

Activating Existing Commercial Structures in Residential Zones

Q: Why did I receive notification?

A: You received a notice because you either reside or own property or a business near an identified potentially eligible structure and may have an interest in these recommendations.

Q: What's changing?

A: Former commercial structures in West Central Spokane would still be allowed to convert back to a commercial use, but with new specifications for limited expansion and updates to parking requirements. In other areas of the city, former commercial structures would be eligible to reinstate a commercial, office, or small multi-family use on a limited basis. A period of time would be established during which the same possibility of converting former non-residential structures to other residential areas outside West Central. These conversions are subject to an application process that would include mailed notice to nearby residents and property owners, with expansions over 3,000 square feet of building footprint requiring a higher level of review with a public hearing. An overall limitation of 5,000 square feet of building footprint would be required.

Allowed uses include:

- Office uses found in [SMC 17C.190.250](#);
- Retail sales and service uses found in [SMC 17C.190.270](#); and
- Uses allowed within the RMF zone found in [SMC 17C.110.100](#).

Uses NOT allowed include:

- Sale or leasing of motorized consumer vehicles
- Fire arms
- Weapons
- Medical marijuana sales

Q: How were potential sites identified?

A: Potential sites were identified in two ways. First, the Spokane County assessor records were searched to identify commercial structures in residential zones. Second, a visual survey was conducted to identify historic commercial structures in residential zones that may no longer retain a commercial classification.

Q: What ensures compatibility between commercial uses and neighbors?

A: The Spokane Municipal Code is designed to ensure compatibility and transitions between commercial uses and the residential neighborhood. These protections include:

1. The mitigation measures for off-site impacts in 17C.220. The standards of this chapter are designed to protect property in the Residential and Commercial zones from certain objectionable off-site impacts associated with nonresidential uses. These impacts include noise, odors and glare. The standards of the City and the regulatory agencies ensure that uses provide adequate control measures to protect the community from health hazards and nuisances.
2. The decision criterion for conditional uses for not having an adverse impact on the environment or the surrounding properties in 17G.060.170(C). This code section also allows conditions to be placed on proposals to avoid significant effects or interference with the use of neighboring property or the surrounding area, considering the design and intensity of the proposed use.
3. Improvements to the property mitigate potential negative impacts on the residential character in. The director may make a determination with supporting findings that a proposed use is not permitted because the nature of the use would have negative impacts on the residential character of the area that cannot be mitigated with conditions of approval, in 17C.370.030(E).

Q: Are there restrictions for the type of commercial use?

A: Yes. The structure must have been legally built to accommodate a non-residential use, expansion into neighboring sites requires a public hearing and approval by the hearing examiner, hours of operation are limited, drive-through businesses are prohibited, outdoor storage is limited, and signage standards apply.

Q: How can I learn more or get involved?

A: Contact Nathan Gwinn at ngwinn@spokanecity.org or 509-625-6893. Additionally, please visit the project webpage for the latest information:

<https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/activate-existing-neighborhood-commercial-structures/>