



# City of Charleston: Application Procedure to Obtain a Business License/Certificate of Occupancy

1 Business License

To start the BL/CO application process, first contact:

**The Revenue Collections Division**  
75 Calhoun Street, Third Floor  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401  
(843) 724-3711

Exception: If the application is for a **DAY CARE** or **BED AND BREAKFAST**, Zoning approval is necessary before you obtain a BL application.

Contact:

**The Zoning Division**  
75 Calhoun Street, Third Floor  
Charleston, SC 29401  
(843) 724-3781

\*The Revenue Collections Division requires that the application for a **BUSINESS LICENSE/ CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY (CO)** be completely filled out. It is very important to complete every line of the application. This information is required and failure to supply it will delay the application process. **The “for-office-use-only” spaces should not be filled in by the applicant.**

2 Zoning

After the application is submitted and approved initially by Revenue Collections, it is reviewed for **ZONING** compliance. Please allow 3 to 5 business days for this review. Zoning staff will evaluate whether the property is zoned for the particular type of business use being applied for, verify that parking requirements are met, hours of operations, etc. For additional information regarding this step in the process, contact the Zoning office at (843) 724-3781.

3 Inspections

Following Zoning approval, the application is then forwarded to **FIRE INSPECTIONS**. A fire inspector will contact you within 24 hours of Zoning approval to schedule a fire inspection. Please refer to the [Fire Inspection Guidelines for Business Inspections](#) (see back page) for information on items that will be verified during the inspection. After this inspection, a CO will be prepared and forwarded to the Business License office. For additional information on Fire Inspections, contact (843) 724-7433 or 724-7431.

4 Business License

The applicant should call the Business License office (843) 724-3711 to confirm the status of this CO. The applicant must then come to the Revenue Collections office to pay the applicable fee to obtain their **BUSINESS LICENSE** for the year.

## NOTES

- All signs visible from a public street or right-of-way must be approved by the **ZONING** and **BUILDING INSPECTIONS** divisions before they are installed.
- Do not confuse **CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY** with **CONSTRUCTION CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**. If construction work was done on the building, a Construction Certificate of Occupancy must be obtained first. Contact **Building Inspections** at (843) 724-7433 or (843) 724-7431.
- If the building involves the preparation and/or serving of food, the approval of Charleston Water Services must be secure before a CO can be issued. A seating layout must be submitted to Building Inspections for CO approval. In addition, a South Carolina DHEC inspection report must be submitted to Revenue Collections before a business license can be issued to a restaurant or bar in the City of Charleston.