



Things to consider

It's important to evaluate cost effectiveness when considering the construction of a new building, or the conversion of an existing building for restaurant use. For example, if the existing structure is a retail space, it is designed for a retail sales function, a different occupancy classification than a restaurant. A restaurant may have different requirements for things like exits, fire sprinklers or even water taps, and would require additional review by the city before it could be used as a restaurant.

It is highly recommended restaurants identify changes that must be made, if any, and obtain estimates from reliable licensed contractors before leasing, purchasing or investing in a location that may be a costly undertaking to construct or convert. Depending on the number and type of changes to be made to an existing space, application reviews could take up to six months. Project construction time would be in addition to this time frame. It is recommended that step one is completed before buying a property or signing a lease.

How the city can help

Step One – Fact Finding

- **Contact Tri-County Health Department:** The Health Department has rules and regulations in addition to the city's requirements for opening and operating a restaurant. 720-322-1507.
- **Identify the existing zoning:** Zoning of the property should be confirmed to determine if the restaurant use is allowed or will require a "Conditional Use Approval" hearing before the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is a board of citizens appointed by City Council to hold public meetings regarding site plans and land use. To determine the zone district call 303-739-7250.
- **Determine the current building occupancy:** Contact the Building Codes Division, 303-739-7420, to determine the current occupancy of the existing structure. This contact should be followed-up with an initial meeting with a Plans Examiner to discuss issues concerning the conversion to restaurant use. It's a good idea to have a licensed contractor participate in the meeting.
- **Schedule a preliminary meeting with the Office of Development Assistance:** The Office of Development Assistance, 303-739-7345, will gather overall comments from city departments involved in permitting. You should engage the service of a consultant, familiar with planning, architecture or contracting. Additional information can be obtained from the city website at auroragov.org.
- **Call the Aurora Business Development Center 303-326-8690:** The Center offers assistance and classes on how to open a restaurant.

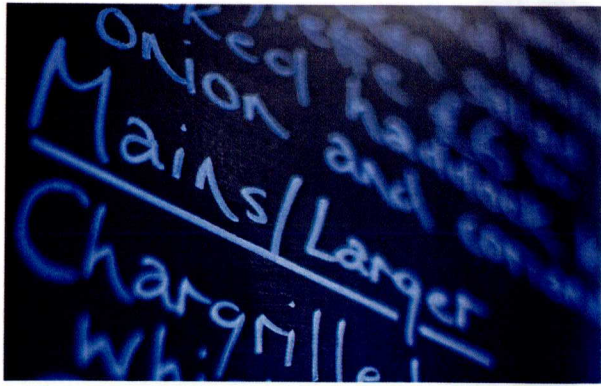
Step Two – Application Process

- **Applications are made where appropriate:**
 - Planning Department- Site Plans and/or Conditional Uses
 - Building Codes Division - building permit processing and Life Safety review (final construction plans are needed)
 - Aurora Water - changes to water and sewer service
 - Public Works - possible changes to public infrastructure.

Plans submittal and reviews between departments can run concurrently. Some applicants may prefer to wait until after Planning Commission approval before spending the money on detailed construction plans. Plans must be produced by a licensed, design professional.

- **Apply for a business license:** You may apply for a business license at the Tax and Licensing Division, (303) 739-7057. The business license process verifies the zoning and building occupancy status noted in Step One. The Planning staff will conduct the zoning review and a Plans Reviewer from the Building Codes Division will verify that the occupancy classification of an existing building is able to support restaurant use.
- **Apply for a liquor license:** If you plan to serve alcohol, contact the Aurora Finance Department – Licensing, at 303-739-7057.

Note - It is important to understand Planning Commission or Planning Department approval is not the same thing as building permit approval. These are two separate review and approval processes. Only after zoning approval is obtained can a permit be issued for building improvements.



Step Three – Permits

Permits are required before any work can begin, including demolition. After approval of all plans required by the appropriate city departments, a building permit may be issued. Permits will only be issued to contractors licensed in Aurora. Permit fees and a list of licensed contractors is available at auroragov.org.

Step Four – Inspections and certificate of occupancy

Call for inspections at 303-739-7420. After field inspections are completed and approved, a Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Use of the building is not permitted until all work is inspected, passed, and a certificate of occupancy is issued.

Cost Considerations

It is the city of Aurora’s goal to provide up-front assistance and help you understand there may be requirements and associated costs. Some common costs include the following:

- Plan preparation by design professions for required application submittals to the city.
- Building new exterior exits, if required.
- Adding panic hardware to doors.

- Strengthening floor construction to meet the minimum requirements of floor strength for assembly areas if required.
- Providing handicap accessibility. Restroom conversion may be a costly consideration, as may be the accessible route.
- The installation of fire sprinklers, fire alarm and commercial kitchen fire suppression systems may be required.
- Updating heating, plumbing and electrical systems to current code requirements.
- Installation of a grease trap.
- The adequacy of the water meter sizing will be evaluated. If up-sizing of the meter is required, the applicant is responsible for Water, Sewer, and Metro Wastewater connection fees corresponding to the required meter size, as well as all construction costs.
- Meeting Tri-County Health requirements.

City Contacts

Office of Development Assistance
303-739-7345

Aurora Business Development Center
303-326-8690

Building Codes Division
303-739-7420

Planning Department
303-739-7250



www.auroragov.org

Starting a Restaurant

Things to consider



City of Aurora
Development Services Department