

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY LEASE OR PURCHASE CONSIDERATIONS

Your business location is important. Before you purchase or sign a lease, check with the City of Nanaimo, Development Services Department first to make sure that you will be able to conduct business in the location you have chosen. Zoning, parking and building bylaw and/or building code requirements differ depending on your business model and the occupancy of the building and/or property.

In addition to confirming if any charges are registered on the property title, here are a few things to consider before you commit to a space:

1. ZONING AND PARKING

Does the zone accommodate your business proposal?

Commercial business is typically located in the following zones: Commercial Centre, Corridor, Downtown, Industrial and Waterfront. Knowing which zone is appropriate for your specific business needs is important. Parking requirements can vary depending on business type, so it is also important to understand whether a specific site can provide the required parking for your proposed business use. For enquiries, contact planning@nanaimo.ca.

2. BUILDING PERMIT

When is a building permit required?

A building permit is required if you are renovating the unit, the building or if a change in occupancy is proposed.

Under the BC Building Code, there are different requirements based on what the space is being used for (occupancy). For instance, if the space you are considering was previously a retail store and you intend to open an esthetic studio, there are specific upgrades that will need to be done in order to satisfy the BC Building Code. A building permit to alter a unit from one type of occupancy to another is considered an **Alteration Permit**.

If you determine that the occupancy is not changing, but you want to renovate the space before moving into it, then you will require a **Tenant Improvement Permit**. If more extensive renovations are planned that alters the building, then an **Alteration Permit** is required (*please be aware that alterations that increase the gross floor area can trigger additional parking requirements*).

Permit application, review and completion take time and may require the involvement of professionals such as an Architect or Engineer, so take this into consideration when looking for your business location. For enquiries, contact building.inspections@nanaimo.ca.

3. BUSINESS LICENCE APPLICATION

Any business entity or non-profit organization carrying on business in Nanaimo is required to obtain a business licence. The business licence process is fast and straightforward if time is taken to ensure that zoning and building permits are dealt with first. Applying for a business licence as the last step can significantly increase the time it takes especially if the zone is not appropriate or if it is determined that a building permit is required to change the occupancy or to rectify previously completed illegal construction.

As part of the business licence review, referrals are sent to other departments and/or external agencies to ensure compliance with bylaws and regulations:

PLANNING

BUILDING

FIRE DEPT

OTHER

If business licence applicants, property owners and their agents do not undertake an adequate due diligence assessment prior to submitting an application, issues discovered at the business licence application review and referral stage can come as a surprise and delay the issuance of the business licence or even result in the rejection of the application. Operating a business without a licence is a contravention to the Business Licence Bylaw. For enquiries, contact business.licence@nanaimo.ca.