

Partners for Success

A Guide for New and Expanding Business in La Mesa

What You Should Know Before You Get Started



**Business
Development
Guide**



**CITY OF
LA MESA**
JEWEL of the HILLS

Welcome

The City of La Mesa strongly supports both business retention, as well as creating an environment that encourages new business to come to La Mesa. We appreciate you considering our community as a location for your new business. If you own an existing business and are looking to expand or open an additional location in our City, we are glad you've been successful here and we want to encourage and assist you in building on your success.



In recent years, La Mesa has benefitted from a substantial amount of private investment, much of it stimulated by the City's own investment in infrastructure and new public facilities, its proactive approach to economic development, and its cooperative method of working with new and existing business owners. There are many

outstanding business opportunities available in La Mesa and this guide was developed to help explain the process of opening a business in La Mesa and alert you to important questions you should answer before purchasing or leasing a site for your business.

Starting or expanding any business is a complicated process with many variables and critical decision points confronting the business owner. The business owner has to finance and plan the business' operating strategy but there are also business licenses and, potentially, other approvals that must be obtained from the City. There are fees associated with these approvals that need to be factored into your business model.



This guide provides you the basics needed to get a business started but does not replace a telephone consultation or a face-to-face visit with the City's Planning or Building Division staff. Please remember, **City staff is here to help and guide you every step of the way.** You can receive information and assistance by visiting City Hall at 8130 Allison Avenue or phoning (619) 667-1177. The City's goal is to help you succeed because your success helps us all.



Consider Zoning Before Getting Started

Whether you're considering acquiring a site or building or leasing an existing facility, it is critical that you first make sure your intended use/activity is allowed in that location. Ask yourself this question: *"Will the City's zoning ordinance allow my type of business in my chosen location?"*

"Determine zoning and building permit requirements prior to purchasing or leasing any land or building"

Confirm the zoning of the location to determine if the proposed use/activity is allowed in the zone. You can do this by checking Title 24 of the **Municipal Code** on the City website. Businesses in residential zones are discussed in Chapter 24.05; commercial zones, Chapter 24.06, and industrial zones, Chapter 24.07.

If your proposed business use is permitted by right under the Municipal Code and you are not making any interior or exterior building modifications to the space and the use is consistent with the prior use of the space, then you can probably proceed to obtain your business license from the City. Visit **Business Licenses**.

If the proposed use is not listed in the Municipal Code, then you should contact the City for clarification.

"Call or visit the City's Planning and Building staff to determine what approvals are required."

If the use is not permitted by right, you should ask yourself the following question: *"Might it still be possible for me to operate my business in my chosen location even if the activity is not permitted within the zone?"*

If the current use of the property is consistent with the proposed use, then its possible that no further approvals will be required. On the other hand, if the new use differs from the current use, additional approvals, such as a Conditional Use Permit, may be required. For example, new construction of large facilities or large additions will generally require approval of a Site Development Plan or changes in exterior building facades may require a Design Review in addition to a building permit. Other discretionary reviews could be required for businesses including outdoor seating and/or live performance entertainment. Structural modifications or tenant improvements, whether major or minor in scope, will likely require building permits, as would new construction of any type.

Again, if the proposed use is not listed in the Municipal Code, you should contact the City for clarification.

"Let the City be your partner in success. Avoid costly mistakes and minimize risk by letting us help you create a safe, code compliant business BEFORE you get started."

Helpful Checklist for Permitting a Business

As previously stated in this guide, conducting some simple research with the City's help BEFORE you purchase or lease land or a facility for a new business is important for your success. Here is a simple checklist you will want to execute before you get started.

- ✓ Confirm the zoning of your chosen business location and determine if the proposed use/activity is permitted within the zone.
- ✓ If the proposed use/activity is not permitted within the zone, find out what discretionary approvals, if any, are required to allow the business to operate within the zone.
- ✓ If the use is not specifically defined in the City's **Municipal Code**, contact the City for clarification.
- ✓ Check the current use of the property. A change of use may require a discretionary review and/or a building permit.
- ✓ If necessary, apply for the appropriate discretionary reviews and pay any fees.
- ✓ If contemplating expansion, remodeling, or construction on the property, contact the City's Building Division for information on obtaining a building permit. The Building Division can be reached at (619) 667-1177.
- ✓ If the proposed use is permitted within the zone (see Checklist Item 1), submit a **business license application**. Processing of business license applications may take four to eight weeks.
- ✓ Check the **status of your business license application**.



Additional Tips and Helpful Links

Here are some additional notes for your consideration and some links to other agencies that you may find useful in your research evaluating your new business opportunity in La Mesa.

Additional Tips

You can contact the Building Division at (619) 667-1176 for more information on any of these tips.

- Signage: You may want to install signage on your business' location. A variety of on-site, commercial signs are allowed and more information can be found in Title 15 of the [Municipal Code](#)
- Signage Programs: Certain established commercial centers with four or more tenant spaces have enacted comprehensive sign programs, which specify the number, type, and size of signs allowed.
- Temporary Banners & Displays: These are allowed but require a temporary sign permit.
- Home Based Businesses: In general, home occupations must not have employees, customer visits, signs, etc. There are a lot of variables involving home-based businesses. Give us a call and we'll walk you through them.
- Vehicle Dealers: The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) requires a local agency to sign the Property Use Verification for Vehicle Dealer's License (Form OL-902) for vehicle dealers. The form can be reviewed by Planning Division staff over the counter (fee applies). Call (619) 667-1158 for more information.
- ABC Zoning Affidavit: This document does not require a City signature, but zoning information must be accurate on the form so let the City review it for you prior to submitting it. Call (619) 667-1188 for more information.

Helpful Links

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| State of California: | Dept. of Alcoholic Beverage Control Dept. of Motor Vehicles Bureau of Automobile Repair |
| County of San Diego: | Health Dept. (restaurant plan checks) Guide to New Food Service Business |
| Utilities: | Power – San Diego Gas & Electric Sewer – City of La Mesa (619.667.1126) Cox Communications Trash – EDCO Water – Helix Water District |