

## FAQ:

# How are amenity spaces treated in multi-family buildings and hotels?

### Background:

Multi-family buildings and hotels frequently include spaces that are for exclusive use and/or of benefit to the building occupants. Such spaces include lobbies, lounges, exercise rooms, and business offices.

The use and occupancy classification of each space is based upon its function in accordance with Chapter 3 of the Philadelphia Building Code. The space must meet code requirements for its designated occupancy group, unless otherwise stated in the Building Code. Specific provisions applicable to ancillary uses include:

- ◆ **Accessory Uses:** Occupancies that are ancillary to the main occupancy of the building or portion thereof.

Per Section 508.2.3, aggregate accessory occupancies SHALL NOT:

- Exceed 10 percent of the floor area of the story in which they are located.
- Exceed the tabular values for non-sprinklered buildings in IBC 2018, Table 506.2 for each such accessory occupancies.

Accessory uses are assigned their own occupancy group based on their specific function. The Building Code requirements for an accessory space are based on its specific occupancy classification; however, height, area, and fire separation exemptions or exclusions for accessory occupancies are set forth in Section 506.

- ◆ **Incidental Uses:** Ancillary functions associated with a given occupancy that generally pose a greater level of risk to that occupancy, as identified in Table 509 of the Building Code. (ex. Storage or laundry rooms exceeding 100 sq.ft., boiler rooms, etc.).

Incidental uses are treated as part of the primary occupancy with the following stipulations:

- Incidental uses must meet fire separation and sprinkler requirements set forth in Table 509.
- Incidental uses are not permitted to occupy more than 10 percent of the building area of the story in which they are located.

The Philadelphia Code also includes certain provisions that refer more broadly to residential uses or include exceptions established by historic interpretation and do not rely solely on the use and occupancy classification. These provisions include:

- Existing Building Sprinkler and Fire Alarm Provisions (Retroactive)
- Flood Resistant Construction Requirements
- Water Supply and Building Sewer Piping

This document provides guidance on the treatment of spaces under these specific provisions that do not solely rely on use and occupancy classification.

**Answer:**

An amenity space is assigned its own use and occupancy group based on function, with consideration given to the accessory and incidental use requirements and exceptions. With respect to specific provisions of the code that do not solely rely on use and occupancy for code applicability, the classification of these spaces as residential or non-residential shall be treated as follows:

**Existing Building Sprinkler and Fire Alarm Provisions**

Chapter 11 of the Philadelphia Fire Code establishes fire safety provisions for existing buildings. This chapter includes the following provisions that refer to residential and R-2 occupancies:

- ◆ All high-rise buildings and portions of mid-rise buildings must be sprinklered in accordance with Section 1103.5 of the Philadelphia Fire Code, with certain exceptions.
  - Section 1103.5.6 requires all existing high-rise buildings to be sprinklered with exceptions that include R-2 occupancies that were existing on or before Dec 18, 1981.
  - Section 1103.5.8 requires the basements and level of exit discharge be sprinklered in mid-rise buildings with exceptions that include R-2 occupancies.
- ◆ Section 1103.7.11 requires a manual and automatic (smoke detection) fire alarm system where a nonresidential occupancy is located below a residential occupancy.

[Code Bulletin F-0102, Existing R-2 Occupancies, High-Rise Buildings, Fire Suppression- Accessory Spaces](#), provides direction on the treatment of ancillary spaces. This interpretation is extended to the aforementioned mid-rise sprinkler and mixed-occupancy fire alarm requirements:

The residential or R-2 occupancy shall include spaces that are incidental to and serve only residential use as defined by Code Bulletin No. F-0102. This shall include lobbies, exercise rooms, laundry rooms, sitting rooms, lounges, and other such spaces serving the residential occupancy. This shall also include incidental utility or storage spaces that occupy less than 10% of the floor area on which they are located. The sprinkler requirements for basements, storage rooms exceeding 120 sq ft, and trash rooms/chutes in R-2 occupancies shall still apply.

This interpretation is limited to the referenced sections. It shall in no case reduce other requirements of the Philadelphia Code, including those set forth in Chapter 11 of the Philadelphia Fire Code.

**Flood Resistant Construction Requirements**

Flood-resistant construction requirements for structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area are provided in the Philadelphia Building Code with reference to *ASCE-24, Flood Resistant Design and Construction*. ASCE-24 includes specific floodproofing requirements based on a building's classification as residential, non-residential, or mixed-use. These terms are not directly defined in ASCE-24 and we must refer to the definitions in the National Flood Insurance Program Regulation:

**Non-Residential Building**: a commercial or mixed-use building where the primary use is commercial or non-habitational.

**Residential Building**: a non-commercial building designed for habitation by one or more families or a mixed-use building that qualifies as a single-family, two-to-four family, or other residential building.

Other Residential Building: a residential building that is designed for use as a residential space for five or more families or a mixed-use building in which the total floor area devoted to non-residential uses is less than 25 percent of the total floor area within the building.

Mixed-Use Building: a building that has both residential and non-residential uses.

Refer to our [Guide for Development in the Floodplain](#) and [Code Bulletin A-1702, Development in Special Flood Hazard Area](#) for more information on building classification.

### Plumbing Material Allowance

The Philadelphia Plumbing Code contains provisions that govern the requirements for both metallic and non-metallic piping installation allowances based on the use of the building.

Sections P-605 and P-702 require metallic water supply and building sewer piping, with an exception for piping located within one- and two-family dwellings and apartments.

‘Apartments (or Apartment House)’ is not directly defined in the Philadelphia Plumbing Code or other I-Codes adopted by Philadelphia; however, it is defined in the International Zoning Code as ‘a residential building used for three or more dwelling units’. This does not include hotels or congregate living facilities classified as R-2 occupancies.

The exception for non-metallic piping within apartments shall extend to all amenity spaces for the exclusive use of the apartment house residents.

- This shall include lobbies, exercise rooms, sitting rooms, lounges, and other such spaces serving the residential occupancy.
- This shall not include parking garages serving three or more dwelling units.

This interpretation is limited to the referenced sections. It shall in no case reduce other requirements of the Philadelphia Code, including:

- Additional restrictions for high-rise buildings set forth under P-605 and P-702.
- Restriction on the use of non-metallic piping for temperatures greater than 140°F. This includes food preparation equipment and piping requiring the approval of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

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## Questions?

Call 311 or (215) 686-8686 (if outside Philadelphia) or submit an online form via <http://www.phila.gov/li/get-help>.

## Disclaimer:

This interpretation, policy or code application is intended to provide guidance to staff for consistency of review and is subject to change without notice. Application of this interpretation, policy or code application to specific projects may vary. There may be other ways to comply with the Code. If so, you are not required to use this method. You may want to investigate other options or consult with a professional identifying an equally code compliant solution.