



Key Considerations for Downtown Office Conversions

Updated May 27, 2026

The Downtown Office Conversion Program was first launched in 2021 and has helped facilitate 21 office conversion projects to date. The Downtown Strategy Team has supported applications from initial design development stage, through permitting, construction and occupancy. Office conversions in the downtown are complex projects with unique challenges from a variety of logistical, regulatory and technical perspectives.

Below are some of the key areas we believe are worth highlighting for special attention as you begin planning your office conversion project. ***This information is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but is instead presented alongside other related resources such as the [Downtown Office Conversion Program website](#), [Comprehensive Application Requirement List](#) and [Program Terms of Reference](#), in an effort to help enable a successful development process from start to finish.***

1. Development Agreement Registered on Title

Most buildings in the downtown have an existing Development Agreement registered on title. Review your Development Agreement obligations and consider their implications in relation to the proposed conversion project. Specific attention should be given to requirements around **public easement areas** and **Plus 15 obligations**. If modifications to the Development Agreement are required to accommodate the conversion project, reach out to the Downtown Strategy Team so that conversations with the relevant City teams can be started early in the development process and feasibility can be assessed.

2. Road Closures and Hoarding

Separate permitting is required for road closures, hoarding and other construction equipment that will be located in the public right-of-way. Consult the City's [Road Permit](#) webpage for more information and reach out to the Downtown Strategy Team if assistance is required with these permits. To ensure adequate vehicle and pedestrian access is maintained, road closures associated with multiple projects within the same area may require scheduling coordination, which would be completed at time of application review.

Additionally, there are **Stampede construction curtailment** requirements in the downtown core during the 10 days of event festivities every July. These requirements may affect construction activities for your project, depending on your building's location and the extent of hoarding and other construction equipment in the public right-of-way. If the anticipated timing of exterior work overlaps with Stampede dates, reach out to the Downtown Strategy Team as early as possible so that conversations with the relevant City teams can be started.

3. Alberta New Home Warranty / Rental Use Designation

Office conversion projects which construct new dwelling units are required to obtain relevant provincial documentation – either in the form of a [new home warranty](#) (condominiums) or [rental use designation](#) (rental units) depending on the ownership structure of the project once complete. These processes have associated [builder licensing](#) requirements which must be completed as well. Contact the [Residential Protection Program](#) office early in the application process to ensure the required licences and documentation are complete at time of building permit submission.

Additionally, it should be noted that the Contractor (City business licence) indicated on the building permit must exactly match the builder indicated on the Residential Protection Program documentation – reach out to the Downtown Strategy Team in advance of building permit submission for assistance if required.

4. Site Servicing

Water and/or sanitary servicing upgrades may be required when converting the building from office to residential use, depending on the size of existing services and the requirements of the new residential use. Retain the appropriate consulting professionals to confirm this early in the development process, as any service upgrades must be facilitated through a [Development Site Servicing Plan](#) permit process.

5. Building Code Considerations

Each office conversion project will present unique challenges and considerations from a building code perspective – but drawing from our experiences through 21 approved projects, we feel there are certain elements that are worth highlighting for special attention as you prepare your project:

a. Occupancy Classification

Large-scale office conversion projects often involve a change to occupancy classifications within the building, including a more restrictive major occupancy classification. This typically involves bringing into compliance any existing non-compliant conditions that might exist.

b. Elevator Power Supply

In many instances for conversion projects, elevators are required to have an emergency power supply as per the relevant articles of the Alberta Building Code. Office buildings may have existing non-conforming elevator systems, which require modification to meet current code requirements when there is a change in occupancy classification. Even if these elevator systems are fully certified and permitted by AEDARSA (Alberta Elevating Devices & Amusement Rides Safety Association), current code requirements must be met.

c. Stairwell Pressurization

Office conversion projects typically involve significant modifications to building mechanical systems, especially where there is a change in occupancy classification. This includes meeting current code requirements for stairwell pressurization, which may require provisioning for mechanical pressurization or adequate testing of natural stairwell pressurization.

d. Complete Applications

Submitting complete building permit applications in the correct format supports more efficient and predictable review timelines by reducing the need for follow-up information requests and resubmissions. This can improve coordination between applicants and reviewing authorities, helping projects advance more efficiently. Further information and relevant requirement lists can be found on the City's [website](#), and questions regarding submission requirements can be discussed at the pre-application stage.

For all of the above code considerations, retain the appropriate consulting professionals* to confirm requirements early in the development process, as they can have significant impacts on project timing and costs. These elements can also be discussed with the building regulations team through a pre-application meeting prior to submitting a building permit application, to ensure a straightforward and expedient building permit review process. Reach out to the Downtown Strategy Team for assistance in setting up conversations with building regulations.

**It is highly recommended that consulting professionals have experience with the City of Calgary's building permit processes and comprehensive knowledge of the Alberta Building Code.*

If you have questions or need assistance with the above topics at any stage of the development process, please reach out to the [Downtown Strategy Team](#).