

**Q: What do I need to submit for a building permit?**

**A:** Information and checklists pertaining to new construction and interior alterations are available online. The Building Permit approval process can take 4–6 weeks (longer if multiple reviews are required). To facilitate reduced review time, please request a Code Consultation with the Inspection Services Division. **This consultation is highly recommended for small businesses and project representatives that are not familiar with Arlington County permitting, review, and inspection processes.**

**Q: What does the Public Health Division license?**

**A:** While not an exhaustive list, some of the establishments include restaurants, night clubs/bars, grocery stores, convenience stores and drug stores.

## SIGNS

**Q: What signs can I have?**

**A:** It depends. Signs are regulated by Article 13 of the Zoning Ordinance; however, certain buildings have Comprehensive Sign Plans, i.e. pre-approved plans that specify types, locations and sizes of signs permitted. Please contact the Zoning Office at (703) 228-3883 for information on your particular location.

**Q: What must I do before installing a sign?**

**A:** First, apply for a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) from the Zoning Office; then complete a Sign Permit application. If you meet these requirements and your sign is in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance or the relevant Comprehensive Sign Plan, your Sign Permit will be approved within five (5) business days.

## OFFICE INFORMATION

### Arlington Economic Development

BizLaunch

1100 N. Glebe Rd., #1500, Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 228-0808

### Commissioner of Revenue

2100 Clarendon Blvd., #200, Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 228-3060

### Department of Community Planning, Housing & Development

Inspection Services Division  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., #1000, Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 228-3800

### Planning Division

2100 Clarendon Blvd., #700, Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 228-3525

### Zoning Office

2100 Clarendon Blvd., #1000, Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 228-3883

### Department of Environmental Services

Division of Transportation  
Development Services Bureau  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., #800, Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 228-3629

### Utilities & Environmental Policy Division

Solid Waste Bureau  
4300 29th St. S., Arlington, VA 22206  
(703) 228-6571

### Department of Human Services

Public Health Division  
800 Walter Reed Dr., Arlington, VA 22204  
(703) 228-7400

[www.arlingtonva.us/bizarlington](http://www.arlingtonva.us/bizarlington)



# Starting a Business in Arlington

**Opening Your  
Door for Business**

## STARTING A BUSINESS

**Q: I have an idea for a new business or I'm thinking about growing/expanding my business – who should I talk to?**

**A:** Visit BizLaunch, Arlington's Small Business resource center online or contact (703) 228-0808. BizLaunch offers counseling, education, and research opportunities all free of charge to help local small business owners plan, develop, grow and find space for their businesses in Arlington.

**Q: Can I operate a business from my home?**

**A:** Perhaps. Some businesses may operate as a "home occupation" provided the business has no adverse impact on neighbors. A home occupation permit from the Zoning Office and a business license from the Commissioner of Revenue are required. Please contact the Zoning Office at (703) 228-3883 for more information.

**Q: I'm looking for commercial space in Arlington – does Arlington County maintain a listing of available properties?**

**A:** Arlington County does not track commercial vacancies; rather, we recommend you enlist the services of a commercial broker to help you find the best fit for your needs. While the County is unable to recommend individual brokers or firms, your local BIDs/Partnerships and potential neighbors may be helpful sources of information.

## GETTING INTO A SPACE

**Q: How can I find out if my business is permitted in the space that I have found?**

**A:** Please contact the Zoning Office at (703) 228-3883 **prior to signing a lease!** You may request an official Letter of Determination (fee required) to receive formal documentation as to the uses permitted in the space.

Some uses (e.g. live entertainment, outdoor seating, food delivery, etc.) require public review and special approval by the County Board due to their potential impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

**Q: My business is permitted in the space I've selected. What next?**

**A:** You will need:

- Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or a Home Occupation Permit from the Zoning Office
- Sign Permit from the Zoning Office (*if you plan to have a new sign or change an existing sign*)
- Business license and other Arlington County taxes from the Commissioner of Revenue
- Virginia taxes (income, retail sales and unemployment) and Federal taxes
- Recycling plan submitted to the Solid Waste Bureau of the Department of Environmental Services
- License from the Public Health Division (*for any business selling prepared or packaged food*)
- And, if a restaurant:
  - o Proposed menu submitted to the Public Health Division
  - o Building Permit from the Inspection Services Division (*if changing the number of seats*)

If you are making alterations, you will also need:

- Building and Trade Permits from the Inspection Services Division
- Right-of-Way (ROW) and other applicable permits from the Development Services Bureau
- If a restaurant, plan approval from the Public Health Division

**Q: Can I expand my restaurant to include live entertainment and outdoor seating?**

**A: Live Entertainment**

The County Board permits live entertainment on a case-by-case basis based on the proposed entertainment's impact on the surrounding community. Examples of "live entertainment" include, but are not limited to: DJs, karaoke, comedians and music performers. Please contact the Planning Division at (703) 228-3525 for more information.

*Outdoor Seating*

Outdoor seating requirements vary based on location. Please contact the Zoning Office at (703) 228-3883 in order to learn the specifics of your location and to receive staff assistance regarding procedures.

## OBTAINING LICENSES AND PERMITS

**Q: How and when do I apply for a Certificate of Occupancy (CO)?**

**A:** Apply for the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) online or at the Zoning Office at the same time you apply for your building permit (if required). Proof of a business license from the Commissioner of Revenue is required to apply.

A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) requires inspections by the Zoning Office, the Inspection Services Division, and depending on use, the Public Health Division. Once the inspections are completed and approved, it will take about 10 business days to obtain your Certificate of Occupancy (CO). **You cannot open your business unless a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) has been applied for, approved, and issued.**

