Getting Started in Businesses

If you have specific questions relating to your particular project or site, please contact the Planning and Building Services Department at 503-635-0270.

Business Licenses
One of the initial steps to doing business in Lake Oswego is obtaining a business license. Unless specifically exempted by State law, Lake Oswego City Code requires anyone who conducts business within the City of Lake Oswego to have a business license. This includes home-based businesses and door-to-door solicitation. Please consult the Finance Department web page for more information about obtaining your business license.

Where to Locate Your Business
The City of Lake Oswego has eight different commercial zones and two industrial zones (view Business District Map). In addition to these base zones, certain commercial properties may be further regulated by Planned Development standards (Westlake, Mountain Park) or overlay districts (Lake Grove Village Center, West Lake Grove Design District, Downtown Redevelopment Design District). Each zone allows a different mix and size of uses and has different site development standards. Before purchasing property in Lake Oswego or signing a lease, please consult with the Community Development Department regarding the allowed uses on a particular site and additional development regulations.

Home-based Businesses
The City of Lake Oswego is home to more than 800 home-based businesses, or Home Occupations. These occupations include:

- Consultants
- Web-based industries
- Music lessons
- Contractor offices
- And many more

All home-based businesses require a Business License from the City.

Signage
The Sign Code (LOC Chapter 47) allows temporary and permanent signs to be displayed in the City. The purpose of the Sign Code is to ensure that signs are constructed, erected and maintained in a safe manner that does not create visual distractions for motorists. It also helps our community maintain a neat, clean, orderly and attractive appearance. Most signs – temporary and permanent – need a permit from the City. This page gives an overview of

some of the regulations of the Sign Code.

Forms & Permits
First, the Lake Oswego Code requires anyone who conducts business within the City to have a business license, including proprietors of home occupation. New businesses may also require land use review by Planning if there is an intensification of the use, exterior changes are proposed, or the new business requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), among other things.

The Community Development Department has developed handouts that outline the permit processes and policies that may be necessary for a new business. These handouts describe timelines, criteria for approval, decision-making body, and general submittal requirements.

Please note that a Pre-Application conference is required for most development projects prior to the complete land use application; this process is described in the next section below. In addition, depending on your business, there may be permits and inspections necessary from the Building Division or from County or State agencies (OLCC, Health Department, etc.).

Do I Need a Permit?
The Planning and Building Services Department developed a guide intended to answer most basic questions about non-residential building and planning requirements in the City of Lake Oswego.

If you have more questions relating to your particular project or site, please contact the Planning and Building Services Department at 503-635-0270.

Pre-Application Conference
A Pre-Application Conference with Planning staff is required for all major and minor developments. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Development Review (new buildings as well as most additions and exterior remodels)
- Variances
- Conditional Use Permits and Partitions

The purpose of the Pre-Application Conference (Pre-App) is to discuss the development proposal, the applicable criteria, and the requirements for completing a Land Use application with the City. The Pre-App process has been developed to:

1. Familiarize the applicant with City development codes.
2. Review the applicant's preliminary site plan and proposal.
3. Provide specific zoning and development information to the applicant as it relates to site limitations and the proposal.

It is not necessary to own the property in question in order to schedule a Pre-App conference. In fact, the City encourages prospective business and property owners to go through a Pre-App prior to purchasing or leasing property or establishing a business that may require land use review. Please contact the Community Development Department to determine whether your new business or development will require land use review.

Web Links

Pre-Application BrochurePre-Application Permit

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