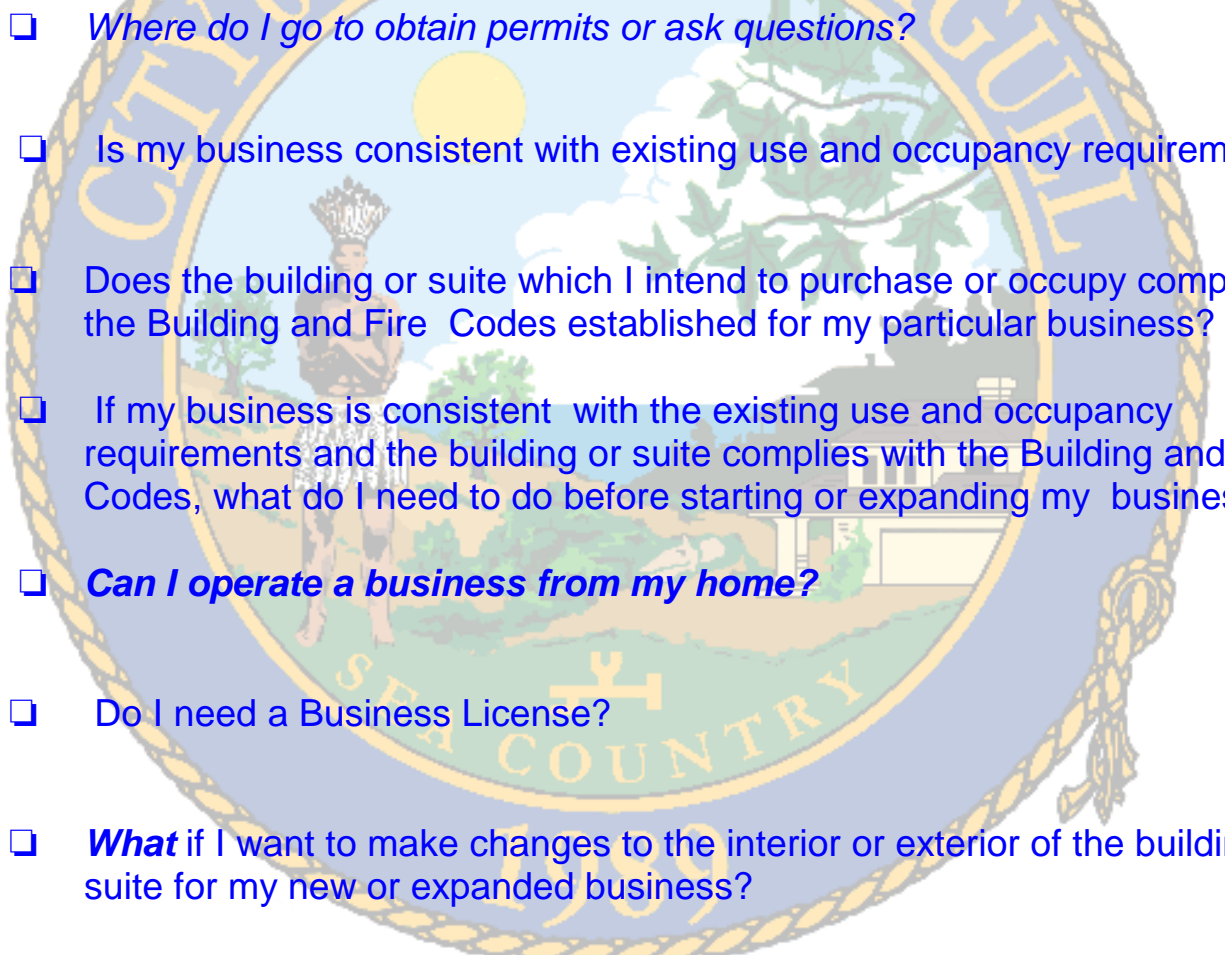


CITY OF LAGUNA NIGUEL

A Guide to Starting or Expanding Your Business

The City of Laguna Niguel is a growing young community which offers an excellent business opportunity to serve its 65,000-plus residents and those from surrounding communities. Over the next 10 years, approximately 500 new homes and one million square feet of new office and commercial development will potentially be constructed in Laguna Niguel as the City reaches buildout. This pamphlet answers many commonly asked questions which will hopefully help you identify the steps necessary to obtain approvals and permits from the City to either start or expand your business in Laguna Niguel.

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- The seal of the City of Laguna Niguel is a circular emblem. It features a central figure of a woman in traditional attire, possibly a Native American or Spanish colonial figure, standing on a grassy field. Behind her is a large tree and a building. The seal is surrounded by a rope-like border. The text "CITY OF LAGUNA NIGUEL" is written in a semi-circle at the top, and "SEA COUNTRY" is written at the bottom. The year "1989" is also visible at the bottom of the seal.
- Where do I go to obtain permits or ask questions?*
 - Is my business consistent with existing use and occupancy requirements?
 - Does the building or suite which I intend to purchase or occupy comply with the Building and Fire Codes established for my particular business?
 - If my business is consistent with the existing use and occupancy requirements and the building or suite complies with the Building and Fire Codes, what do I need to do before starting or expanding my business?
 - Can I operate a business from my home?***
 - Do I need a Business License?
 - What*** if I want to make changes to the interior or exterior of the building or suite for my new or expanded business?
 - What type of sign may I have for my business?
 - Do I have any promotional opportunities for my new business?***

Where do I go to obtain permits or ask questions?

The Community Development Department is conveniently located at 27781 La Paz Road, just north of Aliso Creek Road. The Community Development Department provides planning, building and grading services at one location. The rest of City Hall, including the Public Works Department, is located adjacent to the Community Development Department. Access to the Community Development Department is easy from either the 73 (Tollroad) or I-5 by exiting at La Paz Road and traveling south. A reference map is included at the end of this pamphlet.

The Community Development Department is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., except holidays. The Planning and Building Counter closes at 4:00 p.m. daily. The telephone number for all services is (949) 362-4360.

Is my business consistent with existing use and occupancy requirements?

To answer this question you will first want to talk with a planner from the Community Development Department. The City's Zoning Code identifies many types of businesses which are either permitted or require approval of a Use Permit (UP) prior to operation of the business. Additionally, the building which you intend to occupy may already have a UP which previously established regulations regarding the types of permitted businesses.

If you find that your business is inconsistent with the City's Zoning Code or a previously approved UP, please speak with a planner from the Community Development Department regarding the next steps in the process of starting your business. Businesses requiring a UP generally include restaurants and other food uses, live entertainment, hair/nail salons, and automotive uses. If you are required to process a new UP, you can expect the process to generally take between 15 to 60 days, but may be longer depending on circumstances. The processing costs vary since the City bills hourly from an initial deposit, the amount of which varies depending on the project. The funds which are not used are returned to the applicant.

Does the building or suite which I intend to purchase or occupy comply with the Building and Fire Codes established for my particular business?

The City's Building and Fire Codes contain specific construction requirements for all types of businesses, including exiting requirements, disabled access and facility requirements, fire walls, occupancy loads and occupancy separations. Please contact a Building Division staff member from the Community Development Department to determine whether the building complies with the codes for your particular business. The Building Division staff may ask you to provide information on your business and a site plan of the building or tenant space with dimensions. In certain cases, the City may need to conduct a special inspection which carries an additional fee.

If my business is consistent with the existing use and occupancy requirements and the building or suite complies with the Building and Fire Codes, what do I need to do before starting or expanding my business?

After you have verified that your business is consistent with the use requirements and the building complies with the Building and Fire Codes for your use, the next step is to obtain a Certificate of Use and Occupancy (C of O). The City does not require a business license. However, when a business changes name or ownership, a C of O must be obtained from the Community Development Department. The process to obtain a C of O is simple. The business owner must be present at the

Community Development Department to fill out a C of O application, pay a processing fee, and submit a site plan and floor plan detailing the location and layout of the business. A C of O is issued after a one-time inspection by the Building Division and assuming compliance with the City codes. The building or tenant suite cannot be occupied until a C of O has been issued.

Can I operate a business from my home?

Yes. However, you must obtain a Home Occupation Permit. In order to obtain a Home Occupation Permit, the business owner must be present at the Community Development Department to fill out an application. The application outlines several conditions of approval to operate a home business, including: the business will not have any employees or customers visiting the home; all business must be done by mail, phone, fax or computer; and the business cannot create any noise, traffic or other impacts that disturb the surrounding residential uses. A one-time processing fee is charged and the Home Occupation Permit is issued on site.

Do I need a Business License?

No. The City does not require a business license. However, you will need to obtain a C of O as previously discussed. Also, depending on your particular situation, you may require other approvals from the Community Development Department, Health Department, Police Services or other applicable public agency.

What if I want to make changes to the interior or exterior of the building or suite for my new or expanded business?

Many new businesses remodel their building or tenant suite to fit the particular needs of the new business. If this is your intention, several steps must be taken before you can open for business. First, building permits must be obtained from the Community Development Department. In order to obtain a building permit, building plans must be submitted for review. Typically, tenant improvement plans require five days for plan check. The costs for building plan check and the building permit are based on the valuation of the improvements. After the permit is issued and work has begun, you must call for building inspections. When the work has been completed and finalized by the Building Division, a Certificate of Use and Occupancy will be issued. The building or tenant suite cannot be occupied until a Certificate of Use and Occupancy has been issued.

Improvements to a building or suite can be complicated and experienced licensed professionals can save you money and time. Businesses must comply with disabled access and facility standards in addition to the Building and Fire Code requirements. Where tenant improvements are proposed, up to 20 percent of the valuation of the improvements may be required to be used toward upgrading ADA-accessible facilities, such as restrooms and ramps, to meet current standards. In addition, businesses involving food preparation and service must meet Health Department requirements. Licensed architects and contractors, who have previous experience with commercial projects, handicap standards and Building, Fire and Health Codes, can be invaluable to efficiently process your project.

What type of sign may I have for my business?

If you intend to install new exterior business signs or change the number or type of existing signs, including change of copy, you must obtain planning approval and building permits. Therefore, before buying new signs, please first speak with your property manager and a planner from the Community

Development Department to review all of the regulations. The City's zoning regulations contain very specific sign regulations, and many of the shopping centers in the City have approved Sign Programs that establish sign parameters for the center.

The sign regulations are designed to provide signage exposure while maintaining consistency among each tenant. Signs also require a building permit in order to review the electrical and structural plans. Please submit building plans for your new signs prior to installation. However, please be aware that you must have a C of O for your new business on file before the City can issue a sign permit.

While your signs are in the process of being approved by the City or are under construction, the City will allow you to install a temporary sign or banner identifying your business. Please contact a planner from the Community Development Department for details on a temporary sign permit.

Do I have any promotional opportunities for my new business?

Yes. New businesses may display a temporary sign or banner indicating the grand opening of a new business or a change in business ownership. A temporary sign permit is required from the City, so speak to a planner from the Community Development Department for more information.

Balloons, flags, spot lights, sandwich boards, other banners and outdoor display of merchandise are generally not permitted. However, special events are permitted on a periodic basis. If you are interested in a sidewalk sale or other type of special event, you should contact the property manager for the shopping center and encourage them to apply to the Planning Division in the Community Development Department for a center-wide special-event permit, or contact the Planning Division directly for an individual special-event permit.

The City of Laguna Niguel prides itself on providing the highest level of customer service possible to its residents and businesses. Hopefully, this guide has helped you to better understand the process of opening or expanding your business in Laguna Niguel. The City's regulations are not intended to impede business opportunities. Instead, the City's regulations are designed to maintain the City's attractive and well-kept appearance which ultimately benefits the business community by providing a shopping environment that attracts shoppers from throughout the region. If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the staff at the City.

Good luck on your business!

CITY OF LAGUNA NIGUEL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Public Counter Closes at 4:00 p.m. Daily