



BUSINESS TOOLKIT



FROM PERMITS TO PARKING: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW



Hello there!

Welcome to the City of Aspen's Business Toolkit. We're glad you're here!

What is the Business Toolkit?

This document represents a compilation of information from different departments within the City of Aspen organization. The Toolkit is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of City resources and rules that apply to businesses operating within Aspen's City limits.

Why we made the Toolkit:

This document was prepared with the intention of saving you time when learning about all the requirements of operating within the City. It's designed to give you a "one stop" location for just about anything you'd need to know about opening or managing a business in Aspen. We know that there's a lot to learn when opening a new business or taking the wheel of an existing one, and we wanted to make it easier for you by putting all the information together in one place. Et voila, the Business Toolkit was born!

How to use this document:

The table of contents is organized by topic. If you have a question about a specific topic, flip to the table of contents to find it there. If you've got a few minutes, it's best to read the toolkit starting at Section 1. The information in Section 1 is applicable to all business types, and there's lots of good tidbits there. If you're running a food or beverage business, Section 2 was made with you in mind - don't skip it! Section 3 contains contact information for City staff and is organized by department and the general interest areas they can help you with.

We sincerely hope you find this helpful and informative. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any other questions not answered here or need support in any way. Happy reading!

City of Aspen staff

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SECTION
1

INFORMATION FOR ALL BUSINESSES

TRASH, COMPOST, AND RECYCLING



Who picks up my trash, recycling, and compost?

Businesses are responsible for setting up accounts with waste haulers to have their trash, recycling, and compost picked up on a consistent basis. Visit aspen.gov/387/Waste-Haulers for a list of businesses providing collection services in Aspen.

Unwanted fixtures, furniture, pallets, appliances, kegs, propane containers, electronic waste, and hazardous waste must be taken to the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center (32046 Jack Gredig Lane) for disposal. These items **will not** be picked up by waste haulers. **None of these items should be stored in the alleys or right of way at any time.**

Visit www.landfillrules.com for more information about the Solid Waste Center.

Is my business required to compost?

Composting organic waste is **mandatory** for businesses with a retail food license. This includes restaurants, caterers, food vendors at special events, grocery stores, bars, food trucks, and meal delivery companies.

Beginning in January 2026, compost will be mandatory for all commercial businesses and multifamily properties. In 2028, everyone in the City of Aspen will be required to compost.

The City of Aspen provides free compost containers, signage for staff and customers, and bilingual trainings on proper waste diversion methods. Email waste@aspen.gov to learn more or submit a request through the [City of Aspen Sustainability Resources form](#).



**Sustainability
Resources Form**

How to recycle in Aspen

Recycling is not required by the City of Aspen, but it is highly encouraged. For a list of businesses providing recycling collection services in Aspen, visit aspen.gov/387/Waste-Haulers.

The Rio Grande Recycle Center (618 Rio Grande Place) allows free drop-offs for glass, scrap metal, batteries, clothes, yard waste, and food waste. Visit aspen.gov/345/Rio-Grande-Recycle-Center for more information.

Gently used furniture, fixtures, decorations, and architectural salvage items may be donated to The Motherlode Mercantile at the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center. Visit www.pitkinswc.com/motherlode-mercantile for more information.

Visit aspen.gov/348/Recycling for more recycling resources.

BEARS AND WASTE



What are the rules for securing waste in Aspen?

Aspen is centered in prime bear habitat. While bears typically prefer to avoid human contact, they still routinely enter Aspen in search of human food sources during both day and night. Bears are wild animals and are unpredictable. Please ensure your staff are educated about how to protect themselves around bears and that they know the rules about securing your business' waste.

- Trash and compost must always be secured in bear-proof containers. Contact bears@aspen.gov if you're unsure whether your container is bear-proof.
- Best practice for trash and recycling cans is to keep them upright by securing them to a post or other solid object when possible.
- Employees must securely latch all trash and compost containers every time, without fail. Contact your waste hauler to schedule a repair if your receptacle does not latch properly. *If your waste container is found unlatched, your business will be subject to enforcement.*
- It's a good idea to use locks on your business' containers. Just make sure you provide your employees and your trash haulers with the code to the locks! Locks prevent access for bears as well as for "trash poachers" who illegally dump trash into unlocked containers. *If poachers leave your waste containers unlatched, your business will be subject to enforcement.*
- Never leave trash, recycling, or compost outside of its container; if the container is full, bring the excess waste back inside your business and schedule an extra pickup or increase regular pickup frequency with your waste hauler. *If waste*

is found outside a receptacle, your business will be subject to enforcement.

- Used cooking grease and oil receptacles must be kept latched, clean, and in good working order. Never let grease or oil accumulate outside the container, as these are attractants for bears. Remove food debris from the strainers every time.

What if I notice that a bear is getting into my trash (or my neighbor's trash)?

Once a bear discovers a potential food opportunity, it will inevitably return to the same location, which can put you and your staff at risk for a dangerous encounter.

- If you or your staff notice unlatched containers, knocked over containers, or waste strewn about, contact the City's wildlife staff immediately; don't wait!
- Call 970-920-BEAR or e-mail bears@aspen.gov. City staff are happy to conduct outreach and education to businesses that could use a helping hand in keeping trash secure.

TIP:

Educate your staff on rules about securing waste frequently! Failure to abide by these rules will result in fines up to \$1000 for your business.

Contact bears@aspen.gov to request staff trainings or resources.

SINGLE USE BAGS AND ASPEN BAG FEES

As of January 1, 2024, the distribution of Styrofoam take-out containers are banned in Colorado.

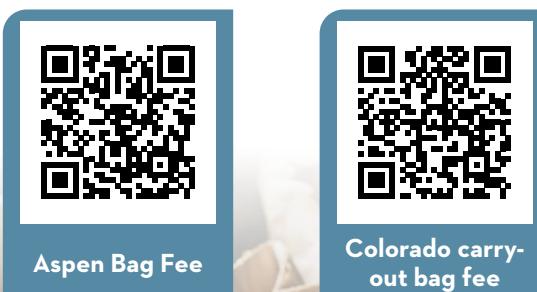
What do I need to know about providing carryout bags for my customers?

Single-use plastic carryout bags are prohibited by state law in Colorado, with few exemptions.

The City of Aspen requires that businesses charge a \$0.20 fee for each single-use carryout bag distributed to a customer (even if the bag is paper).

- Businesses must itemize the bag(s) on each receipt and must display signage to educate customers about the bag fee program.
- Some reusable bags are exempt from the \$0.20 bag fee. If you're offering reusable bags to customers, call 970-920-5039 or email waste@aspen.gov to ensure your bags are exempt from the fee.

For more information about carryout bags and Aspen's bag fee, visit aspen.gov/369/Single-use-bag-fee and tax.colorado.gov/carryout-bag-fee.



WILDLIFE



How can I protect myself and my employees from bears and other wildlife?

Never leave doors or windows to your business propped open; bears and other animals will find their way inside. Always lock doors and roll up windows in vehicles.

Encourage staff to take trash/recycling/compost outside in pairs, if possible. Always make noise and use lights to avoid surprising a bear that may be near your property.

Never gather around wildlife, even from afar! If you encounter a bear, moose, mountain lion, or otherwise, immediately back away slowly and return to a safe location. Don't ever assume wildlife will move out of your way.

For active bear or wildlife intrusions (i.e. in your business, a dumpster, in a car, or in a tree outside), call the Aspen Police Department at 970-920-5314.

TIP:

Keep Your Distance.

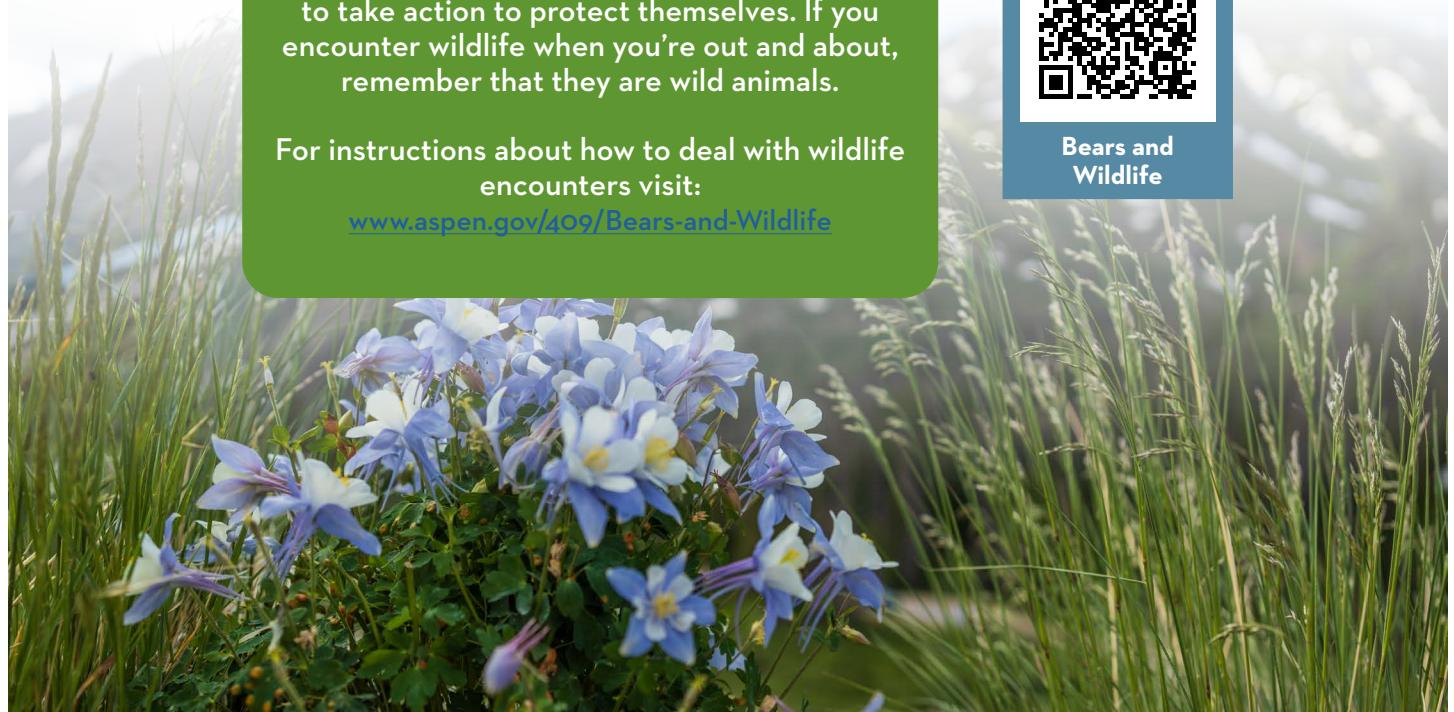
Human-generated activities can cause severe stress for wildlife and could provoke them to take action to protect themselves. If you encounter wildlife when you're out and about, remember that they are wild animals.

For instructions about how to deal with wildlife encounters visit:

www.aspen.gov/409/Bears-and-Wildlife



Bears and
Wildlife



ASPEN AND ROARING FORK VALLEY TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS



What transportation options are available within Aspen's city limits?

Free shuttles depart from the Rubey Park Transit Center with frequent service to Aspen neighborhoods, seven days a week, year-round. Visit www.rfta.com for routes and current schedules.

The Downtowner is an on-demand door-to-door ride service within the City of Aspen, operating daily from 10am-11pm. Download the Downtowner app to request free rides. Find more information at www.ridedowntowner.com/aspen.

WE-cycle is a community bikeshare program that is great for quick trips around town. WE-cycle typically operates in Aspen from spring through October, weather dependent. The first 30 minutes of each ride are free, and WE-cycle docks are conveniently located throughout Aspen during the operating months. Learn more at www.we-cycle.org.

Car To Go is a car-sharing program that maintains a fleet of vehicles for members to use. Gas, maintenance, roadside assistance, and insurance are all included in membership rates. Learn more at www.aspen.gov/221/Car-To-Go.

Additional information about transportation options is available at www.driveless.net.

What transportation options are available for employees living outside of Aspen?

Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) provides valley-wide bus services, from Rifle to Aspen, 7 days per week.

- RFTA service between Aspen and Snowmass Village is free. RFTA service from Aspen to other communities is available for a fare.
- Bus pass and route information is available at www.rfta.com.

TIP:

BUS IS BEST!

Employees can park for free at the Brush Creek Park & Ride lot and catch a free bus to the Rubey Park Transit Center.

Bus timetables are available at www.rfta.com.



UTILITIES



Who provides my utility services?

The City of Aspen provides water services to all properties in downtown Aspen.

The City of Aspen provides electricity for most properties in Aspen's downtown. Contact utilbill@aspen.gov to find out whether your business is inside the City of Aspen service area. Some properties outside of downtown are serviced by Holy Cross Energy for electrical utilities.

Black Hills Energy services natural gas for all properties in Aspen. Visit www.blackhillsenergy.com to set up service.

Visit www.holycross.com if you need to set up electrical service with Holy Cross.

For questions about City of Aspen water or electrical utilities, contact the Utility Billing department at utilbill@aspen.gov or 970-920-5030.

Where do I manage my City of Aspen utility accounts?

To open water or electrical utility accounts, or to pay your monthly bill, visit www.aspen.gov/185/Utility-Billing.

To see past and current consumption on your meters, sign up for Aspen Intelligent Metering at www.aspen.gov/1213/AIM---Aspen-Intelligent-Metering.



CONSTRUCTION, REMODELS, AND BUILDING PERMITS



When should I get a building permit?

Most new businesses undertake some amount of work to customize their space prior to opening to the public. Even if it's not a full remodel, minor scopes of work may still require a building permit from the City of Aspen. Business managers should become familiar with the City's [permit types and triggers](#) to ensure they are not unknowingly doing illegal work to their property.

Common examples of minor work that requires a building permit are:

- Updating plumbing fixtures
- New lighting or alterations to existing lighting layouts
- Updating finishes that require removing the substrate beneath

While there is [work that is exempt from construction permits](#), like moving in new furnishings or movable displays, this type of work can still affect a property's egress or accessibility, which must remain compliant with applicable codes. Even if you're only planning to change the way a space is set up, remember that work exempt from permits is not exempt from code compliance.

Building Department staff are happy to conduct pre-submittal meetings or courtesy walkthroughs



Permit Types

of your space to review existing conditions and/or to ensure that new furnishings/displays are compliant with current building codes. Email builderoftheday@gmail.com or call 970-429-2735 to connect with Building Department staff.

How do I apply for a building permit?

Building permit applications may be submitted online at aspen.gov/179/Building.

Visit the building department document and resource library at www.aspen.gov/1391/Building-Document-and-Resource-Library to learn about the overall permit process, how to set up a pre-submittal meeting, permit timeline estimates, and more.

The EPIC Permit Program is specifically designed to expedite the permit review process for business tenant finish work in downtown Aspen. Learn more about EPIC permits by contacting builderoftheday@gmail.com.



Exempt Work



Resource Library

TIP:

It is always a good idea to discuss your scope of work with the Building Department before beginning.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Photo Credit: Aspen Historical Society

Did you know that Aspen was one of the first communities in Colorado to formally address the preservation of historic properties and districts? Preserving Aspen's historic resources (over 300 of them!) differentiates us as a community and contributes to our long-term cultural awareness and sustainability.

Is my property a part of the Historic Preservation program? What does that mean?

If your property is individually designated or is within the boundaries of the Historic District shown on the map on the following page, your building is subject to the Historic Preservation (HP) program.

Properties within the HP program are held to higher standards for appearance by Aspen's Municipal Code.

TIP:

If your business is located within Aspen's Commercial Core Historic District, work on the building is subject to Historic Preservation review and approval.

See page 13 for a map of the Commercial Core Historic District.

Are you considering making any changes to your historic property?

All exterior work (and even some interior work) needs to be reviewed and approved by Historic Preservation staff before the work begins. Some examples of work that need review and approval are painting masonry, replacing windows, alterations to structural framing, replacing HVAC equipment, and any penetrations through historic material (some of this work may also require a building permit).

If you're considering making any changes to a building within Aspen's historic district, it's a good idea to contact HP staff before beginning. HP staff are happy to conduct a site visit or schedule a chat with you to ensure your work complies with HP standards. Call 970-920-5090 or email hp@aspen.gov to connect with Historic Preservation staff.

ASPEN'S COMMERCIAL CORE HISTORIC DISTRICT



CHARACTER AREA MAP

not to scale

COMMERCIAL CORE HISTORIC DISTRICT

COMMERCIAL AREA

N

PARKING AND PRODUCT DELIVERIES



Where can our customers and employees find parking?

Street parking is available in both the downtown and residential areas of Aspen.

Parking spots in Aspen's downtown have a 4-hour maximum per day. Hourly parking rates are effective from 10am-6pm, and Sundays are free. Learn more at www.aspen.gov/1676/Downtown-Core-Parking.

Daily parking is available from 10am-6pm in residential areas outside of downtown. Learn more at www.aspen.gov/1677/Residential-Parking.

The Rio Grande Parking Garage (427 Rio Grande Place) offers hourly and daily parking rates. Discounted multi-day passes are available for purchase inside the garage. Find out more at www.aspen.gov/1678/Rio-Grande-Parking-Garage.

Parking is FREE at the Brush Creek Park and Ride (Hwy 82 and Brush Creek Rd). Bus service from Brush Creek to Rubey Park Transit Center in downtown Aspen is FREE. Find bus schedules at www.rfta.com.

Carpools (2+ adults) park for FREE in residential zones with a carpool permit obtained at Brush Creek Park and Ride. Visit www.aspen.gov/267/carpool for more information.

100% electric vehicles may apply for a permit to park for free in residential zones. Email parking@aspen.gov to request an application.

Where can I get my product deliveries?

On-street loading zones and alleys are for active loading and unloading only. You may receive deliveries via loading zones or alleys, but any vehicles parked in loading zones or alleys where active loading or unloading is not occurring are subject to enforcement.

To avoid getting a ticket, make sure to move any vehicles out of the alleys and loading zones when you're finished loading or unloading.

Where can I charge my Electric Vehicle (EV)?

Aspen has many EV chargers throughout town. Visit www.aspen.gov/919/Electric-vehicles to learn about charger locations and cost of charging.

TIP:

How do I pay for a parking ticket?

To pay for or dispute a parking ticket, visit www.aspen.gov/336/Pay-or-Dispute-Parking-Ticket



Pay/Dispute
Parking Ticket

ZONING, SIGNAGE, LIGHTING, AND TEMPORARY STRUCTURES



What is zoning and how does it affect my business?

Each property in Aspen is located within a zone district. A property's zoning dictates what the property can be used for. Some examples of "uses" include restaurant, retail, or office uses.

Restaurant and retail uses are permitted in most zone districts throughout Aspen's downtown, but medical and real estate offices are only allowed in certain locations.

Properties north of Main Street (especially in Obermeyer Place, on North Mill Street, and on Puppy Smith Street) have more limited use options due to zoning restrictions.

It's a good idea to email planneroftheday@gmail.com before signing a lease to ensure that the type of business you intend to open is permitted in the zone district for your property.

What should I know about my business' signage?

If you're making any changes to signage for your business, a sign permit is required. Signage includes text, logos, images, or window decals used for the purpose of advertising.

- Visit www.aspen.gov/1577/Permits to apply for a sign permit.



Blinking, neon, and neon-appearing signs are strictly prohibited.

Televisions in my business

TV screens directed toward your windows may not be allowed. E-mail planneroftheday@gmail.com to inquire about options for TV screens.

What should I know about lighting choices for my business?

To protect the night sky, Aspen has laws limiting the amount of light that can extend beyond your business' windows. Window display lighting must be downcast and should only illuminate inside your business.

With a few exceptions, business lighting must be turned off or dimmed each night from 10pm-7am.

Seasonal/holiday lighting is allowed to be illuminated from November 15 - March 1.

Festoon (bistro) lighting is allowed to be installed over pedestrian walkways and outdoor dining areas, however it must be fully or partially shielded (not bare bulbs) and must be within 12' of the walking surface below it.

Can I install a tent (or temporary structure) over my patio?

Tents and other temporary structures such as airlocks may be allowed for up to 14 days per year (including set up and take down). Prior to installation, you'll need to obtain an approved Tent or Temporary Structure permit. Apply for a permit at www.aspen.gov/179/Building.

If you'd like to install a tent or structure for more than 14 days in a year, you'll need to go through the land use process prior to installation. This process requires the submission of a land use application, a public hearing, and the final approval by Aspen's City Council.

- Temporary structures or tents in place for more than 14 days have specific sets of building, energy, and fire codes that apply. Please email builderoftheday@gmail.com to discuss your proposal before you submit a land use application.



Can I operate a business out of my home?

Some types of businesses may be eligible to operate out of private residences. In those instances, a Home Occupation business license is required.

Home occupation businesses can employ no more than one person who does not live in the residence, and the business cannot cause a nuisance outside of the building.

Email planneroftheday@gmail.com to inquire about whether your business is eligible for a home occupation license.

TIP:

Here to Help!

The City of Aspen offers permit portal support and help guides.

www.aspen.gov/1211/Permit-Portal-Support



Permit Portal Support

TIP:

Plan Ahead!

You should allocate several months to go through the land use process if you intend to install a temporary structure. Contact planneroftheday@gmail.com to get started.



ALCOHOL SERVICE



Before serving alcohol to the public, even if it's complimentary, your business needs to obtain either a liquor license or a Retail Establishment Permit.

When do I need a liquor license? How do I get one?

A liquor license permits your business to serve alcohol to the public for a fee (wine, beer, liquor). You'll need a liquor license if your business regularly serves alcohol to guests.

Restaurants and bars are the most common businesses that obtain liquor licenses. Some retail stores obtain "limited" liquor licenses for serving only beer and wine.

To apply for a liquor license, visit www.aspen.gov/187/Liquor-Licensing. Liquor licenses must be renewed each year. Email clerk@aspen.gov for more information.

What is a Retail Establishment Permit? Do I need one?

A Retail Establishment Permit (REP) is an event-based permit that allows qualifying retail businesses to provide complimentary alcohol service at up to 24 events per year without a liquor license.

If your business only occasionally serves free drinks at periodic events like trunk shows, gallery openings, or similar, you'll need to obtain a REP before your next event.

To apply for a REP, visit www.aspen.gov/187/Liquor-Licensing. REPs are valid for one year and may be renewed annually for \$93/year.

Alcohol Awareness

Alcohol Awareness training empowers staff to take a proactive approach in preventing alcohol misuse and maintaining a safe environment in bars and restaurants.

Alcohol awareness training must be completed prior to the initial issuance (or annual renewal) of a liquor license from the City of Aspen Clerk's Office.

For more information or to schedule an Alcohol Awareness training, contact the Clerk's Office at clerk@aspen.gov.

Topsy Taxi Vouchers

Topsy Taxi is a complimentary service that aims to prevent drunk driving by offering a ride home to patrons that have no other way to avoid driving drunk. Most bars and restaurants in Aspen are enrolled in the Topsy Taxi program.

After your staff completes Topsy Taxi training, your business can obtain vouchers that your staff can use to call a free taxi for a customer in need. Topsy Taxi can help patrons who need a sober ride to as far as Glenwood Springs.

For Topsy Taxi contact information, or to learn more about the program, visit www.pitkincounty.com/158/Community-Information.

SIDEWALKS, ALLEYS, SNOW REMOVAL, AND STORMWATER REGULATIONS

Can I put a clothing rack or other merchandise on the sidewalk in front of my business?

Aspen has strict rules around storage, display, or sale of goods on public property. You should never put any of your business' products on sidewalks, pedestrian malls, parking spots, or in the alleys. Keep all merchandise from your business on your private property.

Email comdev@aspen.gov with questions about outdoor merchandising requirements.

Can I set up a table or cart outside for giveaways or activations?

Tables, booths, carts or similar structures from which items are being given away to pedestrians are not permitted on City property, including sidewalks, pedestrian malls, parks, parking spaces, or alleys. All giveaways or activations associated with your business must occur on private property.

Email comdev@aspen.gov with any questions about activations for your business.

I'm doing something that may block the sidewalk. What do I need to know?

If you're washing your windows, staging products or construction materials, or doing anything else that blocks the sidewalk in front of your business, you'll need to get a temporary encroachment permit first.

Temporary encroachment permits help ensure pedestrian walkways remain accessible and safe for the travelling public.

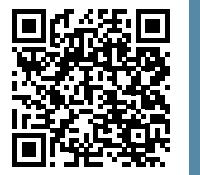
Email engineeringhelp@aspen.gov to obtain a permit.

What are my obligations for snow removal outside my business?

Businesses are responsible for clearing snow from all sidewalks adjacent to the business within 3 hours of daybreak, or 3 hours from the end of a snowstorm, whichever happens later.

Many businesses contract with property maintenance companies for snow removal since they can typically complete the work before the business opens. It's a good idea to check with your landlord or property manager to learn how snow removal is taken care of during winter months.

For more information about snow removal visit www.aspen.gov/1338/Snow-Maintenance.



What considerations should I be making for stormwater protection?

Liquids dumped outside your business can eventually drain into the river, and we need your help in keeping our waters clean! Dumping liquids into the right of way (including roads, alleys, and sidewalks) is strictly prohibited.

If anyone associated with your business (staff, cleaning crew, subcontractors, etc) is found dumping liquid into the alley or right of way, your business can be subject to enforcement. Please make sure any waste liquid is properly disposed of inside your business or through the appropriate methods.

Alley storage policy

It may be tempting to want to store your business' belongings in the alley, but anything stored in the alley is subject to removal as it can be considered abandoned property in a public space.

Serviceable items like linens, kegs, or propane tanks may be stored in the alley adjacent to your business as long as they're in storage cages approved by the city's Engineering Department. Contact engineeringhelp@aspen.gov to explore this option.

What can I do if my business is impacted by work at a construction site?

The City of Aspen has regulations designed to ensure that construction sites are properly contained and that the impacts of construction are managed appropriately.

If there is a construction site nearby that you feel is negatively impacting your business, email engineeringhelp@aspen.gov to connect with a construction inspector.



TAX AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

What taxes am I responsible for paying in Aspen?

Local Sales Tax is collected by the state of Colorado and remitted to the Colorado Department of Revenue along with the applicable county and state taxes. Visit www.colorado.gov/revenueonline to get started.

If your business is a hotel, short-term rental, or you're selling tobacco, other locally collected taxes apply. These taxes are reported and paid separately from the Local Sales Tax; contact aspensalestax@aspen.gov to learn about lodging, STR, and tobacco taxes or visit www.aspen.gov/364.

If you provide single-use carryout bags to your customers, you're required to charge a \$0.20 fee for each bag. This isn't a tax, but a portion of the fee is to be remitted to the City of Aspen. Learn more at www.aspen.gov/369/Single-use-bag-fee.

What else do I need?

Anyone conducting business in the City of Aspen needs a local business license. This includes (but is not limited to) operating a physical location in the city, performing services in the city, sending employees into the city, and owning, maintaining, servicing or leasing tangible personal property for business purposes in the city. Find out more about business licenses, including how to apply for one, by visiting www.aspen.gov/1386.





SECTION 2

INFORMATION FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE ESTABLISHMENTS

FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION



What is a retail food license?

A retail food license is a required license for any business that prepares and serves food to the public. It is separate from and required in addition to a business license.

Who needs a retail food license?

With few exceptions, any business that prepares and serves food to the public, that requires refrigeration for food safety reasons, or that sells food that is not commercially pre-packaged, must obtain a retail food license.

Restaurants, caterers, pop-up restaurants, food vendors at special events, grocery stores, bars, food trucks, and meal delivery companies must obtain retail food licenses.

Retail food licenses are specific to the owner and physical location of each business. If there is a change in ownership or location, a new retail food license is required.

Email foodsafety@aspen.gov or call 970-920-5039 if you have questions about license requirements.

How do I apply for a retail food license?

For pop-up restaurants, newly constructed restaurants, restaurants being remodeled, or restaurants where the concept or menu is changing significantly from what was previously approved, complete the plan review application at www.aspen.gov/1527/Food-Safety.

All new construction and remodels must also obtain an approved building permit.

“Turn-key” change of ownerships may complete only the retail food license application at www.aspen.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11265/Food-License-Application-2023, so long as no construction is involved and the menu or concept is not changing.



Plan Review Application



Retail Food License Application



Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) Program information

Most food establishments, except for those doing only minimal food preparation, always need a Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) employee on site. Contact foodsafety@aspen.gov to learn if your business needs a CFPM employee on the premises.

Food establishment inspection information

Once construction of a new food establishment is complete, a pre-operational inspection will be scheduled to verify that kitchen equipment is installed properly and is working.

Approximately one month after opening, a routine food safety inspection will occur. This first inspection will not be scheduled. The complexity of the operations and inspection history will determine the inspection frequency moving forward. Most businesses receive two unannounced health inspections each year.

Are you a food manufacturer or wholesaler?

Food manufacturers and wholesalers are licensed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). To inquire about a license, email cdphe_mfgfd@state.co.us or call 303-692-3645 and select option 2.

TIP:

To inquire about in-person CFPM class and exam opportunities, contact foodsafety@aspen.gov. Learn how to get certified online by visiting www.aspen.gov/1527/Food-Safety and clicking on the CFPM tab.



ALCOHOL SERVICE



Before serving alcohol to the public, even if it's complimentary, your business needs to obtain either a liquor license or a Retail Establishment Permit.

When do I need a liquor license? How do I get one?

A liquor license permits your business to serve alcohol to the public for a fee (wine, beer, liquor). You'll need a liquor license if your business regularly serves alcohol to guests.

Restaurants and bars are the most common businesses that obtain liquor licenses. Some retail stores obtain "limited" liquor licenses for serving only beer and wine.

To apply for a liquor license, visit www.aspen.gov/187/Liquor-Licensing. Liquor licenses must be renewed each year. Email clerk@aspen.gov for more information.

What is a Retail Establishment Permit? Do I need one?

A Retail Establishment Permit (REP) is an event-based permit that allows qualifying retail businesses to provide complimentary alcohol service at up to 24 events per year without a liquor license.

If your business only occasionally serves free drinks at periodic events like trunk shows, gallery openings, or similar, you'll need to obtain a REP before your next event.

To apply for a REP, visit www.aspen.gov/187/Liquor-Licensing. REPs are valid for one year and may be renewed annually for \$93/year.

Alcohol Awareness

Alcohol Awareness training empowers staff to take a proactive approach in preventing alcohol misuse and maintaining a safe environment in bars and restaurants.

Alcohol awareness training must be completed prior to the initial issuance (or annual renewal) of a liquor license from the City of Aspen Clerk's Office.

For more information or to schedule an Alcohol Awareness training, contact the Clerk's Office at clerk@aspen.gov.

Topsy Taxi Vouchers

Topsy Taxi is a complimentary service that aims to prevent drunk driving by offering a ride home to patrons that have no other way to avoid driving drunk. Most bars and restaurants in Aspen are enrolled in the Topsy Taxi program.

After your staff completes Topsy Taxi training, your business can obtain vouchers that your staff can use to call a free taxi for a customer in need. Topsy Taxi can help patrons who need a sober ride to as far as Glenwood Springs.

For Topsy Taxi contact information, or to learn more about the program, visit www.pitkincounty.com/158/Community-Information.

OUTDOOR DINING



Can I set up tables and chairs outside my restaurant?

Aspen has an outdoor dining program which is administered by the Clerk's Office. Approved applicants may lease City right of way space to expand their dining capacity onto City property. Outdoor dining is typically allowed from Memorial Day through Halloween each year.

Outdoor dining participants must meet all applicable egress, accessibility, right of way, noise, and licensing requirements.

Contact clerk@aspen.gov to discuss whether your business may be eligible for outdoor dining.



FOOD TRUCKS AND FOOD STANDS



Are food trucks or food stands allowed in Aspen?

Food trucks and stands are not allowed on public property in Aspen, including streets and parking spaces. Food trucks and stands may only operate on private property in certain zone districts. Email planneroftheday@gmail.com to inquire about whether your desired location allows food trucks or food stands.

To operate on private property, an Outdoor Food/Beverage Vending License is required. Email planneroftheday@gmail.com to apply for an Outdoor Food/Beverage Vending License. A Retail Food License is required in addition to the Outdoor Food/Beverage Vending license; email foodsafety@aspen.gov to apply for a Retail Food License.

For any other questions about food trucks or food stands, contact City of Aspen Planning Department staff at planneroftheday@gmail.com.



COMPOSTING



MANDATORY WITH A RETAIL FOOD LICENSE

Is my business required to compost organic waste?

Composting is mandatory for businesses with a retail food license. This includes restaurants, caterers, food vendors at special events, grocery stores, bars, food trucks, and meal delivery companies.

Beginning in January 2026, compost will be mandatory for all commercial businesses and multifamily properties. In 2028, everyone in the City of Aspen will be required to compost.

The City of Aspen provides free compost containers, signage for staff and customers, and bilingual trainings on proper waste diversion methods. Email waste@aspen.gov to learn more, or submit a request through the City of Aspen Sustainability Resources form.

To learn more about the organic waste ordinance, visit www.aspen.gov/359/Organic-Waste-Ordinance.



Organic Waste
Ordinance



Sustainability
Resources Form





**SECTION
3**



**DEPARTMENTAL
CONTACT
INFORMATION**

BEARS AND WILDLIFE

Parks Department
970-920-BEAR
bears@aspen.gov
aspenbears.com

ELECTRIC AND WATER UTILITIES

Utility Billing Department
970-920-5030
utilbill@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/185/Utility-Billing

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Planning Department
970-920-5090
hp@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/193/Historic-Preservation

SECURITY ALARM SYSTEMS

Aspen Police Department
Non-emergency: 970-920-5400
Emergency: 911
apd@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/police

WASTE, RECYCLING, COMPOST

Environmental Health & Sustainability Department
970-920-5039
waste@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/357/Waste-Recycling

BUSINESS LICENSES AND TAXES

Finance Department
970-920-5040
finance@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/364/Finance-and-Purchasing

FOOD SAFETY

Environmental Health & Sustainability Department
970-920-5039
foodsafety@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/1527/Food-Safety

LIQUOR LICENSING AND OUTDOOR DINING

Clerk's Office
970-429-2687
clerk@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/171/Clerk

SIGNAGE, TEMPORARY STRUCTURES, LIGHTING

Zoning Department
970-429-2764
planneroftheday@gmail.com
aspen.gov/194/Planning-Zoning

CONSTRUCTION, REMODELS, BUILDING PERMITS

Building Department
970-429-2735
builderoftheday@gmail.com
aspen.gov/179/Building

GETTING AROUND ASPEN AND THE ROARING FORK VALLEY

Transportation Department
970-920-5267
transportation@aspen.gov
driveless.net

PARKING AND LOADING ZONES

Parking Department
970-920-5267
parking@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/parking

STORMWATER, SNOW REMOVAL, RIGHT OF WAY REGULATIONS, CONSTRUCTION SITES

Engineering Department
970-920-5080
engineeringhelp@aspen.gov
aspen.gov/engineering



CITY OF **ASPEN**