

## **Barriers to Business: Steps to Start a Restaurant in New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Disclaimer:** *The numbers below are based on information and data current as of Fall 2025. Since then, processes managed by the local and state regulatory agencies may have changed, which could mean certain details below are no longer fully accurate.*

### **We assume:**

- The restaurant is a limited liability company (LLC)
- It will have 40 seats and 8 employees
- Spatial dimensions:
  - 1,000 sq. ft. total
  - 600 sq. ft. for seating
  - 400 sq. ft. for kitchen/storage/preparation space
- The desired location is zoned commercial, and a restaurant is permitted by right
- A planned renovation involving structural interior changes of a space that was formerly a restaurant
- Permits needed:
  - Building permit for \$180,000 of work
  - Mechanical permit for \$25,000 of work
  - Electrical permit for \$25,000 of work
  - Plumbing permit for \$25,000 of work
  - Sign permit
  - No other miscellaneous permits

These estimations are based on industry standards for calculating the seating capacity of a restaurant as well as for valuing renovation projects on a per-square-foot basis.<sup>1</sup> Please note that the itemized lists below are not necessarily in chronological order nor are they required to be completed in a specified order.

**Total Cost: \$2,659.00**—the total amount in fees for licenses and permits an applicant will have to pay to start a restaurant; see fee totals below.

**Number of Fees: 20**—the number of fees an applicant will have to pay to start a restaurant, according to the assumptions listed above; in some cases, these fees are estimations based on researchers' best understanding of agency regulations and fee schedules.

1. Certificate of Formation for a Limited Liability Company: \$100
2. Trade Name Recording: \$100
3. Courthouse Building Fund – Land Records Division: \$30
4. Occupational License Tax: \$50

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<sup>1</sup> The estimate is based off an average of 15 sq. ft. per seat for a full-service restaurant with 40 seats: <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/calculate-seating-capacity-restaurant-39808.html> and <https://bizfluent.com/how-5707504-calculate-seating-capacity-restaurant.html>.

5. Commercial Building Renovation (Structural) Permit: \$960
6. Plan Review: \$180
7. Mechanical A/C Permit Application: \$30
8. Mechanical A/C Repair/Alteration: \$275
9. Electrical Permit Application: \$100
10. Plumbing Permit SWB Filing Fee: \$50
11. Sign Permit Application: \$72.50
12. Sign Permit Application Plan Review: \$2.50
13. Sign Permit Zoning Review: \$125
14. Sign First Year Operating Permit: \$40
15. Office of State Fire Marshal Plan Review: \$35
16. Louisiana Food Safety Manager Certification Training and Exam: \$134
17. LDH Food Safety Certificate: \$25
18. LDH Plan Review: \$100
19. State Health Department Permit to Operate: \$150
20. Grease trap/interceptor discharge permit: \$100

**Agencies Involved: 19**—the number of agencies an applicant will likely have to interface with to start a restaurant.

1. Internal Revenue Service—oversees Employer Identification Numbers (EIN).
2. Louisiana Secretary of State—oversees formation of limited liability company registrations.
3. Land Records Division of the Clerk of the Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans—oversees trade name registration.
4. Louisiana Department of Revenue—oversees tax accounts.
5. Louisiana Works—oversees Louisiana Unemployment Employer Account.
6. Zoning Division of the Department of Safety and Permits—oversees zoning approval.
7. City of New Orleans One Stop Shop—oversees most permit and license applications and approvals, including occupational licenses.
8. New Orleans Health Department—oversees childrens menu approvals or exemptions.
9. City of New Orleans Bureau of Revenue—oversees occupational license taxes.
10. Permit Processing Division of the Department of Safety and Permits—oversees building permit intake.
11. Plan Review Division of the Department of Safety and Permits—oversees plan review.
12. Plumbing Department of the Sewerage and Water Board—oversees plumbing permits and inspections.
13. Louisiana Office of the State Fire Marshal—oversees architectural plan review and inspection.
14. Mechanical Division of the Department of Safety and Permits—oversees mechanical permits and inspections.
15. Electrical Division of the Department of Safety and Permits—oversees electrical permits and inspections.
16. Building Inspection Division of the Department of Safety and Permits—oversees final inspections.
17. Louisiana Department of Health—oversees food safety manager certification.
18. New Orleans Sanitation Department—oversees litter abatement compliance.

19. Pretreatment Department of the Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans—oversees grease trap / interceptor discharge permits.

**In-Person Activities: 7**—the minimum number of compliance activities an applicant will have to complete in person to start a restaurant.

1. Record an original notarized affidavit with the Land Records Division of the Clerk of the Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans.
2. Undergo Mechanical Inspection.
3. Undergo Electrical Inspection.
4. Undergo Plumbing Inspection.
5. Undergo Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal Inspection.
6. Undergo Final Building Inspection.
7. Undergo Orleans Parish Sanitarian Final Inspection.

**Number of Forms: 26**—the number of forms and applications an applicant will have to complete to start a restaurant.

1. FEIN Registration
2. Louisiana Secretary of State account registration
3. Certificate of Formation for a Limited Liability Company
4. Domestic Limited Liability Company Initial Report
5. Trade Name Registration
6. Louisiana Department of Revenue account registration
7. Louisiana Works account registration
8. New Orleans One Stop App account registration
9. Occupational license application
10. Restaurant Classification Form & Restaurant Use Standard
11. Health Department Menu Attestation Form
12. Amended Return form
13. Building Permit Application
14. Benchmark Certificate
15. Mechanical A/C Permit Application
16. Electrical Permit Application
17. Plumbing Permit Application
18. Sign Permit Application
19. Louisiana Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) account registration
20. Louisiana OSFM New Plan Review
21. Louisiana OSFM Certificate of Completion
22. Statefoodsafety account registration
23. Application for Food Safety Manager Certification
24. LDH Plan Review questionnaire
25. Litter Abatement Checklist
26. Grease Trap / Interceptor Discharge Permit Application

**Number of Steps: 54**—the total number of discrete steps an applicant will have to complete to start a restaurant; We identified documentation requirements using state and local instructions featured on guides and applications.

1. Obtain FEIN from the IRS.<sup>2</sup>
2. Create an account with the Louisiana Secretary of State's (SoS) *geauxBIZ* portal.<sup>3</sup>
3. Check to make sure your legal business name is available.
4. Respond to email from SOS confirming appointment as registered agent. If the registered agent is not self, instruct the registered agent to respond to the email from SOS confirming their appointment.
5. Register business as a limited liability company.<sup>4</sup>
6. Submit Domestic Limited Liability Company Initial Report.
7. Ensure that your business name is available for trade registration.
8. Register your trade name with the Land Records Division of the Clerk of the Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans.<sup>5</sup>
9. Register with the Louisiana Department of Revenue.<sup>6</sup>
10. Register with Louisiana Works.<sup>7</sup>
11. Visit the City of New Orleans Property Viewer to determine an allowable location for your business or contact the Safety and Permits zoning inspector on duty.
12. Create an account with the New Orleans One Stop App.<sup>8</sup>
13. Apply for an occupational license.<sup>9</sup>
14. With application, include restaurant operation plan.<sup>10</sup>
15. With application, submit Restaurant Classification Form & Restaurant Use Standard.<sup>11</sup>
16. With application, include menu with prices. Receive NOLA Health Department approval on children's menu or complete the Health Department Menu Attestation Form.<sup>12</sup>
17. Mail Amended Return form to Bureau of Revenue.<sup>13</sup>
18. Submit Building Permit Application.<sup>14</sup>
19. With application, submit two sets of complete plans, stamped with digital seals.
20. With application, submit plot plan.
21. With application, submit foundation drawings.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employer-identification-number>

<sup>3</sup> <https://geauxbiz.sos.la.gov/>.

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.sos.la.gov/BusinessServices/PublishedDocuments/365ArticlesofOrganizationLouisianaLimitedLiabilityCompany.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.orleanscivilclerk.com/LR\\_Fees.html](http://www.orleanscivilclerk.com/LR_Fees.html).

<sup>6</sup> <https://revenue.louisiana.gov/businesses/general-resources/business-registration/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://geauxbiz.sos.la.gov/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://onestopapp.nola.gov/Account/Login.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> <https://nola.gov/occupational-license/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://nola.gov/restaurant-license-guide/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://nola.gov/nola/media/Safety-and-Permits/OSS\\_Acknowledgement-of-Restaurant-Use-Standards\\_1.pdf](https://nola.gov/nola/media/Safety-and-Permits/OSS_Acknowledgement-of-Restaurant-Use-Standards_1.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> <https://nola.gov/nola/media/Safety-and-Permits/REVISEDMenu-Attestation-Form.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Revenue/Amended.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Forms/Building/OSS\\_SP\\_BUILDING\\_PERMIT\\_MASTER\\_APPLICATION\\_INFORMATION-CZO.pdf](https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Forms/Building/OSS_SP_BUILDING_PERMIT_MASTER_APPLICATION_INFORMATION-CZO.pdf)

22. With application, submit previous/current and proposed use of the structure.
23. With application, submit number of floors or levels in the structure.
24. With application, submit Benchmark Certificate.
25. With application, submit Contractor's license information.
26. Submit Mechanical A/C Permit Application.<sup>15</sup>
27. Submit Electrical Permit Application.<sup>16</sup>
28. Submit Plumbing Permit Application.
29. Submit Sign Permit application.<sup>17</sup>
30. Create an account with Louisiana Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM).<sup>18</sup>
31. Submit New Plan Review for Architectural Review.<sup>19</sup>
32. With New Plan review, submit Photographs, Shop Drawings, Specifications/Calculations, and Correspondence.
33. Fill out and sign the Certificate of Completion.<sup>20</sup>
34. Schedule Mechanical Inspection.
35. Undergo Mechanical Inspection.
36. Schedule Electrical Inspection.
37. Undergo Electrical Inspection.
38. Schedule Plumbing Inspection.
39. Undergo Plumbing Inspection.
40. Schedule OSFM inspection.
41. Undergo OSFM inspection.
42. Schedule final building inspection.
43. Undergo final building inspection.
44. Attend an 8-hour Food Safety Manager Course Class.
45. Pass the test and obtain a Food Protection Manager Certificate.<sup>21</sup>
46. Submit Application for Food Safety Manager Certification.<sup>22</sup>
47. Complete plan review questionnaire.<sup>23</sup>
48. Submit with plan review, an interior finish schedule.
49. Submit with plan review, a separate schedule for equipment and plumbing.
50. Schedule final health permitting inspection.
51. Undergo final health permitting inspection.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Safety%20and%20Permits/Mechanical/OSS\\_SP\\_MECHANICAL\\_PERMIT\\_APPLICATION\\_SUPPLEMENT\\_D1-AC.pdf](https://nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Safety%20and%20Permits/Mechanical/OSS_SP_MECHANICAL_PERMIT_APPLICATION_SUPPLEMENT_D1-AC.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Forms/Building/OSS\\_SP\\_ELECTRICAL\\_PERMIT\\_APPLICATION\\_SUPPLEMENT\\_C.pdf](https://www.nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Forms/Building/OSS_SP_ELECTRICAL_PERMIT_APPLICATION_SUPPLEMENT_C.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Forms/Building/OSS\\_SP\\_SIGN\\_PERMIT\\_APPLICATION\\_SUPPLEMENT\\_H.pdf](https://nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/Forms/Building/OSS_SP_SIGN_PERMIT_APPLICATION_SUPPLEMENT_H.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://lasfm.louisiana.gov/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.lasfm.org/media/qffi1rnw/plan\\_review\\_applicationb.pdf](https://www.lasfm.org/media/qffi1rnw/plan_review_applicationb.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.lasfm.org/media/nmdjtuxb/certificate-of-completion-2.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-EH/sanitarian/How-to-obtain-a-LDH-Food-Safety-Certificate-Gold-Seal6-27-TS.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://la.accessgov.com/oph/Forms/Page/food-safety-certification/order-form/1>

<sup>23</sup> <https://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-EH/sanitarian/retailfood/Fillable-RetailFoodPlanReviewQuestionnaireFormRevised-05-2025.pdf>

52. Complete the Litter Abatement Checklist.<sup>24</sup>
53. Complete the Grease Trap / Interceptor Discharge Permit Application.<sup>25</sup>
54. Include with application, a flow schematic.

*Please reach out to Laura Kelly at [lkelly@ij.org](mailto:lkelly@ij.org) with any questions, or if you are interested in learning more.*

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<sup>24</sup> [https://nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/ABO%20Forms/SANITATION\\_LITTER\\_ABATEMENT\\_CHECKLIST.pdf](https://nola.gov/nola/media/One-Stop-Shop/ABO%20Forms/SANITATION_LITTER_ABATEMENT_CHECKLIST.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://webstprodstussc1.blob.core.windows.net/www-documents/Environmental/Pretreatment/2015-Restaurant-Permit-Application-and-Instructions.pdf>