



Starting Your Business

Making the leap to open a business takes vision, passion and most importantly, a plan. A carefully executed plan will save you both time and money. We are very happy you chose New Westminster — here's how to get started!

Register Your Business Name with the Province

To start a business in BC, you should to register your business with BC Registry Services. The first step is to get approval for your business name, and then you can complete the registry process.

Find the Right Location

Finding the right location for your business is an important step. The City's business resource tools can help you evaluate the area's workforce, customers and your competition. The next step is to find your location. You can do this independently, or work with a commercial real estate agent. Make sure you don't sign a lease until you know it complies with the Zoning Bylaw.

Identify Zoning & Permitted Uses

Before signing a lease or committing to a location, check to ensure your business complies with the Zoning Bylaw and the BC Building Code and that any renovations/alternations previously completed meet code requirements and were done with permits. How can you identify zoning and permitted uses?

1. Search the property address in CityViews to determine the zoning (e.g. C-1, C2A, etc).
2. Ensure your business complies with the permitted uses in the Zoning Bylaw.
3. Ensure the occupant load of the building will work for your business.

Apply for Building, Plumbing and/or Sign Permits

Alterations made to a space, or new construction, may require a permit. If you want to expand or make improvements to the business space, contact the City's Planning Division and/or the Building Division to discuss permit requirements. A permit must be obtained prior to starting any new renos or alterations. All exterior signage will require a sign permit.

Apply for your Business Licence

All businesses in the City of New Westminster must hold a valid business licence. This includes commercial and industrial operations and owners of apartment rental properties. A business licence inspection will be required prior to a licence being issued. Home-based businesses also require a licence, and are required to complete a questionnaire when they apply.

Companies that are not located in the city, but do work or provide services within New Westminster, such as contractors, also require a business licence. Applications can be submitted in person at City Hall, or by email.

Are you a Home-Based Business?

Home-based businesses are an important part of the city's local economy and a great way to test or start your business idea. To ensure that neighbourhood livability is maintained, there are a few limitations on the operation of home-based businesses. The Home-Based Business Questionnaire, which you submit with your business licence application, helps the Planning Division assess any effect your business might have on neighbourhood livability.



Frequently Asked Questions

What do I need to apply for a business licence?

1. A New Westminster address for the business.
2. Government-issued photo identification (e.g. BC Drivers Licence, BC ID, or a valid passport).
3. Ownership documents for your business from the BC Registry may be required. Depending upon the structure of your business, ownership documents from the BC Registry may be required:
 - Corporation (i.e. name ends in Inc, Corp, Co or Ltd): a current Company Summary sheet
 - Sole proprietorship: the name and registration number issued
 - Partnership: a current Partnership Summary sheet
 - Society: a current Society Summary sheet

If the business is not owned by any of the above these documents are not required.

How long does it take to get my business licence approved by the City?

If you are only applying for a business licence, it can usually be issued within a few weeks. If you are also applying for a building permit because you are doing renovations/alterations, the process to get a building permit approved can take between 4 and 12 weeks, depending upon the extent of the work being done, and the number of other applications under review.

My business address is not in New Westminster, but I provide services to customers in New Westminster. Do I need a business licence?

Most mobile businesses operating in New Westminster will require a City of New Westminster business licence. If your business is in construction or in the maintenance of land or buildings, you may be eligible for an Inter Municipal Business Licence (IMBL) – ask for more information.

What if the zoning allows for my business use, but the building has an occupancy permit for a different use?

You will need to apply for a change of use. This involves applying for a building permit through the Building Division.

How can I market and promote my business?

It's never too early to plan how you are going to find your customers. A crucial first step is having a website and social media presence. We also recommend connecting with local business associations such as business improvement areas, merchants' associations, and networking groups.

There are many resources to help you learn. Check out Small Business BC as a start.

Important

Restaurants, cannabis or alcohol sellers, daycares, community care facilities and personal services businesses (e.g. tattoo or massage) will be required to obtain approval from other regulatory bodies. These approvals aren't necessary to have before applying for a licence, but will be required before your licence is approved.

City Contacts

Economic Development Office

info@investnewwest.ca
604-527-4536

Business Licensing

businesslicences@newwestcity.ca

General Inquiries

604-527-4565

Applications in Progress

604-527-4566

Zoning/Planning Inquiries

plnpost@newwestcity.ca
604-527-4532

Building/Signage Inquiries

buildinginspections@newwestcity.ca
604-527-4580

Other Resources

Many resources exist to help new businesses thrive, including funding and incentive opportunities. Check the Economic Development page on our website for an up-to-date list of resources.

General

BC Business Registry
Canada Business
One Stop BC
Province of BC Small Business Guides
Small Business BC

Permits and Special Licensing

BizPaL (Permits and Licences)
Fraser Health
Liquor & Cannabis Regulation Branch
WorkSafe BC

Local Organizations

Downtown New Westminster BIA
New Westminster Chamber of Commerce
Tourism New Westminster
Uptown Business Association