

Live/Work and Work/Live Uses

WHAT ARE LIVE/WORK AND WORK/LIVE USES?

Live/work and work/live uses allow a nonseparated commercial business and a residential use within the same space. In the case of live/work, the space is defined as a residential occupancy and the commercial use can be no more than 50 percent of the unit. With work/live, however, the space is a commercial occupancy and the residential use cannot exceed 50 percent of the space. In both cases, the business owner both resides and operates a business within the same space. Unlike home occupancies, the business may have employees and customers just like any other type of commercial business. In general, the unit size is limited to 3,000 square feet; however, there are also alternatives for work/live uses to provide for larger unit sizes if the commercial and residential spaces are separated.

CITY GOALS

- **Further community goals for connecting jobs and housing in a more compact way**
- **Expand entrepreneurial opportunities and support the creation of new businesses**
- **Promote sustainability and historic preservation**
- **Facilitate economic activity in conjunction with residential uses**
- **Provide flexible standards to incentivize these mixed-use developments**
- **Conserve and reuse existing and older, smaller, and historically significant buildings**

ALLOWED OCCUPANCIES FOR LIVE/WORK AND WORK/LIVE USES

Allowed occupancies for live/work and work/live uses include A (assembly), B (office/café/business), M (retail), and F (manufacturing). Uses not allowed are hazardous or storage uses, with the exception of accessory storage for the commercial use. In addition, occupancies related to marijuana growing, processing, or retail sales are not permitted in live/work or work/live uses.

Live/work and work/live uses with food production or food service are required to meet applicable requirements from Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, and Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board.

ZONING FOR LIVE/WORK AND WORK/LIVE

Live/Work and Work/Live uses are allowed in commercial, mixed use and downtown zoning districts, including T, C-1, C-2, HM, PDB, NCX, CCX, UCX, RCX, CIX, HMX, URX, NRX, M-1, DCC, WR, DMU, and DR.



APPLICABLE STANDARDS

1. New construction can contain no more than 20 units.
2. Subject to a conditional live/work and work/live agreement license and City of Tacoma business license.
3. Residential portion must be inhabited by the operator or an employee of the business. The work and living spaces cannot be leased separately from each other.
4. Residential portion of the unit limited to one family.
5. Certificate of Occupancy required for the specific commercial use required for work/live units.



Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | www.tacomapermits.org (253) 591-5030

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

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EXEMPTIONS FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS

Existing buildings converting to live/work or work/live uses may be able to take advantage of some exemptions in the zoning and building codes. For buildings lawfully in existence prior to December 5, 1989:

1. No additional parking is required for live/work or work/live units.
2. Buildings may be partially equipped with sprinkler systems provided all stories with work/live uses and any stories/basements below those uses are fully sprinklered.
3. Buildings with 4 or fewer units may be able to use NFPA 13D or 13R sprinkler systems.

For historic buildings, up to 10% of new floor area may be added in which external additions and alterations are exempt from all prescriptive design standards contained within TMC 13.06.500 and TMC 13.06A.

Offsite improvement requirements may be waived for live/work buildings with less than 10 units, or work/live buildings less than 30,000 square feet in area.



GETTING STARTED

- Discuss with a Planner and Commercial Building Reviewer by calling 253-591-5030 or meet in person by requesting a pre-application meeting.
- Obtain other applicable approvals, such as a State License or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.
- Submit your building plans and obtain a certificate of occupancy, as needed.
- If all standards are met, sign the Conditional Live/Work and Work/Live Agreement.
- Submit the application and license fees to the Tax and License Division, 744 Market St, Tacoma, WA 98402.



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