

City of Suffolk Department of Planning & Community Development

Guide to Opening a Business/Relocating a Business within an Existing Structure



The following checklist is intended to assist business owners/operators, property owners, and contractors in understanding the *overall process* of opening a new business or relocating a business within an existing structure in the City of Suffolk. We recognize that every business and project is unique; thus, the requirements and sequence of tasks provided below is not guaranteed to be suitable and/or accurate for all situations.

NOTE: All property taxes must be current before applications may be accepted.

- 1. CHECK YOUR ZONING: Confirm with Zoning Division staff that the proposed use/business is permitted by-right in the new location.** Contact the Zoning Division by calling (757) 514-4150 or by visiting the “Permits and Inspections” office within the 1st floor of City Hall. Be prepared to inform staff of:

- 1) The property address, tax map number, or parcel ID number, and
- 2) The proposed uses at the property compared to the prior uses

Staff will inform the customer as to whether the proposed use/business is permitted by-right, permitted by a Conditional Use Permit, or not permitted at all (in accordance with Section 31-406 of the Unified Development Ordinance). They will also advise customers of supplemental requirements, if applicable.

If the proposed use is not permitted by-right, the following sequence of steps does not yet apply, set this worksheet aside, and contact the Planning Division at (757) 514-4060 to inquire about the Conditional Use Permit process or potential for rezoning the property. If a CUP is obtained or the property is rezoned to allow the proposed use, you may proceed with the following steps.

- 2. SUBMIT BUILDING/TRADE PERMITS: If no improvements/construction or signage is proposed, skip to step #4. If changes/construction and/or signage is proposed, submit an “Application for Services Commercial,” which can be downloaded at www.suffolkva.us/DocumentCenter/View/1883.**

The application may be submitted via one of the following methods:

- 1) In person at the “Permits and Inspections” office on the 1st floor of City Hall between 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
- 2) Via mail to the Community Development Division, 442 W. Washington Street, Suffolk, VA 23434
- 3) Via email to CDDApplication@suffolkva.us

- 3. SUBMIT CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS IF LOCATED IN HISTORIC DISTRICT: Contact the Planning Division to determine if the property is located in the downtown Suffolk Historic District, if not skip to step #4.** Once again, the Planning Division can be reached at (757) 514-4060 or by visiting the “Permits and Inspections” office within the 1st floor of City Hall.

If ANY exterior changes are proposed (such as painting, signage, lighting, changes to roofs, siding, windows, etc.), then a “Certificate of Appropriateness” must be obtained prior to the release of any building permits which affect the exterior of the property. Depending on the scope of work, this process may take between 7-45 days. This application is accepted in person or via mail with original signatures only.

- 4. OBTAIN COMMERCIAL BUILDING CLEARANCE: Once all work is completed or if no work is being done, submit an application for “Commercial Building Clearance,” which can be downloaded at www.suffolkva.us/DocumentCenter/View/2086, and submitted as described above in step #2.** Inspections may be scheduled by anyone, please contact the applicable departments listed below (area code 757).

Zoning/Building/Trade: 514-4150

Health: 514-4751

Fire Marshall: 514-4550

VA Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services: 509-1060

Public Utilities: 604-3645

- 5. OBTAIN BUSINESS LICENSE: Once you have received a copy of your approved “Commercial Building Clearance” form, you are now ready to apply for a business license at the Commissioner of Revenue’s office located on the first floor of City Hall between 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.** Call (757) 514-4260 for more information.