

FILE NUMBER: DCA 256-001(MW)

DATE INITIATED: February 9, 2026

TOPIC: Development Code Amendment establishing a new land use, "Reception Facility"

COUNCIL DISTRICTS: Citywide

CENSUS TRACTS: All

PROPOSAL: Consideration of amending Sections 51-4.208, 51-4.210, and 51A-4.210 of the Dallas City Code to remove "Commercial Wedding Chapel" and create a new "Reception Facility" land use.

SUMMARY: Currently, facilities intended for hosting private get-togethers without regular operating days and hours are being classified as the slightly mismatched Commercial Amusement (Inside) and (Outside) land uses because there is not a more appropriate land use in the Development Code. The proposed code amendment establishes a land use that recognizes the unique nature of facilities that host private guests and intermittent operating days and hours.

ZOAC RECOMMENDATION: ZOAC will consider this item the same week as CPC.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Forward amendments to the City Council with a recommendation of adoption.

Code Amendments Webpage: <https://dallascityhall.com/departments/pnv/Pages/Code-Amendments.aspx>

1. BACKGROUND

On June 1, 2022, Planning and Urban Design and Code Compliance Services staff presented to the City Council regarding proposed updates to short-term rental registration and zoning ordinances. Some short-term rentals were holding larger private gatherings frequently enough to no longer be reasonably considered a mere residential or lodging land use, and some of these gatherings produced nuisances for surrounding neighbors. However, codified land uses more appropriate for larger gatherings contain unsuitable or irrelevant requirements and prohibitions for banquets, celebrations, receptions, and similar activities. Facilities intended for private gatherings are usually permitted under a Commercial Amusement certificate of occupancy, which is intended for facilities open to the general public at regular hours for a fee where the public engage in games or other activities. Due to the gap in land use provision, Code Compliance officers do not have Zoning guidance on determining when a property holding large private gatherings is operating outside of the property's certificate of occupancy.

In 2022, staff recommended a new use called "Event Venue", now called "Reception Facility." A Reception Facility is a space that is rented for private gatherings of invited guests. Establishing such a land use in the Development Code with appropriate regulations and zoning district allowances would give Code Compliance officers the tools to cite properties not intended or permitted for holding frequent gathering; it would also give Planning and Development staff a suitable land use under which to classify private gathering spaces.

No action was taken on this item in 2022. With the planned FIFA games in in 2026, however, the City expects private FIFA-related gatherings around the City, making establishment of a Reception Facility land use timely.

2. STAFF ANALYSIS

a. Regulatory function

The function of a new Reception Facility land use is to accurately evaluate, classify, and regulate establishments intended for pre-arranged private gatherings at intermittent days and times that may be less consistent and less intense than Commercial Amusement properties, while ensuring that residential and lodging land uses do not operate outside of a residential or lodging character.

b. Discussion

Staff has been issuing certificates of occupancy to such "Reception Facilities" as Commercial Amusement (Inside), described in [Sections 51A-4.210\(b\)\(7\)](#). However, the Commercial Amusement land uses are defined as facilities "offering entertainment or games of skill to the

general public for a fee...” and are further broken down into certain publicly accessible establishments with focused games and activities such as billiard halls, children’s amusement centers, skating rinks, and miniature golf courses.

The Commercial Amusement land uses contain two blind spots for which the Reception Facility would provide:

- Private events: Commercial Amusement establishments are intended explicitly for public attendance – an interested attendee can decide spontaneously to enter and pay an entrance fee. In a Reception Facility, only invited guests may attend private events. The privacy of the event may be proven through a list of invited guests and specific content of invitations in contrast to public promotional materials.
- Intermittent operations: Commercial Amusement establishments are intended for consistent attendance during set operating hours. A Reception Facility hosting non-recurring events such as banquets and fundraisers facilitates gatherings less often, decreasing the frequency of traffic impacts and of potential nuisances generated by the property.

An additional overlapping land use is “commercial wedding chapel” as regulated in Sections 51A-4.210(b)(18) *Mortuary, funeral home, and commercial wedding chapel*. This land use attempts to combine the gatherings associated with funerals with those associated with weddings. However, a commercial wedding chapel is substantially more similar to the proposed Reception Facility land use and should be regulated as such. Chapter 51 separates these land uses already, regulating mortuaries and funeral homes in Section 51-4.210(6) and commercial wedding chapels in 51-4.210(24).

c. Peer cities

A Reception Facility land use is common across municipalities in the United States, going by names such as “Reception Facility”, “Reception Hall”, “Meeting Hall”, “Indoor Event Venue”, or “Events Center”, with some delineating Major and Minor Reception Facilities based on size, and others dividing those where entry fees are allowed from those where fees are prohibited. Texas cities with identical or very similar land uses include San Antonio, Austin, Mesquite, Bastrop, Corinth, and Mission. Outside of Texas, Chicago, IL, Denver, CO, Knoxville, TN, Charlotte, NC, New Orleans, LA, Saratoga Springs, NY, and Davenport, IA have identical or similar land uses.

Consistent themes in definition are that the events are pre-arranged, the guests are invited rather than the venue being open to public, and the operational times are inconsistent. Some cities prohibit fees from being charged for entry but allow carveouts for religious institutions

or non-profit fundraisers and have another similar use where fees are permitted. For our purposes, the charging of an entry fee is not a useful characteristic.

Some peer cities require heightened review when the facility is located within 300 to 500 feet from residentially zoned property.

3. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends establishing a Reception Facility land use within Section 51A-4.210 Retail and Personal Service Uses and Section 51-4.208 Recreation and Entertainment Uses.

Specifically, staff recommends:

- Permitting this use by right, but with a Residential Adjacency Review, in all nonresidential districts, except only facilities 2,500 square feet or less would be permitted by right in NS(A) neighborhood services and NO(A) neighborhood office. Facilities over 2,500 square feet would require a specific use permit in NS(A) and NO(A).
- Requiring the same parking and loading spaces as Commercial Amusement (Inside) in Chapter 51A.
- Prohibiting entry fees unless charged for a fundraiser or event by non-profit organizations, or are professional fees paid by pre-registered guests. Because events allowed at Reception Facilities would be private, an entry fee would not be construed to allow general entry by the public.
- Allowing existing facilities that fit the description of a Reception Facility, but which have a certificate of occupancy for Commercial Amusement (Inside) or (Outside) or Mortuary, Funeral home, or Commercial Wedding Chapel, to maintain their status as a conforming use upon adoption of this amendment. Without this provision, adoption of this land use could cause many such establishments to become nonconforming, triggering the state-mandated letter notifying them. [See [Local Government Code Chapter Section 211.006](#) and [Dallas Development Code Section 51A-4.701\(a\)\(1.1\)](#).] Because we do not have a record of which establishments would fit the Reception Facility description better than their existing CO, identifying which properties should receive this letter would require prohibitively extensive research.
- Clarifying that food and entertainment may be provided on-site incidental to the event.
- Removing “commercial wedding chapel” from Sections 51A-4.210(b)(18) and 51-4.210(24), as this business type would be regulated by Reception Facility.

4. Zoning Ordinance Advisory Committee

Because this item is of timely importance, the Zoning Ordinance Advisory Committee has not yet considered this item, and will do so the same week as the intended City Plan Commission meeting.

**Proposed Chapter 51A
Amendments**

**Chapter 51A Dallas Development Code: Ordinance No. 19455,
as amended.**

**Article IV.
Zoning Regulations**

SEC. 51A-4.210. RETAIL AND PERSONAL SERVICE USES.

...

(b) Specific uses.

...

(18) Mortuary, or funeral home, ~~or commercial wedding chapel.~~

(A) Definition:

~~(i)~~ A mortuary or funeral home is a facility in which dead bodies are prepared for burial or cremation or funeral services are conducted.

~~(ii) A commercial wedding chapel is a facility, not associated with a church, where a wedding is performed for profit.~~

(B) Districts permitted: By right in CR, RR, CS, central area, mixed use, and multiple commercial districts.

(C) Required off-street parking:

(i) Except as provided in this subparagraph, none.

(ii) When located in an MD-1 Modified Delta Overlay, in existence on May 14, 2025:

(aa) One space per 300 square feet of floor area other than the chapel, plus one space for each two seats in the chapel. Up to 50 percent of the required off-street parking for this use may be tandem spaces.

(bb) If all spaces provided are non-tandem, the off-street parking requirement for this use is one space per 500 feet of floor area other than the chapel, plus one space for each two seats in the chapel.

(D) Required off-street loading:

SQUARE FEET OF FLOOR AREA IN STRUCTURE	TOTAL REQUIRED SPACES OR BERTHS
0 to 10,000	NONE
10,000 to 60,000	1
Each additional 100,000 or fraction thereof	1 additional

~~(E) Additional provisions:~~

~~(i) A commercial wedding chapel may provide reception areas, but no alcoholic beverages may be sold.~~

...

(23.5) Reception facility.

- (A) Definition: A facility that is rented for private events for invited guests such as ceremonies, receptions, parties, celebrations, banquets, professional or industry gatherings, and fundraisers.
- (B) Districts permitted: By right in all nonresidential zoning districts, except that a reception facility must be 2,500 square feet of floor area or less in NS(A) neighborhood service and NO(A) neighborhood office districts. Reception facilities over 2,500 square feet of floor area are permitted in NS(A) and NO(A) by SUP. RAR required in all nonresidential districts except for central area districts.
- (C) Required off-street parking: One space per 200 square feet of floor area.
- (D) Required off-street loading:

<u>SQUARE FEET OF FLOOR AREA IN STRUCTURE</u>	<u>TOTAL REQUIRED SPACES OR BERTHS</u>
<u>0 to 10,000</u>	<u>NONE</u>
<u>10,000 to 60,000</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Each additional 100,000 or fraction thereof</u>	<u>1 additional</u>

(E) Additional provisions:

- (i) Any general admission fee, including donations made at the door in exchange for entrance by the general public, is prohibited except for:
 - (aa) fundraisers or events for bona fide non-profit organizations, places of worship, or educational facilities; or
 - (bb) registration fees for pre-registered guests to a professional or industry gathering.
- (ii) An establishment meeting the definition of reception facility that was issued a certificate of occupancy for commercial amusement (inside) or commercial

wedding chapel before [date of passage] may continue to legally operate as a conforming use.

- (iii) Food and beverages may be prepared or served on-site to invited guests.
- (iv) Live performances or entertainment may be provided incidental to a private event hosted at a Reception Facility.
- (v) Residential uses and lodging uses may not be used as Reception Facilities except when customarily incidental to a main lodging use.

**Proposed Chapter 51
Amendments**

Chapter 51 Former Dallas Development Code

**Article IV.
Zoning Regulations**

SEC. 51-4.208. RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT USES.

...

(14) Reception facility.

- (A) Definition: A facility that is rented for private events for invited guests such as ceremonies, receptions, parties, celebrations, banquets, business events, professional or industry gatherings, and fundraisers.
- (B) Districts permitted: By right in all nonresidential zoning districts, except that a reception facility must be 2,500 square feet of floor area or less in NS(A) neighborhood service and NO(A) neighborhood office districts. Reception facilities over 2,500 square feet of floor area are permitted in NS(A) and NO(A) by SUP. RAR required in all nonresidential districts except for central area districts.
- (C) Required off-street parking: One space per 200 square feet of floor area.
- (D) Required off-street loading:

<u>SQUARE FEET OF FLOOR AREA IN STRUCTURE</u>	<u>TOTAL REQUIRED SPACES OR BERTHS</u>
<u>0 to 10,000</u>	<u>NONE</u>
<u>10,000 to 60,000</u>	<u>1</u>
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 - (aa) fundraisers or events for bona fide non-profit organizations, places of worship, or educational facilities; or

(bb) registration fees for pre-registered guests to a professional or industry gathering.

- (i) An establishment meeting the definition of reception facility that was issued a certificate of occupancy for commercial amusement (inside) or commercial wedding chapel before [date of passage] may continue to legally operate as a conforming use.
- (ii) Food and beverages may be prepared or served on-site to invited guests.
- (iii) Live performances or entertainment may be provided incidental to a private event hosted at a Reception Facility.
- (iv) Residential uses and lodging uses may not be used as Reception Facilities except when customarily incidental to a main lodging use.

SEC. 51-4.210. PROFESSIONAL, PERSONAL SERVICE, AND CUSTOM CRAFT USES.

...

(24) Reserved. Commercial wedding chapel.

~~(A) Definition: A facility, not associated with a church, where a wedding is performed for a profit.~~

~~(B) Districts permitted: SC, GR, LC, HC, central area, and industrial districts.~~

~~(C) Required off street parking: None.~~

~~(D) Required off street loading:~~

SQUARE FEET OF FLOOR AREA IN STRUCTURE	TOTAL REQUIRED SPACES OR BERTHS
0 to 10,000	NONE
10,000 to 60,000	1
Each additional 100,000 or fraction thereof	1 additional

~~(E) Additional provisions:~~

~~(i) This use may provide reception areas, but no alcoholic beverages may be sold.~~