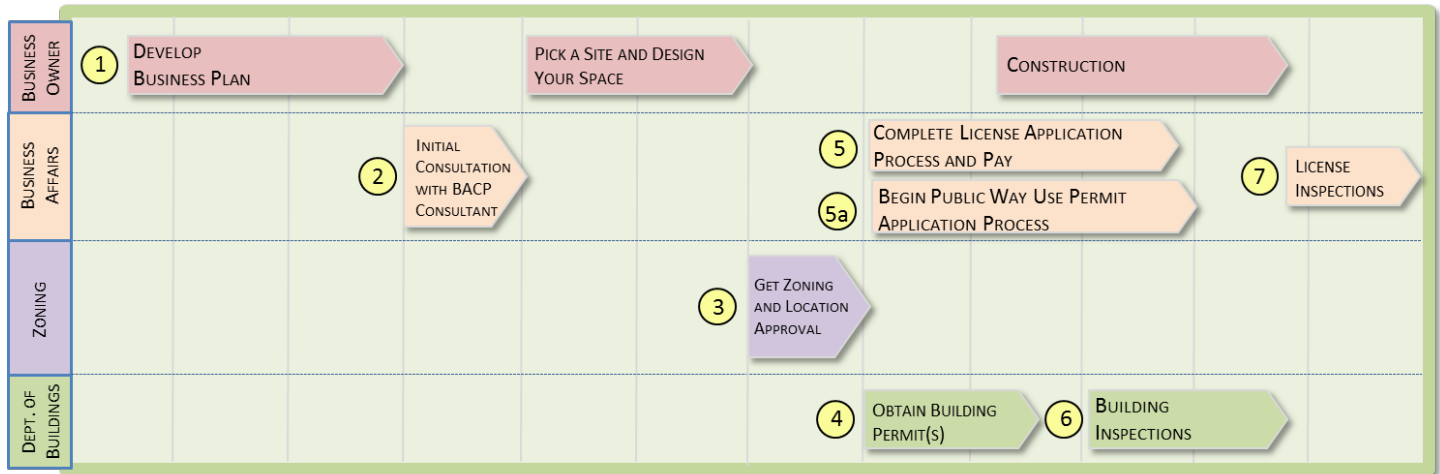




# RESTAURANT QUICK GUIDE TO LICENSES, PERMITS & INSPECTIONS

The information in this guide will save you time by showing you what you'll need in advance and which City agencies can assist you. Since each business is unique, this information serves only as a guide and is subject to change. If you have any questions, please contact us at [restaurant@cityofchicago.org](mailto:restaurant@cityofchicago.org) and we will be glad to help.

## Restaurant Start-up Timeline



Note: Refer to corresponding numbers below for detailed information.

For the complete Restaurant Start-up Guide, please visit

[www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant](http://www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant)

### 1 Develop a business plan and determine legal entity

Before meeting with a BACP consultant, you should develop a business plan and determine your legal entity (i.e., Limited Partnership (LP), Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), Corporation, or Not-for-Profit Corporation (NFP)). There are several resources available to help you:

- 1) Visit the Small Business Solution station every Tuesday (business counseling), Wednesday (legal assistance) and Thursday (financial assistance/loans) and get free business counseling from our trusted non-profit partner agencies.
- 2) Visit your local Chamber of Commerce, who can assist you on developing business plans **(see C-5 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for a list of Chambers of Commerce and other delegate agencies in the city of Chicago)**
- 3) Visit the business library at Harold Washington Library, 400 S State St. 4<sup>th</sup> floor

### 2 Prepare for Initial Consultation with BACP Business Consultant

- Schedule an appointment with a BACP consultant by either calling 312-74-GOBIZ or visiting [www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant](http://www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant)



#### BACP Small Business Solution Station

BACP City Hall, Room 805 or make an appointment by calling 312-744-2086.


(See C-1 for the BACP Small Business Solution Station flyer for more information)



#### Helpful Hint

Your local Alderman's office and Chamber of Commerce have lists of available sites.

- Prior to meeting with a BACP consultant, fill out the **Restaurant Start-up Worksheet** (see pg x of the guide). Additional copies are available at [www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant](http://www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant) and BACP

- Describe your restaurant activity (e.g., liquor, fast-food)
- Identify potential sites and bring photos, if available (note: photos do not need to be printed out. They could be on your camera or phone)
- Check whether your potential sites have outstanding building violations. Go to [www.cityofchicago.org/dob](http://www.cityofchicago.org/dob) > Look Up Building Permits, Inspections and Violations Online 

- Obtain a Chicago Food Service Sanitation Certificate


All restaurants are required to have at least one employed person on the premises at all times who has a valid City of Chicago Food Service Sanitation Certificate. At the time of application, one must provide proof of Sanitation Certificate. **(see C-10 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for a list of training providers)**

- Register with the appropriate government entity **(see C-3 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for more information)**

- If you plan to do business as a Sole Proprietor or General Partnership in Illinois, under an assumed name (a name other than your own), obtain an Assumed Name Certificate from the Cook County Clerk's Office
- Obtain a State of Illinois File Number through Illinois Secretary of State
- Obtain Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) through Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Obtain an Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) Account ID (formerly IBT#) through IDOR

- During your appointment with a BACP consultant, the consultant will guide you through the entire process, which will include checking for potential location restrictions, determining any Public Way Use permit requirements, and discussing food safety requirements.

### **Get Zoning and Location Approval**

The City of Chicago is divided into a variety of zoning districts that reflect the diversity of business and neighborhood uses. Each zoning district has different regulations regarding the types of business activities that are permitted. It is imperative that you check the zoning requirements of your proposed business location carefully. 

**Before taking out a business loan, signing a lease, or applying for a business license, ensure that the site where you intend to operate is in an appropriately zoned area** and that it complies with the Chicago Municipal Code. There are also other location restrictions (e.g., liquor dry area) that your business consultant can check for you. The Municipal Code is frequently updated so a new owner needs to check current zoning and code regulations; **do not assume the previous owner's zoning designation applies to your business.**

- If construction is necessary**, apply for building permits and submit the following documents to the zoning department via Department of Buildings e-plan **(see Section E-11 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for E-plan User Guide)** :



If there is an outstanding violation, the permitting and licensing process may be delayed until the violation is cleared. You could be financially responsible for correcting any violations.



**Interactive Zoning Map**

[www.cityofchicago.org/zoningmap](http://www.cityofchicago.org/zoningmap)


Also see Restaurant License and Zoning Reference Guide on F-2

- Architectural plans, floor plans and plat of survey for zoning approval (**see E-2 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for more information on when a building permit is necessary**)
- If you have not met with a BACP consultant, submit the first page of the Restaurant Start-up Worksheet (**see form 1 in the Restaurant Start-up Guide**)
- If your establishment's occupancy will be more than 100 or you will be applying for a liquor license, submit an application for occupancy capacity signs for zoning approval (**see form 2 in the Restaurant Start-up Guide**)


**If construction is not necessary**, submit the following documents to your BACP consultant:

- If applying for a liquor license, include floor plans and plat of survey for zoning approval (**see D-1 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for examples**)
- If your establishment's occupancy will be more than 100 or you will be applying for a liquor license, submit an application for occupancy capacity signs for zoning approval. (**see form 2 in the Restaurant Start-up Guide**)

If applying for a liquor license or a Public Place of Amusement (PPA) license, you must meet location restrictions. For example, your restaurant has to be more than 100 feet (or 200 feet, if applying for PPA) away from a library, church, school, hospital or home for the aged or indigent (**see F-5 and F-11 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for detailed information on restrictions and regulations**). Submit a payment of \$250 to BACP for an on-site location approval. This fee will be credited toward your license fee. This approval will be valid for one year from the date of approval.

**Outstanding Debt** - Any outstanding debts to the City owed by the business owner or an officer of the business must be paid before a license can be issued. These debts **include past due parking tickets, water bills, child support payments, or any other type of administrative hearing fines imposed by the City**. This also includes Illinois Sales Tax owed. If you have debt, you may apply for a license; however, a license will not be issued until all debt has been paid or you enter into a payment plan with the City. To find out if you have any debt and to find out about payment options, visit the Chicago Department of Revenue. 

#### **4 Obtain Building Permits— If construction or alterations are necessary**

Once zoning has approved your architectural plans and location, the Department of Buildings will review your architectural plans. You should have already submitted the following through e-plan (**see E-11 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for E-plan User Guide**): 

- Zoning approved architectural plans
- Kitchen equipment specifications and menus. (**see E-3 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide standard plan process checklist**)

Once plans have been approved, a building permit will be issued.

#### **5 Complete License Application**

Once zoning has approved your plans and location, submit your completed application for a retail food establishment license to BACP either online or in-person. You will also need to submit:



#### **Helpful Hint**

Even if you are not doing any construction, you will need to submit a site plan and a floor plan. See D-1 for examples.



#### **Chicago Department of Revenue**

33 N. LaSalle Street  
Suite 700  
312-744-7275 or  
pay online at  
[www.cityofchicago.org/finance](http://www.cityofchicago.org/finance)




#### **Helpful Hint**

To avoid delays, you should begin license application concurrently with permit application.



If you are using a self-certified architect, you are **strongly encouraged** to request an **on-site food consultation**. To schedule your on-site consultation, email [restaurant@cityofchicago.org](mailto:restaurant@cityofchicago.org)

- Business Information Sheet (BIS) **(see form 3 in the Restaurant Start-up Guide)**
  - Lease or proof of ownership of the property
  - Chicago Food Service Sanitation Certificate
- If applying for a liquor license, begin your liquor license application. The liquor license application can **only** be completed in-person **(see section F-1 through F-10 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for a detailed list of all requirements, including eligibility requirements)**
- Submit zoning-approved occupancy capacity sign application
  - Submit proof of liquor liability insurance and a Beverage Alcohol Sellers and Servers Education and Training (BASSET) 
  - Schedule fingerprint-based criminal background check for any person with 5% or more ownership
- If applying for a Public Place of Amusement (PPA) license, begin your PPA license application. The term PPA includes but is not limited to bowling alleys, businesses with 2+ pool tables, nightclubs and dance clubs, and karaoke. PPA licenses application **can** only be completed in-person. It is important to note that there are additional zoning and location restrictions **(see F-11 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for a detailed list of requirements)**
- 5a** If your site requires **Public Way Use** or other permits, begin the application process with your BACP consultant. There are six (6) major types of use permits:
1. Sign installation permit - If you are installing a sign, submit a sign permit application to DOB **(see form 4 in the Restaurant Start-up Guide)**
  2. Signs, canopies, and/or lights - If the site will have signs, or canopies, that will project into a public way, submit the application to BACP **(see G-11 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for Public Way Use Bundle Permit Application and form5)**
  3. Sidewalk café – If you are planning to have a sidewalk café, submit an application to BACP **(see G-25 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for Sidewalk Café Application Information Package and form 6)**
  4. If your site has a driveway, you must get a driveway permit **(see G-53 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide for the application process and form 7 for an application)**
  5. If you do not have approved alley access for deliveries, your site needs a loading zone to load and unload deliveries. Submit a loading zone permit application to your alderman’s office **(see G-51 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide)**
  6. If your site needs a standing zone for non-commercial vehicles (e.g., drop-off and pick-up), submit a standing zone permit application to your alderman’s office **(see G-51 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide)**
- Make your final payment and prepare for inspections
- If you are applying for a liquor license, the Department of Public Health will contact you within 3 days of payment to schedule an inspection. **The inspector will not come until you have confirmed that you are ready.**
  - If you are applying for a liquor license, you will schedule a license taskforce inspection through your BACP consultant. The taskforce inspection includes inspectors from BACP, Department of Buildings, Department of Fire, and the Department of Public Health. **On the day of the inspection, the taskforce will arrive within a 3-hour window.**



**Helpful Hint**

City of Chicago Business Licenses are non-transferable. Each restaurant and each location must have its own license in order to operate.



For more information on BASSET training, visit Illinois Restaurant Association. [www.illinoisrestaurants.org](http://www.illinoisrestaurants.org)



**Helpful Hint**

Any use permit on public way requires City Council approval and the application process may take from **60-120 days**. Begin this process as early as possible to prevent any delays.



**Helpful Hint**

If a business I found to be operating without a Retail Food Establishment License or other required city license a Cease and Desist Order will be issued and the operations will be close immediately.

## 6 Building Inspections – If construction is necessary

We are excited to offer a team-based building inspection for your restaurant construction. Previously offered only to larger buildings, this service is now available for any restaurant undergoing construction.

- Prior to constructing your kitchen, schedule a free, optional **on-site food consultation** to ensure that your kitchen construction meets all relevant health codes. To schedule your on-site consultation, contact [restaurant@cityofchicago.org](mailto:restaurant@cityofchicago.org).
- To schedule the team-inspection option, refer to **H-1 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide** for instructions. You will also have the option of scheduling individual inspections but these requests can take longer to accommodate.

## 7 Quick Guide to the Licensing Taskforce and Food Safety 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.

**Fire Inspection – Liquor License** (for a detailed fire inspection checklist, see **H-6 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide**)

Fire inspectors will visit your facility and check for safety measures. Their primary concern is verifying that you have proper exit structures in case of an emergency. They will verify that stairs, chimney, heating, and duct systems are in good condition and that aisles and exits are easily accessible and all fire extinguishers are in good working order.

Below are a few of the more common reasons why applicants fail fire inspections:

- Inadequate water supply for the automatic sprinkler system
- Impaired or non-existent access to elevators or man hoists
- Combustible construction debris or trash onsite
- Non-working, non-illuminated exit and stairs signs
- Storage under stairs
- Storage around heat-producing appliances
- Extinguishers that are not charged and/or tagged from current year's inspection
- Blocked aisles and exit areas/doors
- Accumulation of debris that creates a potential fire hazard
- Lack of panic bar on locked exits

**Building Inspection (SIP) – Liquor License and Occupancy Capacity Sign** (for a detailed building inspection (SIP) checklist, see **H-2 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide**)

Below are a few of the more common reasons why applicants fail building inspections:

- Structural defects (Roof, walls or floor joists need repair, etc.)
- Undersized exit doors, corridor width or stairways
- Insufficient number of exits or improper swing of the exit door
- Locking devices on exit doors



### Helpful Hint

If you conducted any construction, all permits must have passed final inspections prior to license inspections.

- Lack of exit signs or emergency lighting
- Lack of stamped, approved plans on construction site
- Open building permits (i.e., final inspections not completed and passed)

**BACP Inspection – Incidental Liquor License for Restaurants and Tavern** (for a BACP inspection checklist, see **H-5 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide**)

Below are a few of the more common reasons why applicants fail BACP inspections:

- The layout of the restaurant does not meet requirements of Incidental-Consumption on Premises license
- Restaurant floor layout does not match the floor plan that was approved and submitted to BACP and zoning
- Public Notice of Liquor License Application is not visibly posted

**Health Inspections (Food Protection) – Retail Food License** (for a detailed list of requirements, see **H-7 of the Restaurant Start-up Guide** for a complete guide to health inspection)

Chicago Department of Public Health inspects your facility to ensure food safety and proper sanitation. Inspections focus on food-handling practices, proper temperatures, personal hygiene, facility maintenance, and pest control. For the inspection, you or a person with a food sanitation certificate must be present at the time of inspection.

Below are a few of the more common reasons why applicants fail the initial health inspection:

- Not ready for inspection, or physical build-out not completed
- Food equipment not installed and/or not operating properly
- Cooking ventilation system not installed and/or not operating properly
- Lack of three-compartment sink that is large and deep enough to completely submerge cooking utensils in food preparation areas
- Lack of utility/mop sink with a backflow preventer for housekeeping practices
- Lack of plumbing back-flow devices at various plumbing fixtures
- Lack of adequate hand washing stations
- Lack of hot water at sinks or dishwashers
- Unsealed gaps in walls, joints and piping
- Inadequate refrigeration (temperature is above 40 degrees Fahrenheit in refrigerators/coolers and above 0 degrees Fahrenheit in freezers)
- Restrooms not operational
- Pest on site, no pest control log available
- Doors not sufficient to prevent pests

**IF YOU REQUIRE ANY RE-INSPECTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT [restaurant@cityofchicago.org](mailto:restaurant@cityofchicago.org) TO SCHEDULE.**



**Helpful Hint**

Refer to pg 24 of the Health Inspection Guide for a readiness checklist.



**Helpful Hint**

For updates on the more common reasons for health inspections, please visit:

[www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant](http://www.cityofchicago.org/restaurant)