

City of Boston  
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor



# Licenses & Permits for Grocery Store Owners

## A Letter From the Mayor, Thomas M. Menino

Dear Business Owner,

Thank you for opening a small business in our city and investing in Boston! Small businesses play an important role in our city; they provide quality jobs, help power our economy, and revitalize neighborhoods.

I know that opening a business is a significant undertaking, so my administration created this guide to help you through the permitting process. I hope you will explore it and all of the resources offered by the Boston Business Hub at [boston.gov/businesshub](https://boston.gov/businesshub).

Once again, I welcome you to Boston's business community and I thank you for your investment in our city.



Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor of Boston



## Grocery Permitting Overview

This checklist describes the grocery-specific permitting process in the City of Boston. Additional business registration requirements are outlined in the Office of Business Development (OBD) [Small Business Resource Guide](#). Customized permitting checklists, links to applications, and permit information are available at [boston.gov/businesshub](https://boston.gov/businesshub) through the Licensing & Permitting Wizard. For additional questions, please use the [Connect with an Expert](#) function on the Business Hub and you will be routed to the best expert for your question.

**This document can be found online, with active links, at**  
[www.cityofboston.gov/business/permitguides](https://www.cityofboston.gov/business/permitguides).

## Choosing a Location - Zoning & Occupancy

- ☐ Check zoning online by searching for parcel designation on the Boston Redevelopment Authority's [searchable map](#), then check whether neighborhood retail 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](#).
- ☐ The Inspectional Services Department (ISD) offers a one-on-one [Zoning Clinic](#) for zoning-related questions every Tuesday from 9am-12 noon at Plans and Zoning, Counter 2, 1010 Mass Ave 5th floor, Boston, MA.
- ☐ If you need to appeal to change the zoning or use, file a [Long Form](#) online and appeal to the [Zoning Board of Appeals](#) if your intended use is conditional or forbidden at that location.

## Designing the Space - Construction & Building Approval

- ☐ For major construction or structural changes, file a [Long Form](#) online. For minor repairs, file a [Short Form](#) online. For more information on building permit types, visit [ISD's website](#).
- ☐ The Boston Fire Department (BFD) also requires permits for construction projects. Those applications and guidelines can be found at the [BFD's Construction Site Safety web page](#).
- ☐ Secure the appropriate building/plumbing/gas/electrical/mechanical permits through [ISD's on-line application system](#). Only licensed contractors may apply. Obtain all required inspections.
- ☐ [Certificate of Occupancy](#): If there is no existing Certificate of Occupancy, you're completing substantial construction, or if you are seeking to change the occupancy/use, apply at ISD Counter 3A with signed building card and final construction costs breakdown. Also see the BFD's [requirements](#) for Certificate of Occupancy.

## To Consider During Planning

- ☐ [Site Cleanliness License](#): Submit dumpster site plan, maintenance schedule, disposal contract, and rodent/pest control contract to ISD Environmental Division, 1010 Mass Ave, 4th Floor.
- ☐ Storefront Signage: If you are located in a [landmark building](#), [Historic District](#), or [Main Streets District](#), your signs will have to undergo design review with that board/organization. If not, they still may need to be reviewed by the [Boston Redevelopment Authority](#).
- ☐ [Flammability Certificates](#): (Flame Certs) Required for each item in the shop that could pose a fire hazard. This includes but is not limited to: any [carpet](#), [tapestry/ceiling tile](#), [curtain](#), any [upholstered chair](#), [couch](#), or [non-metal furniture](#) (including pedicure chairs), any [wallcovering](#), and other decorations.

## Grocery Licenses & Permits

- ☐ [Food Service Health Permit](#): Required for selling ready-to-eat or packaged food. Submit completed application with proper fees and documentation (Certificate of Occupancy, Certificate of Inspection, [Food Safety Manager Certificate](#), Federal Tax ID, and Workers' Compensation Insurance information) to [ISD Health Division](#). Request a health inspection to check conformity to [State Sanitary Code](#) and [Federal Food Code](#).
- ☐ Weights and Measures Inspection: All scales must be inspected by the [ISD Weights and Measures Division](#). Request an inspection by calling ISD at 617-961-3248.
- ☐ To display merchandise outside your business, you may need to apply for a [Stationary Vending License](#) or a [Use of Premises Permit](#).

## Other Considerations - Additional Permits

- ☐ [Dumpster Placement Permit](#): For permanent (i.e. one year or longer) placement of a dumpster, file an [Annual Permit Application](#).
- ☐ [Permit for Location and Sales of Tobacco Products](#): Apply through the Boston Tobacco Control Program. You must already have a license from the state of Massachusetts, form CT-3A , which can be obtained from the [MA Department of Revenue Tobacco Information](#).
- ☐ [Alcoholic Beverages License](#): The number of available licenses is limited by State law; applicants must appear at a hearing to allow for neighborhood input. See the Boston Licensing Board website linked above for more information.
- ☐ [One-Time Entertainment License](#) from Consumer Affairs & Licensing - for special events (such as a store opening).

## Common Fees

### Certificate of Occupancy

\$110

### Dumpster Placement Permit

\$525

### Food Service Permit - Retail

\$100+ (no take-out)

\$300+ with take-out

### Zoning Appeals Form

\$150 for each violation or

\$150/violation on State Building Code

### Site Cleanliness License

\$50

# Inspection Criteria

## **Building Permit Inspections - Certificate of Occupancy - ISD Inspection**

- ☐ 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 working properly
- ☐ Exitways unobstructed
- ☐ General conditions satisfactory

## **Health Inspections– Food Service Health Permit – ISD Health Division Inspection**

### **Management and Operations**

- ☐ Person In Charge (PIC) assigned and he understands duties
- ☐ Proper, adequate handwashing
- ☐ Chemicals stored properly and safely
- ☐ Soiled linens stored in proper containers
- ☐ Mops and brooms stored properly

### **Physical Facilities**

- ☐ No evidence of rodents or insects
- ☐ Light fixtures above food products have protective shields properly installed
- ☐ Handwash sinks with soap and drying device
- ☐ Outside storage area clean
- ☐ Kitchen areas properly ventilated

## Inspection Criteria Continued

### Food Safety Requirements

- ☐ Proper food safety practices in storage, preparation and service of food
- ☐ Proper labeling of food containers and prepackaged foods
- ☐ Cooler and /or hot holding units operating and proper temperature levels
- ☐ Thermometers available to check food product temperaturesFood properly protected from contamination in storage, display, and preparation
- ☐ In-use food utensils properly stored
- ☐ Proper segregation of cooked and uncooked foods
- ☐ No re-service of potentially hazardous or unwrapped food

### Equipment and Utensils

- ☐ Three compartment sink with drainboards or dishwashing machine operational and properly sanitizing (test kit for chemical sanitizing or proper temperature sanitizing)
- ☐ Wash water and rinse water are clean
  - Wiping cloths used for raw food are stored in separate sanitizing solutions
- ☐ Mop sink provided
- ☐ Separate handwash sink in food preparation area
- ☐ Food contact surfaces properly designed, maintained, installed
- ☐ Non-food contact surfaces properly designed, maintained, installed
- ☐ Proper storage of pots and pans
- ☐ Plumbing and Waste Disposal
- ☐ No waste water back up, proper backflow devices installed
- ☐ Adequate number of refuse containers, clean and covered

See the complete list of requirements at [ISD's Website](#)

## Contact Information

AGENCY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Boston Business Hub	<a href="http://businesshub.boston.gov">http://businesshub.boston.gov</a>	617-635-4500
Office of Business Development	26 Court Street, 9th Floor	617-635-0355
ISD Building Division	1010 Mass Ave, 5th Floor	617-635-5306
ISD, Plans & Zoning Division	1010 Mass Ave, 5th Floor	617-635-5312
ISD Certificate of Occupancy Division	1010 Mass Ave, 5th Floor	617-635-3223
ISD Health Division	1010 Mass Ave, 4th Floor	617-635-5326
Boston Fire Department Fire Prevention Division	1010 Mass Ave, 4th Floor	617-343-3628
Public Works Department Permit Division	City Hall, Room 714	617-635-4910
ISD Environmental Services Division	1010 Mass Ave, 4th Floor	617-961-3422
Boston Licensing Board	City Hall, Room 809	617-635-4170
Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs & Licensing	City Hall, Room 817	617-635-4165
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services	City Hall, Room 708	617-635-3485