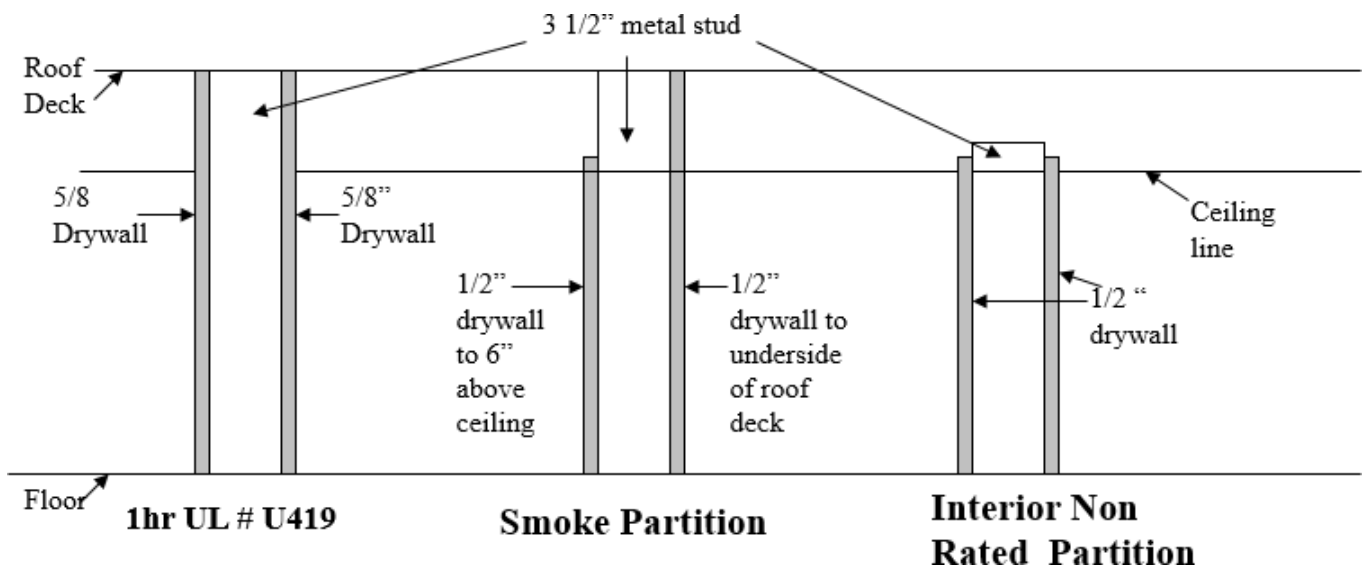
A clear and easy-to-read wall legend helps the plan reviewer understand the full scope of work being proposed. Wall legends should use distinctly different symbols to distinguish between new and existing work.

Only one symbol should be used to represent existing partitions, including the existing core and shell, and the interior tenant walls that will remain during construction. You must use different symbols for new work which are clearly distinct from the symbol for existing construction.

All rooms and spaces must be labeled. Please use common references for designations like “office”, “storage”, or “conference”. Designations like “motivation”, “champion”, or “amber” are not descriptions that tell us what the room will be used for and may result in the disapproval of your plans.

Wall Schedule

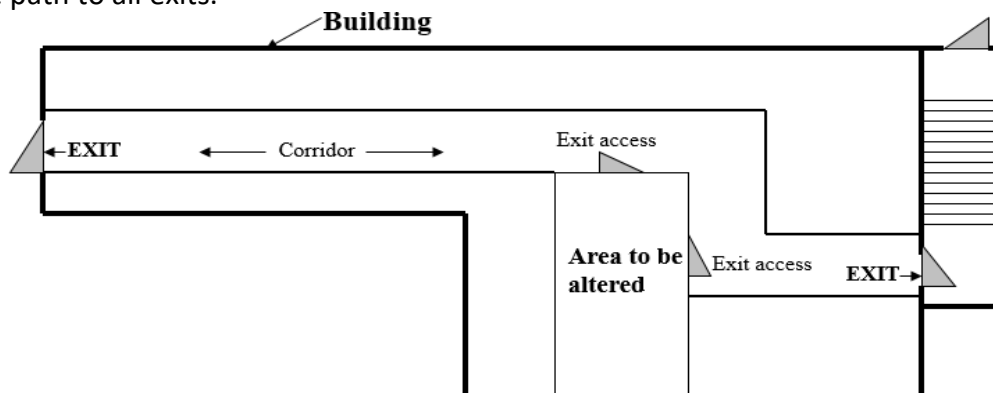
Wall schedules tell your reviewer about the materials and ratings of the walls you intend to construct. Wall schedules should show if the partitions are rated or serve other purposes, such as smoke partitions.



Other schedules which may apply include: door schedules which identify the door size and fire rating (if any), hardware schedules which identify ADA shape requirements for door handles, and any locks that may be provided.

Key Plan

A key plan not only shows the reviewer the location of the project within the building, but also demonstrates the path that must be traveled to get to the building exit (typically a fire rated exit stair or fire rated exit passageway). If the space does not exit directly to the outside, the plan reviewer will need a key plan that shows the entire path to all exits.



Structural Information

File Rooms

- ☐ Provide a certification, sealed and signed by a professional structural engineer, that the floor has **sufficient structural capacity** for the intended loads.
- ☐ The certification shall reference the **proposed floor layout** and **identify the weight** of fully loaded file cabinets.
- ☐ **High density file/storage systems** are not permitted under the Commercial Fast Track process.
- ☐ **Structural support details** shall be provided as necessary.

Mechanical Units

- ☐ Provide **weights and locations** of mechanical equipment, including opening sizes in floors, roofs, and bearing walls (interior and exterior).
- ☐ Provide calculations and details (as appropriate), sealed and signed by a professional engineer, certifying the **structural capacity of the ceiling, floor, wall, bracket, or other structural support**, to carry the appliance load. Equipment in excess of 400 pounds is not permitted under the Commercial Fast Track process.

Appliances

- ☐ Provide the **weight (i.e., load) and location of appliances**, including water heaters.
- ☐ Provide structural connection (i.e., design details) of **all appliances that are proposed to be hung from the ceiling or supported by a wall**. The details shall show structural member sizes and quantities.
- ☐ Provide calculations and details (as appropriate), sealed and signed by a professional engineer, certifying the **structural capacity of the ceiling, floor, wall, bracket, or other structural support**, to carry the appliance load. Water heaters with a capacity of more than 30 gallons are not permitted under the Commercial Fast Track process.

MEP Information

Electrical - Any drawings for electrical plan review must include:

- ☐ A **signature, seal, and professional certification** by a Maryland registered design professional on each sheet. A Maryland registered Professional Engineer may be required depending on the complexity of the alterations.
- ☐ **Power riser diagram**, including the wiring method type, feeder sizes proper grounding and bonding jumper sizes, including over-current protection device, size and rating.
- ☐ **Fire alarm riser diagram**, descriptive notes, annunciator panel and control panel, if applicable.
- ☐ **Symbols list**, lighting and panel schedules.
- ☐ **Reflected ceiling plan**, including show window and track lighting.
- ☐ A **power plan** showing the floor layout and electrical equipment location clearly indicating what is new and what is existing.

Even in a “no electrical work” or “very minor electrical work” situation, must have an electrical plan, or at least a statement on the plan, that describes these minor conditions so that the reviewer can determine if any further information will be needed.

We will accept this statement instead of a full set of MEP plans unless, in a rare instance, it would conflict with other code requirements.

- ☐ Demonstrated **working clearances** for the electrical equipment in accordance with Article 110, Part II.
- ☐ **Demand load calculations**, including existing loads added to new additions.
- ☐ For **emergency distribution equipment**, include transfer equipment and panel locations.

Mechanical - Any drawings for mechanical plan review must include:

- ☐ A **signature, seal, and professional certification** by a Maryland registered design professional on each sheet. A Maryland registered Professional Engineer may be required depending on the complexity of the alterations.
- ☐ All **supply, return, and exhaust registers**, including existing systems, must be shown on the reflected ceiling drawing.
- ☐ When an **HVAC system is to be reconfigured**, an existing condition drawing along with a proposed work drawing must be submitted. All new and altered ductwork, including exhaust systems, must be shown. Show the duct sizes and the quantity of supply and return air per diffuser.
- ☐ When a **new HVAC system is to be installed** all ductwork, piping, unit placement, and duct dimensions must be shown along with the quantity of supply and return air per diffuser. A ventilation air schedule per the current code must also be included. The equipment schedule should correspond with the ventilation air schedule.
- ☐ **Show all new and existing equipment**; include schedules depicting heating and cooling capacities, air flow ratings, and quantity of ventilation air.
- ☐ Include **ventilation air quantities**, or percentage of ventilation air for air handlers supplying spaces to be permitted.

Mechanical plans are handled similar to electrical plans. In many instances when the walls get moved around it becomes necessary to move supply and return in order to balance the ventilation to the space. Even in a minor case, we should, at a minimum, see the relocation of diffusers and have a statement on the plan that describes the condition.

Interior Demolition

- ☐ Provide **demolition plans** for all alteration projects that involve interior demolition of a previous tenant space. For projects with a small amount of demolition, elements to be demolished may be called out on the proposed floor plan.
- ☐ Provide clear a scope of work for **demolition-only** projects.
- ☐ Commercial alteration permits for interior demolition are **restricted to interior tenant work only**.

Kiosks

- ☐ Provide a clear, enlarged **partial floor plan** of the area of the kiosk (to scale or dimensioned) demonstrating the minimum required clearance of 10 feet to storefronts and the minimum required clearance of 20 feet from kiosk-to-kiosk or to another structure.
- ☐ Indicate on the plans if there is a **ceiling or cover above the kiosk**. If a ceiling or cover is provided, identify how automatic fire sprinkler coverage will be provided.
- ☐ Materials used in the **kiosk construction** must be consistent with IBC building construction type of the surrounding mall, fire-retardant treated (FRT) wood, or materials acceptable to the IBC for the

construction of kiosks.

- ☐ **Sales/service counters** shall comply with ADA.
- ☐ If a kiosk has an **electrical panel**, a complete electrical riser diagram will need to be provided.
 - Show wiring back to the existing source.
 - Clearly identify what is existing, what is new, and what is relocated.
 - Identify all overcurrent protection and wire sizes for the riser.
 - Provide all applicable panel schedules.
 - Show a scaled location of all new or relocated electrical system components, to include transformers and disconnects. If kiosk is fed from an individual circuit(s) from an existing panel, identify as such in plans.

Systems or Modular Furniture

- ☐ Provide a clear “Scope of Work”.
- ☐ Provide a **typical modular workstation** layout for verifying the opening to the work area and the height of the furniture components.
- ☐ Provide documentation of acceptable **flamespread index and smoke-developed index**.

Revisions to Commercial Fast Track Plans

Commercial Fast Track plan revisions must be submitted electronically to the original ePlans project with the approved plans, complete with all approval stamps and plan review comments.

- ☐ The applicant is required to submit a set of the revised sheets (ONLY the revised sheets) with seal and signature of the applicable design professional (digitally signed and submitted electronically).
- ☐ The revised sheets shall clearly distinguish the changes from the original approved plans by a revised scope of work note specific to each sheet, located on each sheet.
- ☐ Applicants are encouraged to provide a written narrative, and to use clouds and/or numbered triangles to indicating the revision number.