



Small Business Building Permits Guide

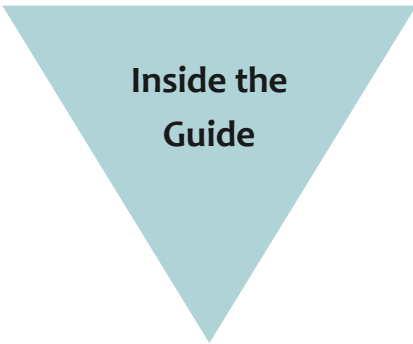
Development Services City of San Antonio

The Small Business Building Permits Guide was developed by the Development Services Department, City of San Antonio, in an effort to assist small business owners throughout the permit process. This resource not only offers guidance to new owners but also answers frequently asked questions regarding certificates of occupancy, building permits, inspections and more.

IN THIS BROCHURE...

- ◆ **Do I need a permit?**
- ◆ **Building Permit Process**
- ◆ **Scheduling Inspections**

The Small Business Building Permits Guide has been designed to help lead you through the building permit process. Using the guide, you will find answers to general questions, along with helpful tips and contact information to reach us in case you need additional assistance.



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WHAT IS THE FIRST THING I SHOULD DO BEFORE I OPEN OR EXPAND MY BUSINESS?

The first, and most important step to consider, before you purchase or sign a lease, is to find out what types of businesses are allowed at the property. Whether you are thinking about opening a restaurant or buying a coffee shop, you'll want to confirm you have enough parking spaces, along with many other factors. The number of spaces you will need is usually related to the number of seats you want to have or what's referred to as occupant load. The best thing to do is schedule a free commercial consultation with us, at the One-Stop, to help verify your zoning and ensure your property is platted.

WILL I NEED A NEW CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY FOR AN EXISTING BUILDING?

When a change of ownership of an existing building or tenant-spaces within a building occurs, and the type of use remains basically the same, a new certificate of occupancy is not required. You can simply request a name change on the existing certificate of occupancy.

A few examples of a change-of-use that would require a new certificate of occupancy include:

- ◆ Changing from a clothing store to a hair salon
- ◆ Adding coffee counter/shop to a book store
- ◆ Changing an office into a restaurant

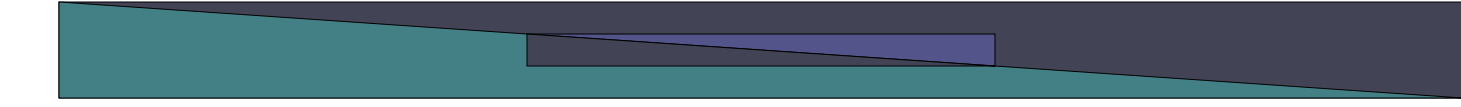
Certain businesses, like the ones listed in the table below, always require a new certificate of occupancy due to location requirements.

Alcohol Sales	Bed & Breakfasts
Boarding Homes	Head Shops
Transitional Homes	Live Entertainment
Community Homes & Assisted Living Facilities	Salvage Yards & Metal Recycling Facilities

Our friendly staff at Development Services will advise you if a new certificate of occupancy is required during your consultation.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I NEED A BUILDING PERMIT?

A building permit is required if you are making any changes to the structure, demolishing, altering the interior, or changing or expanding the use. Building permits are necessary to ensure zoning requirements, fire, structural safety standards, and other building code requirements are met. It is the property owner's or tenant's responsibility to make sure a building permit is obtained, when required, prior to commencing construction or demolition.



Here are a few examples where you will need to apply for a building permit:

- ◆ Adding a patio over 120 square feet
- ◆ Removing/adding interior walls
- ◆ Installing a commercial cooking exhaust system
- ◆ Installing/modifying the storefront window
- ◆ Installing exit signs /emergency lighting system
- ◆ Installing new plumbing fixtures
- ◆ Constructing a washroom or barrier-free washroom
- ◆ Installing a grease interceptor or backflow preventer

If you are not sure if a building permit is required, contact us at 210-207-1111; our Call Center will be happy to assist you.

PROJECTS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A PERMIT:

- ◆ Painting, floor tiling or carpeting
- ◆ Installing minor millwork and cabinetry
- ◆ Replacing existing windows to same size and location

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE I SUBMIT A BUILDING PERMIT?

Create a Checklist and Consider Scheduling a Meeting with Development Services

Before applying for a building permit, it is essential that you create a checklist of all the items you wish to change (i.e. increasing the number of seats for your restaurant, changing any signage, moving kitchen facilities, etc.) for yourself and for your contractor. The more information you can provide to our staff about your plans, the more accurate we can be in determining your needs. In most cases, plans will be required to reflect the construction details of the proposed work. If needed, you can schedule a free commercial consultation at the One Stop to go over your submittal requirements.

To help keep your project on track, you may want to have your contractor set up what is called a ‘Preliminary Plan Review’ meeting with us. At the meeting, we will assist you and your contractor in identifying areas of concern prior to your building plan submission. This allows you to address potential issues in advance; avoiding delays and costly errors (please note there is a fee for this meeting).

Tips to get the most out of your Preliminary Plan Review meeting:

- ◆ Bring an agenda of items you would like to discuss
- ◆ Bring a detail plan for your project
- ◆ Bring design documents if created

Along with building and fire, suggested topics for your meeting could include:

- ◆ Additional permits you might need (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) and the requirement to hire a licensed contractor
- ◆ Sidewalk and parking requirements
- ◆ Tree preservation/landscaping requirements
- ◆ Addressing (if you are subdividing a tenant lease space)
- ◆ How to research plan review and inspection results on-line



HOW DO I APPLY FOR A BUILDING PERMIT?

Building permits may be applied for by the property owner or by an agent (contractor, engineer, architect, or tenant) on behalf of the owner. If your contractor is applying, be sure to ask them to include your contact information, like your email, on the application. This will ensure you are kept informed, by email updates, throughout the plan review and inspection process. Depending on your project, you will need to complete one of the following applications:

- ◆ **Commercial Minor Repairs Application** is appropriate if the work only includes repair work to windows, walls, siding, doors, floors, or sheetrock. This permit does not require the submission of building plans. In addition, you may need to complete a Certificate of Occupancy Application if the existing Certificate of Occupancy is for a different use.
- ◆ **Commercial Remodel Permit Application** is appropriate for any structural repairs or changes to walls, corridors, or doors in addition to other work you are doing. The permit requires the submission of building plans and the application contains a checklist of items you will need to include with your submittal.
- ◆ **Commercial Building Permit Application** is appropriate for new construction, when you are increasing the square footage of a building, or when you are performing interior finish-out to a new structure. The permit requires the submission of building plans and the application contains a checklist of items you will need to include with your submittal.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO APPLY FOR A BUILDING PERMIT?

Building permit fees are based on the value of the project. Development Services' fee schedule and fee estimator can be found on-line at www.sanantonio.gov/dsd.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET MY BUILDING PLANS APPROVED?

If you are new to this process, we recommend you make an appointment with us to go over your submittal documentation. This will ensure your plans are accurate and ready for review. Your building permit will be granted once your plans meet city building codes. If there are problems with your submittal, we will provide you with a list of deficiencies that will have to be addressed prior to getting your building permit approved. We will help you meet your deadline by performing timely reviews, granting partial/conditional approvals, or issuing fast-track permits.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I RECEIVE MY BUILDING PERMIT?

Upon obtaining a building permit, you can begin your construction. The permit holder will need to schedule the required inspections. During the inspection process, knowledgeable staff can assist both the property owner and contractor on completing their projects in accordance with City of San Antonio building codes. Our inspectors work closely with other regulatory bodies in the city, such as the Fire Marshal's Office and the Health Department, to ensure all applicable local regulations are followed.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE INSPECTIONS?

We offer three ways to schedule your inspections: 1) on-line using the permit and inspections login Web page, 2) through 'Inspection Scheduler', an online Web application or 'app', and 3) calling the Inspection Request Line at (210) 207-1111. For your convenience, you can book mark Inspection Scheduler to your Smartphone and save it to the home screen. Although scheduling an inspection on-line or on your Smartphone is free, there is a \$3 charge to schedule your inspection using the inspection request line.

HOW DO I FIND A QUALIFIED ARCHITECT, ENGINEER, OR CONTRACTOR?

The city cannot recommend a particular architect, engineer or contractor; however, it is always suggested to receive at least three written quotes. Local sources available to help you find a consultant are listed in the table below:

American Institute of Architects	www.aia.org
Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.	www.abcsouthtexas.org
Associated General Contractors of America	www.sanantonioagc.org
Professional Engineers in Private Practice	www.bexarpepp.org
Texas Board of Professional Engineers	www.engineers.texas.gov

Various courts, such as municipal, county, state and federal, also offer information, including any previous judgments that may have been rendered against the consultant. The San Antonio Better Business Bureau is another source available to help you determine complaint histories.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T GET A BUILDING PERMIT?

Remember, permits protect. If construction has started prior to the issuance of a building permit, costly repairs may be required to gain compliance and ensure your property is safe. Removal of work that does not comply with the City of San Antonio building codes, and/or other applicable laws, may be required. In addition, if you receive a Stop Work Order for building without a permit, your permit fees may be doubled.



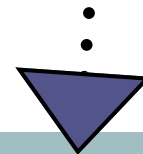
WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET STUCK?

Contact us at:

Development Services Call Center
(210) 207-1111
Development Services Customer Service

Plan Review
(210) 207-4408
DSDPlansManagement@sanantonio.gov

Inspections
Mike Constantino, Development Services Manager
Michael.Constantino@sanantonio.gov



Development Services Department

Address:
Development Business and Services Center
1901 S. Alamo Street
San Antonio, Texas 78204

Hours of operation:
Monday—Friday
7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Partnering with our community to build and maintain
a safer San Antonio



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT