

GUIDE TO OPENING A BERKELEY BUSINESS

STARTING A NEW BUSINESS?
MOVING TO A NEW LOCATION?
TAKING OVER AN EXISTING BUSINESS?



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Four Major Components Required for Opening a Business in Berkeley

- ▶ **If your business will be physically located in Berkeley, CA**, there are several steps you will need to take with the City of Berkeley to legally operate.
- ▶ **If your business is not (or will not be) physically located in Berkeley**, skip to the last bullet point below.

Generally zoning review should happen first, getting building and operational permits are required prior to commencing operations, and a business tax certificate must be obtained within 30 days of opening the business to avoid penalties. However, the order in which you complete the following may depend on the industry you are in, the space you will occupy, and local, state or regulatory agency requirements specific to your business.

1. Zoning approval

2. Permits for any construction or tenant improvements

3. Operational permits

(Environmental Health, Toxics, Fire, Public Works, Zero Waste)

4. Business tax certificate¹

business registration and tax payment

All businesses with a physical location in Berkeley need zoning approval and a Business Tax Certificate. Construction permits and additional operating approvals may also be required, depending on the location, planned improvements, and business activity.



Not sure where to start? Tell us about your business. [Contact the Office of Economic Development](#) (OEDmailbox@berkeleyca.gov) for further assistance.

¹ A "business tax certificate" is referenced in the [Berkeley Municipal Code Section 9.04](#) as a "Business License." The two terms may be used interchangeably in City of Berkeley communications.

Step by Step Guide: an Overview

- **Select the appropriate site for your business**

as allowed by the City of Berkeley's zoning (shown in the [Property & Planning Map](#)) and receive zoning approval from the [Land Use Division of the Planning and Development Department](#).

Before You Sign a Lease: If the business activity you will undertake in the space will be different than that of the previous occupant, verify that the existing building occupancy classification can accommodate your proposed business use. If your business requires a [change in occupancy classification](#), additional permits, accessibility upgrades, and/or fire protection or building improvements may be required. Discuss this with your architect or the City's Building & Safety staff before committing to a lease.

If you will modify the building or make interior tenant improvements: Retain the services of a licensed design professional with experience in permitting your type of business from the start. Submit plans and other documents to the Building and Safety Division for Plan Check. The plans will be routed to all reviewing agencies with that submittal.

- **Obtain permits from Building & Safety, Fire, and Public Works**

for relevant building construction or tenant improvements, including electrical, mechanical, and plumbing modifications. The number and type of permits varies depending on the type of business you are considering opening.

- **Obtain operational permits and needed services**

(as applicable for your business) from Fire, Public Works, Toxics, Zero Waste and Environmental Health.

- **Register your business and pay for your business tax certificate**

within 30 days of opening your business to avoid penalties and interest. (Note: You may apply for a business tax certificate at any time; however, you are still required to obtain all necessary building and other agency permits before opening or beginning operations.)

Renew your business tax certificate annually by reporting and paying taxes before March 1 to avoid penalties and interest.

The following pages outline the steps, and things to consider regarding each step.



Not sure where to start? Tell us about your business. [Contact the Office of Economic Development](#) (OEDmailbox@berkeleyca.gov) for further assistance.

1. Zoning Approval

To find an appropriate space for your business before signing a lease or purchasing a property, you can:

- Research an address' zoning using the City's [Parcel and Zoning Search Tool](#).
- Ask the City's Land Use Division:
 - what zoning designation or areas allow the type of business you are considering; then focus your search on those areas, or
 - what it would take to get a zoning approval for the property or property addresses you have selected for the business(es) you are considering opening.

For the above inquiries, you can visit the Land Use (Zoning) Counter located at the City of Berkeley Permit Service Center (1947 Center Street, 3rd floor) or email planning@berkeleyca.gov.

Apply for Zoning Approval from the City's Land Use (Zoning) Division

Depending on how your business is categorized in the [Zoning Ordinance](#), you will need one of four distinct approval types:

- Zoning Certificate (ZC)
- Zoning Certificate for a Home Occupation (ZCHO)
- Administrative Use Permit (AUP)
- Use Permit with a Public Hearing (UPPH)

If your business use is allowed by right, based on the City's zoning map (which you can explore in the City's [Parcel and Zoning Search Tool](#)), you can apply for a Zoning Certificate (ZC). If you operate your business out of your residence, you will seek a Zoning Certificate for a Home Occupation (ZCHO).

You can apply for a ZC or ZCHO online or in person and will need to pay the corresponding fee for a business use that is newly established, expanded, or changed, or for a ZCHO. If you are requesting a continuation of a lawful ZC use, there will be no cost.



Apply Online

To [apply for a Zoning Certificate \(ZC\) or Zoning Certificate for Home Occupation \(ZCHO\) online](#), you will need to first register for an account, following the instructions below:

- Register for an account and log in (existing user log in only)
- Click on the Zoning tab
- Click on “Apply for a business-related zoning certificate”
- Accept the terms of the website and click on continue
- Select the radio button by the type of Zoning Certificate you are applying for and click on Continue Application
- Follow prompts and complete the application

Your ZC application will be reviewed by land use staff who will reach out via email to request additional information if needed. You will receive an invoice via email if your business is allowed for the zoning district, and once payment is received, staff will approve your ZC.

If Not Approved

If the business use is not allowed, staff will deny the Zoning Certificate (ZC) and contact you via email. If you apply for a ZC but your business requires an Administrative Use Permit (AUP) or Use Permit with a Public Hearing (UPPH), staff will reach out via email with more information on next steps.

Discretionary Approvals

Administrative Use Permit (AUP) and Use Permit with a Public Hearing (UPPH) are two types of discretionary approvals based on standards found in the Zoning Ordinance. If you require an AUP or UPPH, it must be approved prior to operating your business. If your business requires a discretionary approval, but you are moving into a space formerly occupied by a company undertaking the same business use, verify with the City’s Land Use Division if there is already an approved AUP or UPPH associated with that address. If staff can identify one, you can apply for a zoning certificate to continue the existing legally established use.



If your business requires a new discretionary approval, please reach out to land use staff at planning@berkeleyca.gov or visit the zoning counter at the [Permit Service Center](#) for more information about the process at 1947 Center Street, 3rd Floor, Monday – Thursday 8:30 – 2:30pm (last check in at 2pm).



Apply in Person

Apply in person at the Permit Service Center, Monday through Thursday from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM at 1947 Center Street, 3rd Floor, at the Zoning Counter. During your session you will fill out a Zoning Certificate (ZC) application and pay any corresponding fees. Many ZCs can be approved by right (over the counter). However, some may require additional review.

2. Building Construction & Tenant Improvement Requirements

Hire a Licensed Professional

Permits are required from the City of Berkeley Building & Safety Division for building construction, modifications or tenant improvements to the interior and exterior walls, and all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work. Building and construction must follow [Berkeley-specific requirements](#) in addition to the California Building Standards Code, regardless of whether you own or lease the property. Local regulations include: Private Sewer Lateral requirements, gas shut-off valve requirements and energy/green building reach codes.

To alter a space for non-residential uses, it is required for you to hire a licensed professional to help you to design a new space or make interior modifications: getting approval from the City will require submitting drawings or building plans that bear the stamp and signature of the California licensed architect or engineer who was responsible for their preparation [per [California Business & Professions Code 5538](#) and [6737.1](#)].

Things to Talk to Your Architect or Engineer About

Before hiring an architect, engineer (or team of licensed professionals), you might want to compare a few options and ask the following questions (in addition to the firm's hourly costs or overall pricing schedule):

- Have you ever completed a project in the City of Berkeley before?
- For which projects (for a similar type of business) have you received approved final inspections from the City of Berkeley (or other nearby Bay Area jurisdictions)?
- How many rounds of plan check did it take for these to receive approval from the City and have a permit issued?
- Is my proposed business allowed in the building or space as it relates to state & local regulatory requirements. e.g.:
 - [Occupancy Classification](#) [Building occupancy certificate requirements, and other Berkeley Building Codes, are pursuant to California Building Code Section 111.1 and can be found in [Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 19.28](#). **A change in occupancy classification may trigger additional building, accessibility, or fire protection requirements and should be evaluated early in the process.**]
 - Construction Type of the building or space (does the building, as constructed, allow the type of occupancy you are proposing?)
 - Allowed areas and height
 - Fire sprinkler and alarm requirements

2. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION & TENANT IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENTS

- Accessibility (ADA) improvements.

California law requires that up to 20% of the cost of the tenant improvements be spent on upgrading accessible facilities in the building serving the area of alteration, if the cost of the alterations is under the [valuation threshold](#) set by the State Architect. If the cost of improvements are more than the valuation threshold set by the State Architect, then a minimum of 20% shall be spent on upgrading the accessible facilities serving the area of alteration. Facilities serving the area of alterations include the path of travel from the street or parking area to the building or space entrance, the entrance, restrooms, signs, drinking fountains, etc. [[California Building Code Chapter 11B section 202.4 exc. 8](#)]

- Egress requirements
- Fire resistive construction
- Will I need to make any improvements in the Public Right of Way or plan to replace or upgrade the Private Sewer Lateral?
- Can you provide an estimate of how much money or time I will need to put into the building or space to have my business receive its issued permits and have a final building inspection approved?

Construction Plans and Supporting Documents

Your design professional will assist in creating your project scope and program. Ask them to assemble the appropriate design team (e.g. Structural, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, Energy, Fire Protection and other engineers) as required for designing your project and preparing plans and documents to submit to the City of Berkeley Building and Safety division for permits.

Generally, your licensed architect will be able to recommend a contractor, engineers, electricians, plumbers, etc. Unlicensed persons are limited to the design of nonstructural storefronts, fixtures, cabinetwork, furniture, or other appliances or equipment not hardwired to the electrical, plumbing or mechanical systems.

Completed plans and supporting documents can be [submitted for plan review online](#) or in person by appointment to the Permit Service Center (PSC) by you or your design professional. The submittal will need to clearly identify any equipment being installed and how it will be anchored to the structure. (It is common for a design professional to submit a project to the City on behalf of a business.)

Once submitted for plan check and the [plan check fees](#) are paid, the PSC will route your project for plan check to all the relevant reviewing agencies (e.g. Fire, Public Works, Environmental Health, Land Use, Zero Waste, and Toxics).

Note that getting a permit involves more than submitting the application. During the plan review process, reviewing agencies will draft a list of “corrections” (comments on items where they cannot confirm compliance with City codes in the drawings or documents). Each of the reviewing agencies will upload their corrections to the record and, once all the reviewing agencies have completed their respective reviews, the PSC will compile all the various corrections and send you an email stating that the results of the plan check are available for review.

2. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION & TENANT IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Review the corrections with your design team and have your licensed professionals respond to each, being careful not to miss any. Resubmit revised plans or supporting documents either electronically or by scheduling an appointment at the PSC. It is common for projects to go through several rounds of plan check, with each plan check cycle typically taking 3 – 6 weeks.

Once all reviewing agencies are satisfied that the project depicted on your plans and documents complies with City codes and regulations, each agency will approve and the PSC will process the application. Once processed, the PSC will notify you of what permit fees are due and what final documents are required to issue the permit.

Once the fees are paid (online or in person) and final documents have been received, the permit will be issued.



Visit the [Berkeley Building Permits webpage](#) for additional information on how to submit project plans and documents.

Private Sewer Lateral Requirements

A consent decree between federal authorities and East Bay government agencies requires all property owners to upgrade or verify the condition of private sewer laterals (PSLs)² when selling a property or obtaining a building permit for work with a value of more than \$60,000. In other words, if the amount of your construction work is over \$60,000, then the Private Sewer Lateral will need to be tested, and possibly replaced, if the property does not have a valid sewer certificate.

Forms and information are available on the City's [Private Sewer Lateral webpage](#). With questions regarding Private Sewer Lateral compliance or to confirm if a parcel has a valid sewer certificate, call Public Works staff Monday through Thursday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM at (510) 981-6423 or email PSLProgram@berkeleyca.gov. You can also do a General Search in the Public Works tab of the [City of Berkeley online permit portal](#) by inputting the parcel number or street address and looking if the PSLC record shows the status of that record as 'Active'. If no results generate, the address is not in compliance.

Construction and Demolition Recycling Requirements

The [California Green Building Standards Code \(CALGreen\)](#), as [modified by the City of Berkeley](#), requires non-residential construction and demolition projects to divert 100% of concrete, asphalt, and other land-clearing debris from the landfill through recycling and reuse, and 65% diversion of all other materials.

Construction projects that meet the CALGreen requirements are required to have a completed [Construction Waste Management Plan Form](#) and all project waste tonnage must be tracked

² A PSL is the pipe and associated fittings that connect the plumbing in a home or business to the sanitary sewer main, usually located in the street. The PSL carries sewage from a building to a public sanitary sewer. It is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain the PSL in satisfactory condition.

2. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION & TENANT IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENTS

in [Green Halo Systems](#), an online tool. Project waste tonnage includes material that is recycled, disposed, reused, or salvaged.

Space Allocation for Landfill, Recycling & Compost

As you design your space, ensure that your trash room is big enough to accommodate the four required waste streams (fiber recycling, container recycling, compost and landfill). See the [New Construction: Adequate Space Guidelines for Waste Containers](#) for more information on how to comply or contact the City's Zero Waste Division at recyclingprogram@berkeleyca.gov with questions.³

Signage/Awnings

Design Review is required for signage in all non-residential zoning districts, as well as some higher-density residential districts. If installing new signage or awnings or replacing a sign with a different location, size, or design, refer to the [submittal instructions and requirements for signs/awnings](#).

Specific Guidelines for Food Facility Design and Construction

For food facility design and construction, see the [Construction Guide for Food Facilities](#) or contact the City's Environmental Health division at envhealth@berkeleyca.gov.

Project Construction and Passing Required Inspections

Once you have obtained the permits, your contractor can start construction or tenant improvements. Your contractor will know when to call for inspections from the various agencies.

³ Per Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 12.32.030, "[e]very person owning any premises, where garbage or rubbish is produced or accumulated [is to] provide and maintain...in a suitable place readily accessible to personnel of the solid waste and environmental health divisions, containers of sufficient capacity and number to store the accumulations of garbage or rubbish during the intervals between collections or disposal."

3. Operational Requirements (Business-Specific)

Operational requirements vary based on your industry and the activities or operations your business will undertake in Berkeley. Depending on your business type, you may need to obtain operational permits (separate from building and fire construction permits) or services from Fire, Public Works, Zero Waste, Toxics and/or Environmental Health.

Examples of business activities that need operational permits are:

- Retail and Home-based Food and Beverage Preparation, Production and Sales
- Paint and coating operations (spray booths, dipping)
- Metal fabrication and welding shops
- Woodworking facilities with dust collection systems
- Handling or storing hazardous materials
- Manufacturing or processing facilities
- Propane (LPG) or other fuel gas systems
- Large Assembly uses
- Other novel Research & Development activities
- Tobacco or cannabis retail
- Body Art / Tattoo Operations
- Commercial / Public Swimming Pools and Spa Operations

The following sections provide an overview of some of the operational requirements for Berkeley businesses. Early consultation with staff in the relevant department can help you make sure you are seeking the right approvals. If you are not sure which department or City employee to contact, email OEDmailbox@berkeleyca.gov.

3. OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS (BUSINESS-SPECIFIC)

Fire Operational Permits

Depending on your business activities, you may also need a separate operational fire permit from the Fire Department and pay associated fees. You can find a list of some of the operations that would require a permit on the [City's Fire Permits webpage](#).

Hazardous Materials Permits

If you plan to use hazardous materials, you may also need to submit a [Hazardous Materials Business Plan \(HMBP\)](#) to the [California Environmental Reporting System \(CERS\)](#). The City's Toxics Management Division is the [Certified Unified Program Agency \(CUPA\)](#) for the City of Berkeley and regulates hazardous materials and waste on behalf of the State of California.

A HMBP is required if the **total quantity of hazardous materials on site** meets or exceeds any of the following thresholds:

- 55 gallons of liquids
- 200 cubic feet of compressed gases
- 500 pounds of solids

Regulated facilities are subject to periodic inspections and applicable regulatory and permit fees based on the programs that apply to their operations. Contact the Toxics Management Division at (510) 981-7460 or toxics@berkeleyca.gov for assistance.

If the business generates hazardous waste, you will also be required to complete a [Hazardous Waste Generator Application](#).

Any business that treats or recycles hazardous waste onsite must have a permit to do so before conducting this activity. Call (510) 981-7460 or email toxics@berkeleyca.gov to receive an application and present an appropriate plan for treatment or disposal.

For installation and/or removal of underground storage tanks (USTs) for hazardous materials, you will also need to get a permit from the City's Toxics and Fire departments.

If your business stores 1,320 gallons or more of petroleum in aboveground tanks OR has a tank in an underground area (TIUGA), you may also be subject to the Aboveground Petroleum Storage Act (APSA).

Permits for Projects Using the Public Right of Way

Public Works Department staff are responsible for the City's extensive network of public infrastructure, including streets, sanitary sewers, stormwater piping, green infrastructure installations, streetlights, parking meters, public buildings, and waste, recycling, and composting.

Your business may need special permits for sidewalk seating, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, driveways.

3. OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS (BUSINESS-SPECIFIC)

Requirements for Waste Disposal, Composting & Recycling

Businesses and institutions are required by [statewide compost and recycling laws](#)⁴ to subscribe to landfill, recycling, and compost collection services, reduce waste, and educate employees, tenants, and contractors to sort properly.

The City of Berkeley's [Zero Waste Division](#) provides [commercial waste collection services](#).

- To start or adjust compost and recycling collection service, contact the City of Berkeley Customer Service Center at (510) 981-7270.
- Place color-coded compost, cardboard/paper recycling, container recycling, and landfill bins together with proper signage in waste rooms and common areas indoors.
- Check bins periodically and educate staff and contractors to sort properly annually (Property managers and owners must educate tenants about proper sorting no later than 2 weeks after move-in and at least 2 weeks before move-out.)

Food-generating Businesses

All retail food establishments in the city must operate in compliance with the [California Retail Food Code](#), [Berkeley Municipal Code, Title 11](#). These include brick and mortar restaurants, cafes, bars, mobile food operations, [temporary event food booths](#), and farmer and flea market food vendors and home-based retail food sales (e.g. microenterprise home kitchens, cottage food). Food service operators can contact the Environmental Health Division (EHD) at envhealth@berkeleyca.gov or (510) 981-5310 regarding permits and inspections.

Please reference the [Environmental Regulations & Resources for Berkeley Food Businesses guide](#) for a general overview of environmental requirements for food businesses.

Reusable Foodware

Businesses selling prepared food must reduce their usage of single-use foodware.

Requirements:

- Reusable Foodware for On-site Dining
- Color-coded and Labeled Recycling, Composting, and Trash Receptacles
- BPI Certified Compostable Foodware for take-out
- \$0.25 Charge for Disposable Cups & Accept Reusable Customer Cups
- Disposable Accessory Items Only Upon Request or at Self-serve Stations

To learn more, visit the City of Berkeley [webpage on Single Use Foodware Rules](#).

Food Waste Prevention and Required Donation Agreements

Sites such as grocery stores, food distributors, health facilities, public schools, and large restaurants must reduce and donate surplus edible food to feed our community. Visit [StopWaste's Food Donation and Recovery Rules webpage](#) for more info.

⁴ State laws: SB 1383, AB 341, AB 1826; Berkeley Municipal Codes 11.63, 11.64, 12.32, 12.34, 12.35, 12.36, 12.38. California state law SB 1383 aims to keep recyclable and compostable materials out of landfills to reduce emissions that contribute to climate change. In Alameda County, the law is implemented and enforced under the Organics Reduction and Recycling Ordinance in partnership with [StopWaste](#).

Other Rules & Requirements for Consideration

For full regulatory compliance for your business, there may be additional regulatory agencies you will need to work with, at multiple levels of government.

See the Operating in Berkeley page for additional City requirements for:

- [landlords](#)
- commercial [pools and spas](#) at apartment complexes
- gym and fitness facilities and other recreational aquatic facilities
- [tattoo / body art facilities](#) (including the artists and practitioners)
- [retail tobacco](#)
- cannabis operations
- [amplified sound](#) (indoor & outdoor, as permitted by [BMC Section 13.40](#))
- [local workforce standards](#) (e.g. minimum wage and paid sick leave)
- [commuter benefits](#)
- [stormwater compliance](#)
- [outdoor commerce, sidewalk seating & parklets](#)

At the regional, state and national level, the Bay Area Air District, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food & Drug Administration (FDA) are just a few examples of the types of agencies your business may need to work with. Please consult advisors in your industry or hire an Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) specialist to help your business evaluate all the areas where permits and protocols must be followed to keep your employees, the environment, and our community healthy and safe.

4. Business Tax Certificate (aka Business License)

[Berkeley Municipal Code Section 9.04](#)⁵ requires all persons or businesses conducting business within Berkeley, directly or indirectly, to have a current business tax certificate by paying an annual tax. You can [apply for a business tax certificate](#) at any time; however, if you do not apply for a business tax certificate within 30 days of opening of your business, penalties and interest will apply. Handled by the Finance Department, the business tax certificate serves as proof that your business tax has been paid.

The business tax certificate is not a construction or operational permit and does not authorize business activities.

Apply for a Business Tax Certificate

Fill out an application, calculate the total tax due, and make payment to “**City of Berkeley.**” Depending on your type of business and physical location, the application process may take a few days to several weeks to complete the review and approval process.

Typically, the cost to apply for a business tax certificate (provided in [BMC Section 9.04.075](#), [9.04.230](#), or [9.04.235](#) on business licenses) is as follows:

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. One time registration fee: | \$25 |
| 2. Minimum tax | |
| a. For most businesses: | \$51 |
| b. For rental properties: | \$77 |
| c. For non-profits (include copy of IRS exemption letter): | \$26 |
| 3. State-Mandated Fee: | \$4 |

You may return your application and payment by mail to:

Finance Department

Revenue Collection

1947 Center Street, 1st Floor

Berkeley, CA 94704

Or in person at the Finance Customer Service Center

(1947 Center Street, 1st Floor, Monday – Thursday between 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM)

⁵ **BMC 9.04.035 License required.** It shall be unlawful for any person, either for themselves or for any other person, to commence or carry on any business specified in this chapter, in the City, without first having procured a license from the City to do so, or without complying with any and all regulations of such business contained in this chapter. The carrying on of any business without first having procured a license from the City to do so, or without complying with any and all regulations of the chapter, shall constitute a separate violation of this chapter for each and every day that such business is so carried on. (Ord. 5017-NS § I (part), 1977)

4. BUSINESS TAX CERTIFICATE (AKA BUSINESS LICENSE)

Before a business tax certificate can be issued, the business must pay all associated taxes and fees. After applying and paying for your business tax certificate, you will receive a confirmation number and ultimately be assigned a business tax certificate number.

All Berkeley businesses must renew their business certificate annually and pay before March 1 to avoid penalties and interest. Any required approvals, permits, or licenses must be obtained separately, along with payment of applicable taxes or fees.

Helpful Tips When Applying for a Business Tax Certificate

- **Business Name:** If the business name is different from the owner's legal name, additional documentation may be required.
A business name may include the owner's first name, last name, or both, along with descriptive words about the business. However, if the business name includes or refers to any other person (other than the owner), the applicant must provide one of the following:
 - **Fictitious Business Statement.** If located in Alameda County, check the County of Alameda website for a [Fictitious Business Name Filing](#)
 - If the business is a Corporation or LLC, conduct a [Business Search](#) with the California Secretary of State to verify that the business status is "active."
- **Business Start Date:** This is the date the business began activity in Berkeley. If an application is not filed and paid in full within 30 days of the business start date, penalties and interest apply.
- **Berkeley Location:** This is the physical address in Berkeley, including residential addresses (if you work from home). If the business has no physical presence within the City of Berkeley, this field should be left blank.
- **Mailing Address:** This address will be used for correspondence and all mailings; it is also where the City will mail the physical business tax certificate along with vehicle decals, if applicable.
- **Detailed Description of Business Activity:** The detailed business description informs the City of the business activity the business will be conducting. This is critical in properly identifying the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code and to assign the corresponding tax code per Berkeley Municipal Code 9.04.

Once all required permits, licenses, approvals, and business tax certificates have been obtained, approved, and paid for, you can open for business!



At any point in the process, Berkeley businesses or prospective business owners can [contact the Office of Economic Development](#) for further assistance.

Business Tax Certificate Renewals

Business tax certificates expire annually on December 31. All Berkeley businesses are responsible for the timely filing of the [annual business tax certificate renewal](#) and payment. Reminders are generally mailed in December, and full payment is due prior to March 1 to avoid penalties and interest.

4. BUSINESS TAX CERTIFICATE (AKA BUSINESS LICENSE)

Business Closures

If your business closes during a calendar year, a [Closing Declaration Form](#) is required. Please be advised that all business tax certificate renewals report the previous year's gross receipts until the closure date. Fees are based on your gross receipts from January 1 to the end of business operation in the same calendar year. Mail your completed form(s) along with payment(s) made payable to City of Berkeley to:

Finance Department

Revenue Collection

1947 Center Street, 1st Floor

Berkeley, CA 94704

Contact Information for City Departments

Topic	City Resource and Location	Hours (See Note)	Contact Information
General	311 Call Center Information Technology Department	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	(510) 981-2489
Land Use/Zoning	Zoning Counter, Permit Service Center Planning Department 1947 Center Street, 3rd Floor	Monday to Thursday 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM (Final check-in at 2:00 PM) Closed every Friday	(510) 981-7410 zoningcounter@berkeleyca.gov
Building and Safety Review	Building and Safety Division Planning Department	Monday to Thursday 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM (Final check-in at 2:00 PM) Closed every Friday	(510) 981-7440 Planningbuildingandsafety@berkeleyca.gov
Fire Prevention Review	Permit Service Center Planning Department 1947 Center Street, 3rd Fl.	Monday to Thursday 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM Closed every Friday	(510) 981-5585 BFDfireprevention@berkeleyca.gov
Environmental Health (permits for food, pools/ spas, amplified sound, tobacco, cannabis, body art)	Permits and Inspection Environmental Health 2180 Milvia Street, 2nd Floor	Monday to Friday 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	(510) 981-5310 envhealth@berkeleyca.gov
Waste Disposal, Composting & Recycling	Zero Waste Public Works 1201 Second Street	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	(510) 981-7270 customerservice@berkeleyca.gov
Toxics Review	Toxics Management Division Planning Department 1947 Center Street, 1st Floor	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM By appointment only	(510) 981-7460 toxics@berkeleyca.gov
Business Tax Certificate	Customer Service Center Finance Department 1947 Center Street, 1st Floor	Monday to Thursday 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM	(510) 981-7200 biztax@berkeleyca.gov

Note: The City of Berkeley is closed on holidays and the second Friday of every month, as a cost-savings measure.

County and State Resources

If you need a...	Resource and Location	Hours	Contact Information
Fictitious Business Name	Alameda County Clerk-Recorder's Office 1106 Madison St., Room 136 Oakland, CA 94612	Monday to Friday 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM	(510) 272-6362 www.acgov.org
Business Entity Name (LLC, Corporation, Partnership, etc.)	Secretary of State 1500 11th Street Sacramento, CA 95814	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	(916) 657-5448 www.sos.ca.gov
Federal Tax ID, Non-profit certification	Internal Revenue Service 1301 Clay Street Oakland, CA 94612	Monday to Friday 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM	Individual: (800) 829-1040 Business: (800) 829-4933 www.irs.gov
Professional License (Contractors, Auto Repair, etc.)	California State Department of Consumer Affairs 1625 North Market Blvd, Suite N Sacramento, CA 95834	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 4:45 PM	(800) 952-5210 www.dca.ca.gov
Seller or Wholesale Permit	California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) 1515 Clay Street, Suite 303 Oakland, CA 94612	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	(800) 400-7115 cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/faqseller.htm
Alcohol License	Alcoholic Beverage Control Department 1515 Clay Street, Suite 2208 Oakland, CA 94612	Monday to Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	(510) 622-4970 www.abc.ca.gov oak.direct@abc.ca.gov

Disclaimer

This guide is provided by the City of Berkeley for general informational purposes only to assist prospective business owners in understanding common steps involved in establishing a business. While the City makes reasonable efforts to provide accurate and up-to-date information, this document is not intended to be comprehensive and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice.

Business owners are solely responsible for determining and complying with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and permitting requirements. The specific requirements for any business may vary depending on the proposed use, location, building conditions, and other factors. City approvals, permits, or staff guidance do not relieve applicants of their obligation to ensure full compliance with all applicable requirements.

The City of Berkeley shall not be held liable for any errors or omissions in this document, or for any outcomes, delays, costs, or damages resulting from reliance on the information provided herein or from the establishment or operation of any business. Prospective business owners are strongly encouraged to consult with licensed professionals, including architects, engineers, attorneys, and other qualified advisors, as appropriate.