

Restaurant Roadmap

Guide to Permits,
Licenses & Inspections



Permitting Overview
Fee Schedule
Inspection Checklist



Thomas M. Menino, Mayor
City of Boston
Office of Business Development



A LETTER FROM
THOMAS M. MENINO
Mayor, City of Boston

Dear Friends,

Boston has a long history of culinary excellence, and I'm proud that restaurants are at the heart of our city's diverse and welcoming neighborhoods.

Opening a restaurant is a significant undertaking. I have asked my office to create this Restaurant Roadmap Guide outlining the restaurant permitting process in the City of Boston. Inside you will find an overview of the process, including fees and inspection criteria.

If you would like more information or have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us, or visit the Restaurant Homepage at www.cityofboston.gov/restaurants. I welcome you to this endeavor and thank you for your investment in the community.

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston

RESTAURANT PERMITTING OVERVIEW

This checklist describes the restaurant-specific permitting process in the City of Boston. Additional business registration requirements are outlined in the Office of Business Development (OBD) [Small Business Resource Guide](#). Links to online applications are available at www.cityofboston.gov/restaurants. For questions, please contact OBD at 617-635-0355.

CHOOSING A LOCATION – ZONING AND OCCUPANCY

- Check zoning online by searching for parcel designation on the Boston Redevelopment Authority's [searchable map](#), then check whether Restaurant, Take-out, Drive-in, or Live Entertainment uses are Allowed, Forbidden, or Conditional in the [Zoning Code](#) (by Neighborhood District in Articles 38-73).
- Check the building's existing legal use and occupancy online through the [Building Permit Search](#).
- To change the zoning or use, file a [Long Form](#) online and appeal to the [Zoning Board of Appeal](#) if it is a conditional or forbidden use at that location.
- The Inspectional Services Department (ISD) offers a [Zoning Clinic](#) for zoning-related questions every Tuesday from 9am-12 noon at Plans and Zoning, Counter 2, 1010 Mass Ave, Boston, MA.

DESIGNING THE SPACE – CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING APPROVAL

- Obtain ISD Health Division approval of restaurant design before construction or alteration. Request a Plan Review appointment at 617-635-5326, then bring a completed [Food Service Health Permit Application](#), equipment specifications, menu, and 3 copies of plans to the appointment.
- For major construction or structural changes, file a [Long Form](#) online. For minor repairs, file a [Short Form](#) online. For more information on building permit types, visit [ISD's website](#).
- The Boston Fire Department (BFD) also requires permits for construction projects. Those applications and guidelines can be found at the BFD's [Construction Site Safety web page](#).
- Secure the appropriate building/plumbing/gas/electrical/mechanical permits through ISD's [online application system](#). Only licensed contractors may apply. Obtain all required inspections.
- [Certificate of Occupancy](#): If no existing Certificate of Occupancy or if seeking to change the occupancy/use, apply at ISD Counter 3A with signed building card and final cost breakdown. Also see the BFD's [requirements for Certificate of Occupancy](#).
- [Place of Assembly Permit \(if occupancy is 50 persons or more\)](#) is issued by the BFD.
- [Certificate of Inspection](#): Submit 3 sets of plans stamped with capacity approvals from ISD and BFD to ISD Counter 3A; await inspection.

SERVING FOOD – RESTAURANT LICENSES AND PERMITS

- [Common Victualler License](#): To apply for an existing CV License, submit a completed application and fee. Applications for a new CV License require attending a scheduled hearing. After approval, bring the Certificate of Inspection and copy of the lease to pick up the CV License.
- [Food Service Health Permit](#): Submit completed application with proper fees and documentation (Certificate of Occupancy, Certificate of Inspection, [Food Safety Manager Certificate](#), Federal Tax ID, and Workers' Compensation Insurance information) to [ISD Health Division](#). Request a health inspection to check conformity to [State Sanitary Code](#) and [Federal Food Code](#).
- [Alcoholic Beverages License](#): The number of available licenses is limited by State law; applicants must appear at a hearing to allow for neighborhood input. See the Boston Licensing Board [website](#).
- [Site Cleanliness License](#): Submit dumpster site plan, maintenance schedule, disposal contract, and rodent/pest control contract to ISD Environmental Division, 1010 Mass Ave, 4th Floor.
- [Dumpster Placement Permit](#): If larger than 3 cubic yards, file an [Annual Permit Application Form](#).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS – ADDITIONAL PERMITS

- [Live Entertainment License \(Annual Seven-Day License\)](#) or [Non-Live Entertainment License](#): Available online. If live entertainment does not conform to zoning or is not listed on the Certificate of Occupancy, file a Long Form to add that use and appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeal if necessary.
- [Pool Table License](#): Applications online. For questions, contact the Boston Licensing Board.
- [Sidewalk Café Permit](#): Complete all [requirements](#) to apply. Also file a [Use of Premises application](#).
- [Valet Parking Permit](#): Available online. For questions, call Daniel Nuzzo at 617-635-4489.
- Clubs: Restaurants which may also be considered clubs due to their use must have the club use stated on their Certificate of Inspection and Place of Assembly Permit.
- Kitchen Exhaust Hoods and Ducts require Health Department review and BFD Certification. See the [BFD website](#) for more information on commercial hood and duct maintenance requirements.

RESTAURANT INSPECTIONS

Completion of this checklist does not guarantee inspection approval. This information is provided to help you prepare for the necessary inspection(s) in starting your restaurant. Please contact the Office of Business Development at 617-635-0355 if you have further questions.

BUILDING INSPECTION – CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

- Emergency lights installed and functional
- Fire escapes in satisfactory condition
- Fire extinguisher tag dates current
- Commercial duct work cleaning on schedule
- Stairs properly railed
- Exits/directional signs visible and lit
- Sprinklers functioning properly
- Fire alarm system/smoke detectors
- Exitways unobstructed
- General conditions satisfactory

FIRE INSPECTION – PLACE OF ASSEMBLY PERMIT

- ISD Certificate of Inspection posted
- Place of Assembly Permit posted
- Flammability permits for all decorations, furnishings, and interior finishes
- Egress plan on site, consistent with layout of furniture
- Fire escapes clear and operable
- See the complete list of BFD requirements at <http://www.cityofboston.gov/fire/inspections/assembly.asp>.
- Door self-closers operate correctly
- Exit doors swing outward
- Exits unobstructed, lead to public way
- Good general housekeeping
- Stairwells clear with proper signage
- Alarm system inspections up to date
- Sprinkler inspections up to date

HEALTH INSPECTION – FOOD SERVICE HEALTH PERMIT

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

- Person In Charge (PIC) assigned, knowledgeable, performing duties
- Proper, adequate handwashing
- Chemicals stored properly and safely
- Soiled linens stored in proper container
- Mops and brooms stored properly

FOOD SAFETY

- Proper food safety practices in storage, preparation, and service of food
- Proper labeling of food containers and prepackaged foods
- Coolers and/or hot holding units operating at proper temperature levels
- Thermometers available to check food product temperatures
- Food properly protected from contamination in storage, display, and preparation
- In-use food utensils properly stored
- Proper segregation of cooked and uncooked foods
- No re-service of potentially hazardous or unwrapped foods

EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS

- Three compartment sink with drainboards OR dishwashing machine operational and properly sanitizing (test kit for chemical sanitizing or proper temperature for high-temp sanitizing)
- Wash water and rinse water are clean
- Wiping cloths used for raw food stored in separate sanitizing solutions
- Mop sink provided
- Separate handwash sink in food preparation area
- Food contact surfaces properly designed, maintained, installed
- Non-food contact surfaces properly designed, maintained, installed
- Proper storage of pots and pans

PLUMBING AND WASTE DISPOSAL

- No waste water back up; proper backflow devices installed
- Adequate number of refuse containers, clean and covered

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

- No evidence of rodents or insects
- Light fixtures above food products have protective shields properly installed
- See the entire list of health code violations at the Mayor's Food Court website at <http://www.cityofboston.gov/isd/health/mfc/explaincodes.asp>.
- Handwash sinks with soap, drying device
- Outside storage area clean
- Kitchen areas properly ventilated

RESTAURANT PERMITTING FEES*

Certificate of Occupancy	\$50
(ISD Building Division & BFD Fire Prevention Division)	
Certificate of Inspection	\$37.50 + \$1 per seat
(ISD Building Division)	
Place of Assembly Permit (only if capacity > 50 persons).....	\$100-\$1000, by capacity
(BFD Fire Prevention Division)	
Common Victualler License	\$100 plus \$1 per seat, or \$210 for Take-Out Only
(Licensing Board)	
Food Service Health Permit	\$200 plus fees for certain menu items
(ISD Health Division)	
Alcoholic Beverage License	\$170 Advertising Fee + \$200 Filing Fee + \$100 Hearing Fee
(Licensing Board)	
Site Cleanliness License	\$50
(ISD Environmental Division)	
Dumpster Placement Permit	\$420
(BFD Fire Prevention Division)	
Live Entertainment License	\$425 for instrumental/vocal music not to exceed 3 performers; or \$825-\$2025 for instrumental/vocal music > 3 performers, dancing, DJ and/or karaoke, depending on capacity; or \$1200-\$2400 for instrumental/vocal music > 3 performers, dancing, DJ and/or karaoke and floor show, by capacity
(Consumer Affairs & Licensing)	
Non-Live Entertainment License	\$105 for background music, \$145 for < 5 small TVs, \$180 for > 5 small TVs, \$180 per widescreen TV, \$180 per DVD player
(Consumer Affairs & Licensing)	
Pool Table License	\$170 Advertising Fee + \$50 Primary Fee + \$30 per pool table
(Licensing Board)	
Sidewalk Café	Generally \$500 - \$1200 per month
(Public Works Department)	
Valet Parking Permit	\$40 per linear foot of curb space per year + \$150 per sign for five years
(BTD Off-Street Parking Division)	

CONTACT INFORMATION

AGENCY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Office of Business Development	26 Court Street, 9 th Floor	617-635-0355
ISD Building, Plans & Zoning Division	1010 Mass Ave, 5 th Floor	617-635-5312
ISD Certificate of Occupancy Division	1010 Mass Ave, 5 th Floor	617-635-3223
ISD Health Division	1010 Mass Ave, 4 th Floor	617-635-5326
Boston Licensing Board	City Hall, Room 809	617-635-4170
Boston Fire Department Fire Prevention Division	1010 Mass Ave, 4 th Floor	617-343-3043
Public Works Department Permit Division	City Hall, Room 714	617-635-4910
ISD Environmental Services Division	1010 Mass Ave, 4 th Floor	617-961-3422
Transportation Department Off-Street Parking Division	43 Hawkins Street	617-635-4489
Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs & Licensing	City Hall, Room 817	617-635-4165
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services	City Hall, Room 708	617-635-3485

*Links to all permit and license applications can be found online at www.cityofboston.gov/restaurants.
Additional business registration fees apply. See OBD's [Small Business Resource Guide](#) for more details.