



**BOSTON INSPECTIONAL SERVICES  
OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

# **OPENING GUIDE FOR FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS**

*A Guide to Starting Your Business, and Getting Permits, Licenses & Inspections*

**July 2021**

*Thanks for considering opening your food business in the City of Boston!  
Opening a food establishment is hard work. Our team at the City of  
Boston is here to help!*

*This guide gives an overview and describes the restaurant-specific permitting and inspection process in the City of Boston. For questions, please contact Boston Inspectional Services (ISD) [Health Division](#), and the [Economic Development Department](#), or call 311.*



City of Boston  
Mayor Kim Janey

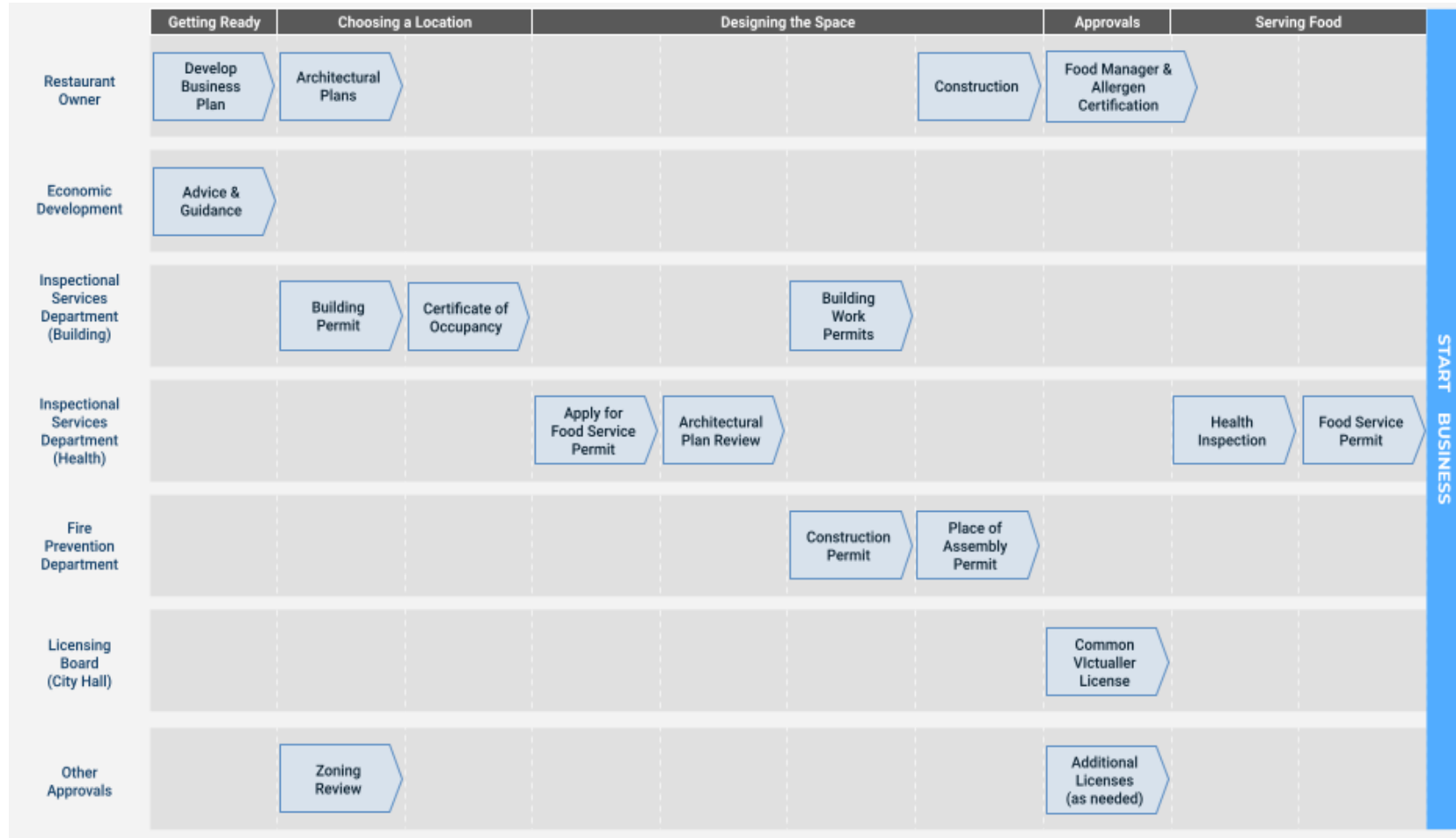


City of Boston  
Inspectional Services



City of Boston  
Economic Development

# OVERVIEW CHART



[Link to Chart Slide](#)

# STEPS

## STEP 1

### GETTING READY - UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS AND MAKE A PLAN

- The [Mayor's Office of Economic Development](#) offers one-stop resources for all businesses in the City of Boston, including the [Small Business Development Team](#) and [Boston Main Streets](#), both of which offer resources to start, grow, and build businesses in Boston.
- Start by connecting with your Neighborhood Business Manager (NBM)-- NBMs are experts in small business and can guide you on how to open a restaurant in Boston. [Contact an expert](#) to learn more about permitting and licensing, developing a business plan, selecting a location, or other critical business-related matters.
- The [Economic Development Center](#) offers workshops to increase access and opportunities, including workshop series tailored to food businesses.

## STEP 2

### CHOOSING A LOCATION - ZONING AND OCCUPANCY

- Check zoning online by searching for parcel designation on the [Boston Redevelopment Authority's searchable map](#).
- 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.
- File a building permit application for any necessary construction. For major construction or structural changes, file a [Long Form](#) online. For minor changes, file a [Short Form](#) online. For more information on building permit types, visit [here](#).
- Obtain a [Certificate of Occupancy](#) by submitting your [Certificate of Occupancy Application](#). If you have any questions please reach out to [ISDcertificates@boston.gov](mailto:ISDcertificates@boston.gov) (see the ISD's [requirements for Certificate of Occupancy](#)).

- Once you have a lease in place, reach out to your Neighborhood Business Manager to discuss help with [signage or storefront improvements](#) for your business!

### STEP 3

## DESIGNING THE SPACE – CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING APPROVAL

Get your plans reviewed; obtain Inspectional Services Department (ISD) Health Division approval of restaurant design before construction or alteration. Apply for the [health permit](#) at that time, pay for the permit provide 4 sets of site plans, equipment specifications from manufacturer for new equipment being installed that meet the NSF/UL certifications, a [Food Establishment Review](#), menu with consumer advisories (if applicable). Request a Plan Review appointment by emailing [ISDHealth@boston.gov](mailto:ISDHealth@boston.gov) or call 617-635-5326.

Learn about the Inspectional Services permitting process [here](#).  
Learn about the Food Service Health Permit application process [here](#).

- The Boston Fire Prevention Division (BFD) also requires permits for construction projects. Those applications and guidelines can be found [here](#).
- Secure the appropriate building/plumbing/gas/electrical/mechanical permits through ISD's [online application system](#). Only licensed contractors may apply. Obtain all required inspections.
- [Place of Assembly Permit](#) (if occupancy is 50 persons or more) is issued by the BFD. Please check the relevant [Guidelines](#) and [Requirements](#).
- Certificate of Inspection: Submit 3 sets of plans stamped with capacity approvals from ISD and BFD to ISD Counter 3A; await inspection. Download the checklist and/or application.

## STEP 4

### APPROVALS – GATHER ALL NECESSARY LICENSES AND PERMITS

- Get a [Common Victualler License](#) from the Licensing Board.
- You need to get certified as a food manager by an independent company. [Learn more about getting certified as a food manager.](#)
- Obtain an allergen awareness certificate. Learn more about it [here](#)
- Depending on your specific business, you may also need one or more of the following approvals:
  - [Live Entertainment License](#) or [Non-Live Entertainment License](#).
  - [Pool Table License](#)
  - [Sidewalk Café Permit](#)
  - [Valet Parking Permit](#)
  - [Liquor License](#): For details, see the [Boston Licensing Board website](#).
  - Apply for Site Cleanliness License. See details [here](#).
  - Apply for [Dumpster Placement Permit](#): If larger than 3 cubic yards, file an [Annual Permit Application Form](#).
  - [Business Certificate](#) from the [City of Boston Clerk's Office](#)
  - Kitchen Exhaust Hoods and Ducts require Building Division review and Boston Fire Department Certification. See the BFD website for more information on commercial hood and duct maintenance requirements.

Learn about the Licensing Board [here](#).

Learn about Food Code at the [state's retail food website](#).

## STEP 5

### SERVING FOOD – FOOD SERVICE PERMIT AND INSPECTION

- In order to complete the process and prepare for the Health Inspection, Please provide all the necessary remaining certificates, licenses and/or permits.

They are as follows:

- [Certificate of Occupancy](#) or a Certificate of Inspection
  - Your [completed food service permit application](#) Need updated forms for links
  - A copy of your Food Manager Certification and Allergen Awareness Certification
  - Your [Common Victualler License](#)
- Please note: If you didn't pay your fees when you had your plans reviewed, you must bring your payment when you visit the ISD office. You must also bring copies of workman's compensation insurance and your Federal Tax ID number or Social Security number.
  - If all of your paperwork is in order, ISD will set up a pre-operational inspection request. The Health Division will help you set up your pre operational inspection and confirm your appointment. At the time of inspection, the Health Inspector will ensure that you are compliant with the code, and answer any questions you may have.

*Division of Health Inspections*

1010 Massachusetts Ave.

Boston, MA 02118

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. If you are paying with cash or credit card, you need to make your payment by 3:30 p.m.

# INSPECTION CHECKLIST

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. For questions, please contact the [Health Division](mailto:ISDHealth@boston.gov) at [ISDHealth@boston.gov](mailto:ISDHealth@boston.gov) , or call 311.

## **BUILDING INSPECTION – CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY** ([View Details](#))

- 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
- Exit Ways unobstructed
- General conditions satisfactory

## **FIRE INSPECTION – PLACE OF ASSEMBLY PERMIT** ([View Details](#))

- 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
- 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

Establishments must ensure compliance with the [Food Codes](#) and the [2013 Federal Food Code](#) with the 2015 supplement and have access to the regulations at the facility. ([View Details](#))

### Ready to operate? Please see the [Inspection Guide here](#)

- Person in charge (PIC), knowledgeable, monitors food safety risks and takes corrective actions. PIC available all operational hours
- Employees trained in their duties and responsibilities
- Employee illness policy to inform in a verifiable manner requirement to report
- Separate hand wash sinks accessible and supplied for food preparation, dispensing and warewash areas; in addition to the restrooms
- Food contact surfaces properly designed, maintained, installed
- Adequate NSF equipment for cooking, holding food hot & cold and to properly cool.
- Non-food contact surfaces properly designed, maintained, installed
- Proper storage of clean and soiled pots and pans
- High-temp sanitizing dish machine or adequate 3 compartment sink with drainboards - testing equipment

### PLUMBING AND WASTE DISPOSAL

- Properly plumbed potable (drinking) water and wastewater systems. No waste water back up; proper backflow devices installed
- Adequate number of refuse containers, clean, covered, adequate storage area.
- Food preparation sink provided for washing fruits and vegetables
- Mop sink provided

### PHYSICAL FACILITIES

- Clean and organized
- Employee lockers to store clothing and personal care items
- Sufficient storage for dry goods, servicewares, maintenance items, chemicals
- Light fixtures above food products have protective shields properly installed
- No evidence of rodents or insects
- Outside storage area clean
- Kitchen areas properly ventilated and hood inspection current
- See the entire list of health code violations at the [Mayor's Food Court website](#).



# CONTACTS

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>WEBSITE</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
Economic Development Small Business Unit	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/small-business">boston.gov/small-business</a>	617-635-0355
Equity & Inclusion	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/departments/economic-development/equity-and-inclusion-office/get-your-business-certified">Get Your Business Certified as an M/WBE : https://www.boston.gov/departments/economic-development/equity-and-inclusion-office/get-your-business-certified</a>	617-635-3720
ISD Building	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/what-building-permit-do-i-need">https://www.boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/what-building-permit-do-i-need</a>	617-635-5300
ISD Health	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/health-division">https://www.boston.gov/departments/inspectional-services/health-division</a>	617-635-5326
Boston Licensing Board	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/licensing">https://www.boston.gov/licensing</a>	617-635-4170
BFD Fire Prevention Division	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/departments/fire-prevention">https://www.boston.gov/departments/fire-prevention</a>	617-343-3628
Entertainment Division	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/entertainment">https://www.boston.gov/entertainment</a>	617-635-4165
City Clerk (Business Certificate)	<a href="https://www.boston.gov/cityclerk">https://www.boston.gov/cityclerk</a>	617-635-4601

# Thank you

## Harvard Team

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## City Of Boston Team

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