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*Success*



# Downtown

## *Framework for Success*

**A Real Estate User's Guide for Spaces less than 5,000 sq. ft.**  
(for owners or tenants renovating space downtown)

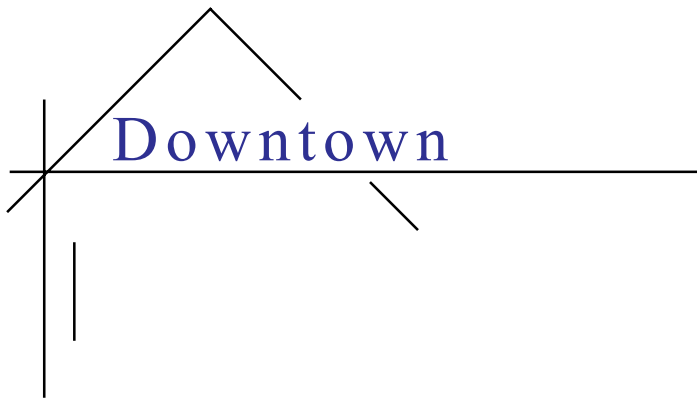
The majority of space Downtown falls under Corpus Christi's two most "generous" zoning designations, B-5 or B-6. These designations allow the widest possible range of uses. But many designations allow the widest possible range of uses. Many newcomers will be changing the property's use, ie: office to retail or retail to restaurant. This change of use requires a new ***Certificate of Occupancy***. You must submit a plan of proposed renovations to the City in order to get a ***Building Permit*** that will later allow you to get your ***Certificate of Occupancy***. The City requires every plan to show the same things: 1) all outside and interior walls, 2) understandable dimensions, 3) which direction the doors open or swing, 4) the location of all electrical outlets, appliances and panels, 5) the location of all plumbing fixtures and appliances. Plans do not require an architect's seal, nor do they have to be scaled drawings. Plans do have to be legible and understandable. Allow the City at least three weeks for their review and approval. There are three important rules to remember:

- \* **Never expect to open a business without a *Certificate of Occupancy***
- \* **Never start renovation without a *Building Permit***
- \* **Never apply for a permit without a plan attached**

There are a few other renovation tips you need to keep in mind when you are working on Downtown property.

### **Watch for:**

- 1 ) outdated and/or inadequate meter boxes
- 2 ) inadequately sized sewer lines
- 3 ) the right size sewer trap for your purpose
- 4 ) the properly sized grease trap as well as compliance with the new interceptor requirements for restaurants
- 5 ) some buildings are so old that they have outstanding unpaid sewer tap fees, or their tap no longer exists... having been bypassed or sleeved
- 6 ) restrictions and requirements that limit what you can do for your dumpster site
- 7 ) compliance with parking requirements if zones "B-5"



It is our recommendation that you seriously consider the expense of hiring a Master Plumber and a Master Electrician to make an inspection of your site prior to buying or leasing the space. It could be money well spent.

We also recommend that anyone embarking on a renovation project carefully consider the many legal issues involved. You should consider engaging a Board Certified Real Estate Attorney to assist you with all Contracts and Leases before they are signed. Generally, less than an hour's work is needed to review such documents. If your renovation involves hiring subcontractors and/or general contractors, there are things you need to know about statutory *retainage, payment and performance bonds, and lien waivers* that could best be explained by a capable attorney. Environmental issues also involve legal fine points. Older buildings typically need to be checked for lead paint and asbestos. Remediating problems usually involve the less expensive prices known as "encapsulation in place" instead of the costly removal approached of the recent past. If you are thinking of by-passing this step, remember that the Board of Health enforces the environmental rules, and they also monitor all the demolition and remodeling permits that come through.

The American's with Disabilities Act is also relevant whenever a renovation is planned. This act is enforced by State and Federal agencies, not the City. However, enforcement is often triggered by citizen complaints and can result in costly lawsuits. The penalties are harsh (liquor licenses have been suspended over ADA compliance issues). The Health Department inspects for compliance for a wide variety of specialized requirements for new restaurants. The Fire Department also is heavily involved in reviewing fire and safety issues, ie: exits, sprinkler systems, capacity limits.

The **Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce** can be an important source of help for anyone starting a new business venture. You can get:

- 1) a candid evaluation of your business plan
- 2) help preparing a business plan
- 3) some ideas on basic economic feasibility- costs, prices, volume and overhead

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Our last suggestion is related to financing your project. Never finance the start of a renovation project from your own pocket based on the idea that later you can borrow the money you need to finish the project. In Texas, a lender must make the loan before any work commences in order to have an insurable first lien on the collateral.

## *Important Phone Numbers*

City Offices: Planning (Zoning and Platting)	361.826.3240
Fire & Safety	361.880.3932
Building Division	361.880.3240
City-County Health Department	361.851.7205
Associated General Contractors of America	361.289.0996
Associated Builders & Contractors	361.289.5311
American Institute of Architects (AIA) (You may contact individual Firms)	N/A
Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce	361.881.1800
Corpus Christi Downtown Management District	361.882.2363



The above information was compiled and formulated by the Incentive's Committee of the Corpus Christi Downtown Management District (DMD) in an effort to assist those who plan to become significant investors in the future of a growing and exciting Downtown venture.

For more information call: (361) 882.2363 or fax (361) 884-9591