



NEW BUSINESSES & PLANNING

**For new business owners, welcome to Redwood City!
For those relocating, we're glad you stayed!**

As you begin the process of establishing or relocating a business in Redwood City, there are four major steps with the Planning Division that you will need to take before you apply for a business license and set-up shop. This handout will walk you through the information needed for the City to evaluate if your business is allowed in certain locations and what's needed for building alterations. **Please review this document before signing a new lease.**

NOTE: This is not an all-inclusive list for starting a business. Please see the Business Resources section for more information, including requirements with other agencies and divisions.

1. DEFINE YOUR BUSINESS USE

How would you describe your business? What kinds of activities does your business do, make, or sell? The City's Zoning Code (see [Article 2](#)) defines use types under general categories, such as personal services, medical offices, retail sales, and vehicle repair, to name a few. Consider which use type would be the closest fit for your business and fill out the New Business Form on the last page of the handout to help with this process.

When applying for your business license, you may be asked the following questions by the Planning Division to determine how your business is defined and whether it is allowed at a given location:

- Describe your business *uses* and *activities*?
- What was the *previous use* of the property/unit? When did the prior use *discontinue*?
- Are you *replacing* an existing business use? Are any *expansions* being proposed?

Business Use Category Examples:	
Massage parlor, beauty spa, barber shop	→ <i>Personal Services, General</i>
Martial arts, gymnastics, instructional space	→ <i>Personal Services, Studio</i>
Psychotherapy, Dentistry, Acupuncture office	→ <i>Medical Office</i>
Architecture, engineering, law firm	→ <i>Professional Office</i>

You can make an appointment with a Planner with the booking service [here](#).

MON-THUR: 10:00am to 4:00 pm (Virtual / In person)

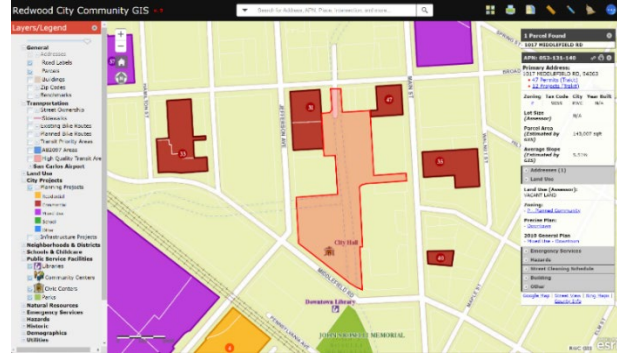
Or speak to a Planner at (650) 780-7234 or at planning@redwoodcity.org



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2. DETERMINE IF YOUR BUSINESS USE IS PERMITTED

Before signing a lease, check what kinds of business uses are permitted in the space. To learn more about a property and its zoning designation, you may visit the Redwood City GIS page [here](#). You can find all applicable Zoning District standards in the City's Zoning Code, including the Uses Regulations Table which lists which uses are Permitted (P), Conditionally Permitted (C), or Prohibited (-) within that district. Permitted uses are allowed, whereas conditional uses require review and approval by the Zoning Administrator through a [Use Permit](#).



- For home-based occupations, please review the Home Occupations handout [here](#).
- For massage therapy businesses, please review the Massage Permit process [here](#).
- For short-term rentals, please review the Short-Term Rentals page [here](#).

3. TENANT IMPROVEMENTS AND SIGNAGE ALTERATIONS

Will you be making improvements to your new location? You'll need to obtain certain permits before getting started. See a summary of common improvements and the associated requirements below.

- ✓ Exterior alterations require an Architectural Permit (see [Article 45](#)). See the Planning Application form [here](#).
- ✓ Interior alterations require a Building Permit. See the Building Permit Submittal page [here](#).
- ✓ New signage requires a Sign Permit. See the Sign handout [here](#).
- ✓ Parklets and sidewalk cafés require an Outdoor Business Activity Permit. See the Outdoor Business Activity page [here](#).

4. BUSINESS LICENSE REQUIREMENT

Now it's time to register your business. All businesses (excluding family child care) must obtain a business license tax certificate from the Revenue Services Division before operating.

To apply, visit the business licensing page [here](#). You may apply online or come to the City Offices during office hours, listed [here](#).



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BUSINESS RESOURCES

Still have questions? Below are a list of resources to help establish your business in Redwood City:

- “Why Choose Redwood City?” (link [here](#))
- San Mateo County Environmental Health (link [here](#))
- California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (link [here](#))
- Chamber San Mateo County (link [here](#))
- RWC Economic Indicators Dashboard (link [here](#))
- Space Availability Search (link [here](#))
- Additional City Resources (link [here](#))



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NEW BUSINESS USE WORKSHEET

[NOTE]: The purpose of this form is for the businessowner to provide Planning staff with additional context and information about their business use. This form **DOES NOT** constitute official Planning approval of the business use in the described location.

Location: _____

Business Use (per Zoning Code definition): _____

Description of Business Use (including business webpage and other locations, if applicable):

Zoning District: _____

Permitted Use: Conditional Use: Prohibited Use: Unsure:

Additional Notes: _____

Prior Use: _____

Replacement/Continuation: Expansion: Change: