



Retail Checklist

This guide tells you which forms you need to fill out, offices you need to visit, and decisions you need to make.



Get Going

These things are crucial to accomplishing other steps, so get them in motion now.

Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), also known as a Federal Tax ID Number from the IRS. This is used to identify your business and allows you to hire employees. If you are a sole proprietor without employees, you may choose to use your Social Security Number instead.

Apply for a Seller's Permit from the CA State Board of Equalization. Every location must have this permit to sell taxable goods.

Choose and file a business name. File a Fictitious Business Name (FBN) Statement at the Office of the County Clerk if you will be using a name other than your given name, the names of your partners, or the officially registered name of your LLC or corporation.



Visit

Talking to people at these offices will help you figure out what you need.

Office of Finance
Special Desk Unit
200 North Spring St. Room 205
(844) 663-4411

Dept. of Building and Safety
221 N. Figueroa St. 8th Floor,
Room 800
Los Angeles, CA. 90012
(213) 473-3231

Dept. of City Planning
201 N. Figueroa St. 4th Floor
Los Angeles, CA. 90012
(213) 482-7077

Los Angeles Police Dept.
Police Permit Processing
100 W. First St. Room 147
Los Angeles, CA. 90012
(213) 996-1210

Los Angeles County Clerk
12400 Imperial Highway
Los Angeles, CA. 90650
(800) 201-8999



Read

Reading up on these materials will prepare you for opening your restaurant.

Review Americans with Disability Act (ADA) guidelines to make sure your business is accessible.

Review the City of Los Angeles Minimum Wage Frequently Asked Questions to make sure your business is compliant.

Visit finance.lacity.org for essential reading about permits and taxes.

Find a location

- ❑ Don't know where to begin looking for a potential location? Try [LocateLA](#) which can help you find the best commercial buildings for rent and offers robust economic and demographic data to help you decide.
- ❑ Have found a prospective location for your business? Great! Make sure it has the right zoning for a restaurant by looking on [ZIMAS](#).

Tip: Also look to see if there are any overlay zones or other special planning zones - these may suggest additional restrictions above the zoning requirements.



- ❑ If the business you are opening is the same as the type of business that was there before, it will be much faster to get up and running. Otherwise, a Change of Use permit may be required from the Department of Building and Safety. You can check by reviewing the building's [Certificate of Occupancy](#).
- ❑ Once you know the zoning for the property, verify that your business is allowed within the [property's zoning category](#).
- ❑ Identify the parking requirements for your business type and check to see if the lease includes enough parking spaces to [meet those requirements](#).

Tip: Ask your landlord about the number of parking spaces that are assigned to your building unit. If there is inadequate parking for the type of business you plan to open, you may need to apply for a variance with the Department of City Planning.



- ❑ If the property doesn't meet the zoning or parking requirements for a restaurant, you will need to submit an application to the Department of City Planning and undergo a public hearing to obtain a Change of Zoning or Variance. \$\$\$

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- ❑ Ask the landlord whether the unit meets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements so you are aware of and can budget for any needed renovations.
- ❑ Review your lease closely before signing it and keep in mind that it may take several months to obtain the permits you need to start running your business and bring in paying customers.
- ❑ Have questions? We recommend visiting the City's Development Services Center or calling (213) 482-7077 to connect with city staff who can help you review the zoning and physical requirements of your property location.

If you plan to serve alcohol...



- ❑ Certain high-end retail establishments will provide alcohol for customers. Visit the [Development Services Center](#) to apply for a Conditional Use Permit from the Department of City Planning. A CUP typically takes at least 4-5 months and requires a public hearing.
 - i. **Tip:** For a small fee, the Department of City Planning will research your property location and provide you with early notification of any zoning or permitting issues which may affect your business, and provide you with a tailored list of items you need to prepare for your application.

Once you've decided on your location

- ❑ [Register your business](#) with the City, County and State.
- ❑ It's always a good idea to meet with your local Council Office, Neighborhood Council and community police station - getting their support and insights can be important for a smooth launch. You can find their contact information here: www.neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org.

Get ready to open

- ❑ If you are planning to make changes to the interior or exterior of your building, you will likely need to apply for building permits with the [Department of Building and Safety](#).

Tip: Depending on the extent of the changes, you will have different options to apply for the building permit.



- ❑ Minor projects can be approved online, while larger projects – for instance, significant remodeling or a change of business use – may require a more detailed “plan check” process that includes submitting architectural and structural plans. You can find more information [online](#).
- ❑ When you apply for your building permits, the Department of Building and Safety will provide you with a “clearance summary worksheet” that lets you know what additional approvals are required. This may include:
 - The Los Angeles Fire Department \$\$
 - The Los Angeles County Department of Health \$\$

- ❑ If you are purchasing an existing retail space and don't plan on making any renovations that require building permits, you may contact the Los Angeles County Department of Health directly to obtain a [Public Health Permit](#).
- ❑ If you've received a land use or building permit from the City, make sure to follow up with the Development Services Center after the work is completed and schedule an inspection to make sure the work meets the required standards.

Tip: You can schedule the inspections online on the LADBS website!



Need help? Visit the City's Development Services Center or call (213) 482-7077.

Open Your Business

- ❑ Connecting with people will be the key to your success. Network with event planners, join your local Chambers of Commerce, or get a booth at a fair or farmers market.
- ❑ Social media marketing can be effective method for getting the word out. Start a Facebook or Yelp page for your business, and consider using other platforms such as Instagram or Twitter to showcase your work.

Bring on staff

- ❑ Review business.lacity.org/manage/employees for information on additional wage and employment guidelines.

If you plan to have live entertainment, music or karaoke...



- ❑ Apply for a Café Entertainment/Shows Permit with the [Police Department](#).
 - Tip:** You will need to undergo a background check and have the Department of Building and Safety to verify that your business meets the zoning requirements and sign off on the application.
 - Tip:** Police permits need to be renewed annually at the end of the calendar year.

If you plan to have outdoor tables and chairs located on a city sidewalk...

- ❑ Apply for an R-Permit with the [Bureau of Engineering](#).