

# HANDOUT

## SPECIAL USE PERMIT

# PERMITS+PLUS ZONE

**Washoe County**  
**Permits Plus Zone**  
1001 East Ninth Street  
PO Box 11130  
Reno, NV 89520-0027



## **What is a Special Use Permit?**

By their very nature, certain uses need case-by-case consideration before they can be allowed in a particular land use designation. Each land use designation in Washoe County has a list of uses allowed by right (called an allowed use), and a list of uses allowed conditionally (called a special use). The reasons for requiring special consideration involve, among other things, the size and intensity of the use, traffic generation, and compatibility of the use with the surrounding neighborhood. Examples of special uses in residential designations include churches, daycare centers with 12 or more children, a second dwelling on a lot (granny flat), and public and private schools. In commercial designations, examples include neighborhood shopping centers, truck stops, and commercial antennas. A special use permit application requires a public hearing before the Planning Commission or the Board of Adjustment, depending on the type of request.

## **How is the Application Processed?**

The first step is to discuss your proposal informally with Community Development staff. If what you propose requires a special use permit, you will be provided with the necessary information and application forms to process your proposal. Applications can be submitted only by the property owner or the owner's authorized agent. In every case, the application must be signed by the property owner(s).

Each submittal must include the information listed on the special use permit application. After accepting your submittal for processing, a staff member will review the application for completeness. **If your application is found incomplete, you will be notified and asked to submit the additional information required to process your application. This may delay the scheduling of your application for a public hearing.**

All applications are processed on a monthly cycle and are due by the 15th day of each month (or the first working day thereafter if it falls on a weekend or a holiday) by 3:00 p.m. After you submit a completed application accompanied by the appropriate fee, a copy of the request will be sent to other agencies for comments on how the proposal will affect traffic, parking, availability of public facilities and utilities, water, and any other relevant impacts.

In addition, all requests for special use permits must comply with the Washoe County building codes, International Fire Codes and District Health Department codes. Other agencies and organizations that will review your application include local utility companies, general improvement districts, and, in some instances, other state and federal agencies. Your application will also be reviewed by your area's local Citizen Advisory Board (CAB). It is recommended that you contact the CAB prior to the public hearing and attend any meetings for which your project has been agendaized. To find out where and when your local CAB meets, please call the Department of Community Development at 328-3600. In some instances, your proposal may require review by the Washoe County Design Review Committee for site design, landscaping, and architectural design elements. Your case planner will notify you if the Design Review Committee must review your project.

## **The Public Hearing**

Special use permit requests are considered by the Washoe County Planning Commission or the Board of Adjustment, depending on the type of request. Public hearings for the Planning Commission are on the first and third Tuesdays of every month. Public hearings for the Board of Adjustment are on the first Thursday of every month.

Hearings for special use permits are held within 65 days after the application is submitted, and, in most cases, applications are scheduled for a public hearing six weeks after the submittal date.

Notice of the hearing is mailed to the applicant and to all property owners and mobile home park occupants within 500 feet of the perimeter of the subject property or within 750 feet if the request is a project of regional significance. A minimum of 30 property owners must be notified.

Prior to the public hearing, the Community Development staff will prepare a written report based on an investigation and analysis of the facts and how they pertain to the Development Code requirements. The application is approved or denied based on the information in the staff report and public testimony supporting or opposing the proposal. The applicant and any interested parties will be mailed a copy of the report and an agenda of the hearing.

The property owner desiring the special use permit must show that the proposal meets the following Development Code findings:

1. **Consistency.** The granting of the special use permit is consistent with the policies and maps of the Comprehensive Plan Elements and the Area Plan in which the property is located.
2. **Adequate Public Facilities.** Adequate utilities, roadway improvements, sanitation, water supply, drainage, and other necessary facilities must exist or will be provided.
3. **Site Suitability.** The site must be physically suitable for the proposed use and for the intensity of development.
4. **Issuance Not Detrimental.** Issuance of the permit may not be significantly detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare; have a detrimental impact on adjacent properties; or be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area.

If the request involves a natural resources development, such as energy production, mining operations, petroleum gas extraction, and forest products production, the following Development Code findings shall apply:

1. That the proposed development is not detrimental to surrounding properties, land uses, and the environment in general.
2. That the proposed development will not block scenic views or degrade any surrounding scenic resources.
3. That the proposed development will reclaim the site and all affected areas at the conclusion of the operation.

Whether or not an application is approved depends primarily on the merits of the application and its compliance with the requirements of the Washoe County Development Code as listed above. In addition to the Development Code requirements, conditions of approval may be imposed for each application to ensure compatibility with surrounding properties and neighborhoods. Approval of a special use permit is contingent upon acceptance and observance of specified conditions, such as standards related to the emission of noise, vibration, odor, hours of operation, hours for construction, and other potentially objectionable elements that might affect the public health, safety, and welfare of surrounding properties.

### **Appeals to the Board of County Commissioners**

Whether a variance application is approved or denied by the Board of Adjustment, any aggrieved party is entitled to appeal the decision to the Board of County Commissioners. An appeal must be filed within 10 days of the decision.

In addition, it is also important to know that, if an application is approved, it does not become final for 10 days after the decision of the Board of Adjustment. During this time, any aggrieved party may file an appeal to reverse the decision approving or denying a variance application.

### **How Much Does it Cost?**

A current fee schedule may be obtained:

- From the Department of Community Development at Building A, second floor, Washoe County Administration Complex.
- By calling (775) 328-6100, or
- By accessing our web site at [www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us).

The submitted fee is 50% refundable after distribution to the agencies for review and is nonrefundable once the written analysis by Community Development staff has commenced.

### **More Information**

The Washoe County Development Code and Comprehensive Plan are available on line at [www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us). Parcel Map procedures are found under Division Eight, Article 810, of the Development Code

**Washoe County  
Department of Community Development  
1001 East Ninth Street  
Building A  
Post Office Box 11130  
Reno, NV 89520-0027  
Telephone: 775-328-6100  
[planning@washoecounty.us](mailto:planning@washoecounty.us)  
Fax: 775-328-6133**