

Opening Your Business Location

Learn how to complete a renovation or construction project and how to open a brick-and-mortar business in Seattle. This guide breaks down the steps to open a new business location or remodel a business.



Planning Your Project

Timelines and costs depend on your project. The list below is a suggested timeline, but your project could take more or less time.

At Least One Year Before Opening: Find the Right Location

Research locations

- ☐ Find a broker to help you find a desired location
- ☐ Talk to the [neighborhood business group](#) in your desired location
- ☐ Get [money for your project](#)
- ☐ Get [free research help](#) from City of Seattle staff to learn about what a location can be used for based on its current permits and location

Negotiate your lease

- ☐ Talk to the landlord about a [letter of intent](#)
- ☐ Get a lawyer to help negotiate your lease
- ☐ Hire an architect to make an estimate of how much renovations will cost
- ☐ Have a lawyer review your lease before signing

At Least 9 Months Before Opening: Get Permits

Design and plan

- ☐ Finish plans with your architect
- ☐ Get an updated budget, including furniture, fixtures, and equipment costs
- ☐ Talk with a licensed contractor and create a project schedule and cost estimate



Apply for permits

- ☐ Sign up for [Permit Coaching](#) to find out what permits you will need
- ☐ If your business will be in a [historic district](#) or [landmark building](#), you will need to get a [Historic Preservation Certificate of Approval](#)
- ☐ If you are doing any construction or renovations, have your architect apply for construction permits
- ☐ If you are opening a food business, get your food service plan reviewed by Public Health – Seattle & King County's (PHSKC) [Food & Facilities](#) program
- ☐ You also might need permits through the King County [Plumbing & Gas](#) program
- ☐ Apply for other permits depending on what you need for your business, like a liquor license or sign permit

6 Months Before Opening: Construction

- ☐ Make sure you and your contractor have all permits before starting construction
- ☐ Review the construction schedule with your contractor
- ☐ Know which inspections you will schedule and which ones your contractor will schedule

3 Months Before Opening: Inspections

Schedule inspections

- ☐ [Get inspections](#) for construction work from the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and from the Seattle Fire Department
- ☐ Get any other [permits you might need from the Seattle Fire Department](#), such as an assembly permit for restaurants with 100+ people
- ☐ If needed, get inspections from King County Public Health for food service and plumbing and gas inspections
- ☐ After all inspections, get a final inspection to receive your Certificate of Occupancy

Promote your business

- ☐ Meet other business owners in your neighborhood
- ☐ Publicize your opening in neighborhood groups and on social media
- ☐ Get [free help from marketing consultants](#)

If you need help, translation, disability accommodations, or materials in a different format, contact us at [\(206\) 684-8090](tel:2066848090) or at OED@seattle.gov.