

# Restaurants & Take-Outs – Tenant Improvement Building Permit Application Checklist

## OVERVIEW

This guide outlines the building permit application requirements and general considerations for locating or renovating an eating establishment in an existing building. This includes coffee shops, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, and food take-out businesses, but does not include pubs and liquor establishments.

Eating establishments are classified as either *Business and Personal Services (Group D)* or *Assembly Occupancy (Group A-2)*. An eating establishment with an occupant load of 30 or less may be classified as a *Business Occupancy*. All other eating establishments with occupant loads exceeding 30 are considered *Assembly Occupancies*.

## REQUIRED ITEMS

*Note: All sealed professional drawings and Letters of Assurance are to be submitted online with an electronic seal and signature as part of the online application. Please review checklist items, along with the section “Additional Items That May Be Required”, as the occupant load, classification and complexity of the project will determine the required items for permit submission.*

### Planning Approval

The Zoning Bylaw regulates what type of business is permitted within the city. The proposed use and parking requirements should be confirmed with Current Planning staff prior to proceeding with a building permit application.

### Building Permit Administrative Requirements

- [Building Permit Application](#) - online application
- [Appointment of Agent](#) - required if the permit is to be applied for, revised or issued to anyone other than the registered owner, complete and submit online as part of the building permit application process
- Application Fee (if construction value is over \$20,000) - requested after your online building permit application has been accepted
- [BC Building Code Analysis](#) - required for new A-2 suites, change of occupancies and complex buildings

### Site Plan or Key Plan

- Dimensions of site, including a north arrow, street names, and location and width of any lanes
- Location and dimensions of the building, including vehicle access and parking stalls
- Building area and number of floors
- Street address, floor, and tenant suite number
- Indicate area to be developed and adjoining tenant occupancies
- Exiting for the tenant space and all other tenant spaces on the floor where the construction/alterations will occur

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## REQUIRED ITEMS cont'd

### Floor Plans (to scale ¼"=1'0" or 1:50)

*Note: If the paper size exceeds 2' x 3', using a smaller scale may be acceptable to Building Inspections staff*

- Existing and proposed construction
- All outside dimensions of tenant space and total area in square meters or feet
- Dimensions and use of all rooms and areas
- Interior partitions, including height of partitions
- All door sizes, doors in grilles (in malls), direction of swing and corridor widths
- All plumbing fixtures; identify as new or existing
- Seating, tables, and other millwork

### Construction Details

- Wall structure (cross-sections or written description, i.e. 5/8" type x gypsum board, 2"x 4" 16 gauge steel studs, 5/8" type x gypsum board)
- Wall height (on cross-section) – all areas with varying wall heights to be identified with specific heights
- Fire-resistance rating and the tested listed assemblies of any required fire separations, new and existing
- Firestopping/blocking details for all service penetrations of fire separation
- Structural changes
- All exit signs, emergency lighting, and fire alarm pull station locations
- Universal washrooms, counter layouts, doors and ramps that meet the 'accessibility' requirements (as applicable)  
*For more information, see our guide [Accessibility – Requirements for Persons with Disabilities](#)*
- Reflected ceiling plan

### Plumbing Drawings

- Isometric plumbing drawings for plumbing changes, including name and phone number of plumber  
*For more information, see our guide [Isometric Plumbing Drawing Requirements](#)*
- Grease trap capacity and dimensions of pot sink
- A completed [Plumbing Declaration Form](#)

### Cooking Equipment

- Exhaust hoods complying with NFPA 96 are required where cooking may produce grease-laden vapours. All installation drawing details, including clearances to combustibles and manufacturer's documentation of products, must be submitted and be specific to the project. New installations and upgrades to existing exhaust hoods systems are to be designed by a mechanical engineer; sealed design drawings and Letter of Assurance Schedule B at application and C at completion will be required.
- Installation detail of the hood, including interface of the extinguishing system detectors, piping, nozzles, fuel shut-off devices, agent storage containers, manual activation devices, and exhaust ducts  
*For more information, see our guide [Commercial Cooking Equipment Exhaust & Replacement Air Systems](#)*
- Where cooking does not produce grease-laden fumes, the form [Commitment Not To Create Grease-Laden Cooking Vapours](#) must be submitted along with your building permit application
- All appliances identified on a floor plan

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## REQUIRED ITEMS cont'd

**Health Approval by Island Health**

- Floor plans, including decks, stamped by Island Health, for all food and beverage services

## ADDITIONAL ITEMS THAT MAY BE REQUIRED

**Coordinating Registered Professional** (Schedule A) – required for all new Assembly (A-2) eating establishments and for renovations to existing Assembly restaurants, depending on the complexity of the renovation

**Architectural Drawings** – sealed – required for all new Assembly (A-2) eating establishments and for renovations to existing Assembly restaurants, depending on the complexity of the renovation

- Letter of Assurance (Schedule B) with appropriate architectural items initialed

**Sprinkler Drawings** – indicate existing and proposed installations and sprinkler contractor's name and business licence number. A mechanical engineer's design and review may be required where more than 8 heads are added, 20 heads relocated, or changes are in the hydraulic calculation area.

*For more information, see our guide [Sprinkler Permit Applications](#)*

- Letter of Assurance (Schedule B)

**Plumbing Drawings** – sealed

- Letter of Assurance (Schedule B)

**Mechanical Exhaust Hood & Replacement Air Drawings** – sealed – design and field review by a mechanical engineer is required for new installations for upgrading existing installations and may be required where steam-removing exhaust hoods are being installed

- Letter of Assurance (Schedule B)

**Structural Drawings** – sealed – for structural changes, including over-height walls, structural bulkheads, etc., and where a change of occupancy triggers the requirement for seismic restraint upgrading  
*See our guide [Change of Occupancy](#)*

- Letter of Assurance (Schedule B)

**Sign Permit**

**Business Licence**

**Occupant Load Calculation** – [Occupant Load Calculations](#) for Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Board (LCRB) licence applications will not be provided by the City of Nanaimo. A letter to this effect is available upon request. It is possible to retain the services of an architect to provide the required calculation. A [Professionals Listing](#) is available on our website for your consideration.

**Construction Fire Safety Plan** – A [Construction Fire Safety Plan](#) will be required prior to commencement of construction. Submit this plan directly to Nanaimo Fire Rescue.

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## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Restaurants – Occupant Load More Than 30

These restaurants are considered Assembly Occupancies under Part 3 of the BC Building Code and must be designed by an architect. An architect may not be required for renovations to an existing restaurant depending on the complexity of the project. This will be determined by Building Inspections staff.

### Take-Outs & Small Restaurants – Occupant Load 30 Or Less

The BC Building Code allows a suite of Group A, Division 2 Assembly Occupancy to be classified as a Group D Business and Personal Services Occupancy provided:

- The occupant load of the suite does not exceed 30; and
- The suite is separated from the remainder of the building by a fire separation with a fire-resistance rating of not less than 1 hour.
- The fire separation required above need not have a fire-resistance rating where the suite is located in a building sprinklered throughout.
- A permanent sign indicating the lesser of the occupant load for the suite of 30 persons shall be posted in a conspicuous location near the suite’s principal entrance.

### Building Classification

Not all existing buildings have been designed to accommodate eating establishments with an occupant load of more than 30 (Assembly Occupancy). If the size of the proposed restaurant suite, including other tenant spaces with an assembly occupancy, is 10% or more of the floor area in which they are located, the building may need to be upgraded to attain the intended level of safety required in the 2024 BC Building Code (2024 BCBC). This is called a “Change of Occupancy”. An assessment is required to determine if upgrading is possible or viable. A Coordinating Registered Professional (Schedule A) and (Schedule B) from each Registered Professional of Record is required where a building’s occupancy classification is changed to an Assembly Occupancy. See our guide [Change of Occupancy](#).

### Seismic Upgrading

One of the most onerous “Change of Occupancy” upgrades that could be required for an existing building is seismic upgrading. A structural assessment by a structural engineer will be required where change of major occupancy of a building is proposed. A seismic review (the building’s ability to withstand the forces of an earthquake) may form part of the assessment, as well as a review of falling hazards (OFCs). The Engineers & Geoscientists of British Columbia have a Professional Practice Guideline, “Structural Condition Assessment of Existing Buildings”, for guidance in their assessment.

## BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

### Time

The time required for a tenant improvement building permit review will depend on revisions required and if additional approvals, such as development permits, Island Health, Nanaimo Fire Rescue, etc., are required. The processing time may also be affected by the volume of permit applications received by Building Inspections and cannot be guaranteed. [Processing Times](#) can be viewed on the website.

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## BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS cont'd

### Cost

**Application fees** apply to building permits with a construction value over \$20,000. The fee is 10% of the estimated building permit fee with a minimum fee of \$175.00. This non-refundable fee is deducted from the final cost of the building permit. For assistance in estimating the application fee, see our webpage [Building Fee Calculations](#).

**Permit fees** are based on the market value of construction as follows: first \$1,000 is \$105.00, each additional \$1,000 up to \$100,000 is \$10, each additional \$1,000 greater than \$100,000.01 is \$7.00. Fees are outlined in [Bylaw 7336](#), available on the website.

### Contact Numbers

Current Planning, Building Inspections ..... 250-755-4429  
Liquor Licensing Branch ..... 1-866-209-2111  
Nanaimo Fire Rescue ..... 250-753-7311  
Island Health ..... 250-739-5800  
Technical Safety BC (Electrical, Gas & Propane) ..... 1-866-566-7233

## INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

*If you have any questions or require clarification, please contact Building Inspections at 250-755-4429.  
This guide should not be used as a substitute for existing building codes and other regulations.  
The building owner is responsible for compliance with all codes, bylaws, and other regulations.*