

Appendix: Steps to Start Common Businesses in Boulder, Colorado

Disclaimer: The numbers below are based on information and data current as of March 2026. Processes managed by the local and state regulatory agencies may have changed between completion of research and publication, which could mean certain details are no longer fully accurate. Please see the notes below for an overview of the potential impact of recent legislation on the restaurant permitting process.

Proper Use: This process map should not be followed as a comprehensive requirement guide, rather it should be viewed as an educational starting point that can provide an idea of what a business process journey could potentially look like. Nothing in this appendix should be considered legal or other advice.

Steps to Start a Restaurant

- 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 with an adequately sized grease trap
- 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. 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: \$6,282.55—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: 12—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. Register LLC with Colorado Secretary of State: \$50¹
2. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License through Department of Revenue: \$66²
3. Apply for Business License with City of Boulder Tax and Licensing: \$25³
4. Building permit fee with Planning and Development: \$1,535⁴
5. Mechanical permit fee: \$927.40
6. Electrical permit fee: \$490
7. Plumbing permit fee: \$927.40
8. Plan check fee: \$997.75
9. Sign permit: \$178
10. Application fee for Boulder County Retail Food Establishment License: \$155⁵
11. Plan review fee for Boulder County Retail Food Establishment License (estimated half the maximum): \$450
12. License fee for Boulder County Retail Food Establishment License: \$481⁶

Agencies Involved: 6—the number of agencies an applicant will likely have to interface with to start a restaurant.

1. Internal Revenue Service
2. Colorado Secretary of State
3. Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
4. Colorado Department of Revenue
5. City of Boulder Planning and Development Services
6. Boulder County Public Health

In-Person Activities: 4—the minimum number of compliance activities an applicant will have to complete in person to start a restaurant.

1. Building inspection for building permit⁷
2. Mechanical inspection for building permit
3. Electrical inspection for building permit
4. Opening inspection with Boulder County for Retail Food Establishment License⁸

Number of Forms: 22 —the number of forms and applications an applicant will have to complete to start a restaurant.

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS

¹ https://www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/info_center/fees/business.html

² https://tax.colorado.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/CR0100_2025.pdf

³ <https://boulderonlinetax.gentaxcpc.net/TAP/ />

⁴ <https://bouldercolorado.gov/planning-and-development-services-2026-schedule-fees>

⁵ <https://bouldercounty.gov/records/licenses/restaurant-and-food-vendor-licensing/#application-fees>

⁶ <https://bouldercounty.gov/records/licenses/restaurant-and-vendor-licensing-fees/>

⁷ <https://bouldercolorado.gov/services/building-permits-and-inspections>

⁸ <https://bouldercounty.gov/records/licenses/restaurant-and-food-vendor-licensing/#completing-and-submitting-plans>

2. Registration for LLC
3. Registration for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account
4. Registration for Family and Medical Leave Insurance
5. Registration for Colorado Sales Tax License
6. Registration for Wage Withholding Account
7. Business License Application with Boulder
8. For building permit, Include Scope of Work Form
9. Include Building Owner Authorization Form
10. Include Plumbing Fixture Count Form
11. Include 2024 Energy Conservation Code - Prescriptive Checklist
12. For sign permit, include site plan
13. Include building elevation information
14. Include sign details
15. For County Retail Food Establishment License, send application
16. Include HACCP plan
17. Include Certified Food Protection Manager certificate
18. Equipment Installation Table
19. Finish Schedule
20. Plumbing Fixtures
21. Warewashing
22. Water Heater

Number of Steps: 49—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.

Federal:

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS

State:

2. Register LLC with CO Secretary of State
3. Create account on mybiz.colorado
4. Register for an Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account
5. Register with Family and Medical Leave Insurance
6. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License
7. With Sales Tax License, open Wage Withholding account

City:

8. Create log in for Boulder Online Tax System
9. Apply for business license
10. Verify Zoning
11. Register for Customer Self Service Portal profile
12. Apply for Building Permit
13. Include contractor
14. With permit, include Scope of Work Form. Fill out online, then upload form sent to email
15. With permit, include Building Owner Authorization Form

16. With permit, submit Plumbing Fixture Count Form. Fill out online, then upload form sent to email
17. With permit, submit the 2024 Energy Conservation Code - Prescriptive Checklist
18. With permit, include Mechanical Plans
19. With permit, include Electrical Plans
20. With permit, include Plumbing Plans
21. Review "other" requirements if applicable
22. Pay plan check fee for nonresidential
23. Find a Licensed Sign Contractor or apply for Sign Contractor License
24. Apply for a Sign Permit
25. Include site plan
26. Include building elevation information
27. Include sign details
28. Pay building, mechanical, electrical and plumbing permit fees
29. Schedule building inspection
30. Schedule mechanical inspection
31. Schedule electrical inspection
32. Undergo mechanical inspection
33. Undergo electrical inspection
34. Undergo building inspection
35. Obtain Certificate of Occupancy

County:

36. Create log in for Boulder County Accela portal
37. Apply for Restaurant and Food Vendor License
38. With application, include HACCP plan
39. Need Certified Food Protection Manager certificate
40. Upload: Floor Plan
41. Upload: Equipment Installation Table
42. Upload: Menu
43. Upload: Finish Schedule
44. Upload: Water Heater Information
45. Upload: Plumbing Fixtures Information
46. Upload: Warewashing Information
47. When approved, must contact plan review at least 5 business days before opening to schedule inspection
48. Contact the Plan Review Specialist to schedule opening inspection
49. Pay for Retail Food Establishment license

Steps to Acquire a Liquor License

We assume:

- A fully permitted and operating restaurant wants to add on a liquor license to serve beer, wine and liquor, based on our restaurant assumptions:
 - The restaurant is a Limited Liability Company (LLC)
 - It will have 40 seats and 8 employees
- The facility is already zoned for use as a liquor establishment

Total Cost: \$3,813.50—the total amount in fees for licenses and permits an applicant will have to pay to obtain a liquor license; see fee totals below.

Number of Fees: 4—the number of fees an applicant will have to pay to obtain a liquor license, 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. Fingerprinting appointment: \$38.50⁹
2. Colorado Liquor Retail License Application: \$1,600¹⁰
3. City of Boulder New Hotel/Restaurant Liquor License: \$1,075¹¹
4. State of Colorado Liquor License Fee: \$1,100¹²

Agencies Involved: 4—the number of agencies an applicant will likely have to interface with to obtain a liquor license.

1. City of Boulder Regulatory Licensing Division
2. Colorado Department of Revenue
3. Colorado Secretary of State
4. City of Boulder Beverage Licensing Authority

In-Person Activities: 6—the minimum number of compliance activities an applicant will have to complete in person to obtain a liquor license.

1. Complete fingerprinting background check
2. Pick up the hearing poster from City Licensing
3. Conduct door-to-door petitioning according to City Licensing requirements
4. Return the petitioning materials to City Licensing 10 days prior to hearing
5. Attend the public hearing before the Beverage Licensing Authority
6. Complete premise inspection by City Licensing

⁹ https://library.municode.com/co/boulder/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT4LIPE_CH20FE_4-20-2ALFEMABELIAPFE

¹⁰ https://sbg.colorado.gov/sites/sbg/files/documents/DR8404_12.9.2025.pdf

¹¹ https://library.municode.com/co/boulder/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT4LIPE_CH20FE_4-20-2ALFEMABELIAPFE

¹² https://sbg.colorado.gov/sites/sbg/files/documents/DR8404_12.9.2025.pdf

Number of Forms: 18—the number of forms and applications an applicant will have to complete to obtain a liquor license.

1. Submit Administrative Review Application
2. Submit Zoning Confirmation Application
3. With zoning confirmation application, include vicinity map
4. With zoning confirmation application, include parking summary
5. Submit Secure Folder Request Form to receive new liquor license application
6. Submit Secure Folder Request Form to receive new liquor license application
7. Include with license application, diagram of the premises
8. Include with license application, proof of property possession (at least 1 year needed)
9. Include with license application, completed Individual History Record - Form DR8404-I
10. Include with license application, copies of fingerprinting receipts
11. Include with license application, complete Lawful Presence Affidavit - Form DR4679
12. Include with license application, Certificate of Good Standing
13. Complete City of Boulder Liquor License Application
14. Include in city application, a copy of food and drink menu
15. Submit City of Boulder Financial Disclosure Statement
16. Include with disclosure, all purchasing agreements, notes, loans, gift letters and bank statements
17. Complete City of Boulder Statement of Training Form
18. Complete City of Boulder Liquor Occupation Tax Registration

Number of Steps: 25—the total number of discrete steps an applicant will have to complete to obtain a liquor license; We identified documentation requirements using state and local instructions featured on guides and applications.

1. Email licensingonline@bouldercolorado.gov to obtain Boulder-specific code to register/schedule fingerprinting with CABS
2. Schedule and complete fingerprinting appointment
3. Submit Administrative Review Application
4. Submit Zoning Confirmation Application
5. With application, include vicinity map
6. With application, include Licensed Premise Diagram drawn to scale
7. With application, include parking summary
8. Submit Secure Folder Request Form to receive new liquor license application
9. Complete Colorado Liquor Retail License Application - Form DR8404
10. Include application, diagram of the premises
11. Include application, proof of property possession (at least 1 year needed)
12. Include application, completed Individual History Record - Form DR8404-I
13. Include with application, completed Lawful Presence Affidavit - Form DR4679
14. Include with application, Certificate of Good Standing

15. Complete City of Boulder Liquor License Application
16. Include in application, a copy of food and drink menu
17. Submit City of Boulder Financial Disclosure Statement
18. Include with disclosure, all purchasing agreements, notes, loans, gift letters and bank statements
19. Complete City of Boulder Statement of Training Form
20. Complete City of Boulder Liquor Occupation Tax Registration
21. Pay State of Colorado fees through state portal
22. Pick up and post Hearing Poster with application summary (provided by city once reviewed)
23. Complete and return petitioning materials
24. Attend BLA (Beverage Licensing Authority) Hearing
25. Complete Premise Inspection and receive License

Steps to Open a Retail Store Requiring Conditional Use Approval

We assume:

- The retail store is a limited liability company (LLC)
- It will have 2 employees
- 1,000 sq. ft.
- The desired location requires conditional approval
- No structural renovations needed
- Permits needed:
 - Conditional use permit
 - Sign permit

Total Cost: \$1,409

Number of Fees: 5—the number of fees an applicant will have to pay to start a retail location, 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. Register LLC with Colorado Secretary of State: \$50¹³
2. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License through Department of Revenue: \$66¹⁴
3. Apply for Business License with City of Boulder Business Licensing: \$25¹⁵
4. Conditional Use Review Fee: \$1,090¹⁶
5. Sign Permit: \$178

Agencies Involved: 5—the number of agencies an applicant will likely have to interface with to start a retail location.

1. Internal Revenue Service.
2. Colorado Secretary of State
3. Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
4. Colorado Department of Revenue
5. City of Boulder Planning and Development Services

In-Person Activities: 0

Number of Forms: 15—the number of forms and applications an applicant will have to complete to start a retail location.

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS
2. Registration for LLC
3. Registration for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account
4. Registration for Family and Medical Leave Insurance

¹³ https://www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/info_center/fees/business.html.

¹⁴ https://tax.colorado.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/CR0100_2025.pdf

¹⁵ https://boulderonlinetax.gentaxcpc.net/TAP/_/

¹⁶ <https://bouldercolorado.gov/planning-and-development-services-2026-schedule-fees>

5. Registration for Colorado Sales Tax License
6. Registration for Wage Withholding Account
7. Business License Application with Boulder
8. For Conditional Review: Include Vicinity Map
9. Include Written Statement
10. Include Site Development Plans
11. Include Survey
12. Include Persons in Interest Form
13. For sign permit, include site plan
14. Include building elevation information
15. Include sign details

Number of Steps: 21—the total number of discrete steps an applicant will have to complete to start a retail location; We identified documentation requirements using state and local instructions featured on guides and applications.

Federal:

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS

State:

2. Register LLC with CO Secretary of State
3. Create account on mybiz.colorado
4. Register for an Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account
5. Register with Family and Medical Leave Insurance
6. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License
7. With Sales Tax License, open Wage Withholding account

City:

8. Create log in for Boulder Online Tax System
9. Apply for business license
10. Verify Zoning
11. Register for Customer Self Service Portal profile
12. Apply for Plan - Other Conditional Uses
13. Include: Vicinity Map
14. Written Statement
15. Site Development Plans
16. Site Survey
17. Persons in Interest Form
18. Apply for a Sign Permit
19. Include site plan
20. Include building elevation information
21. Include sign details

Steps to Start a Food Truck

We assume:

A typical food truck serving hot meals prepared on location using standard ingredients.

- Limited Liability Company (LLC)
- 1 food truck
- No existing brick-and-mortar location
- Will not serve alcohol
- Requires HACCP Plan
- No employees

Total Cost: \$1,543

Number of Fees: 8—the number of fees an applicant will have to pay to start a food truck, 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. Register LLC with Colorado Secretary of State: \$50¹⁷
2. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License through Department of Revenue: \$66¹⁸
3. Apply for Business License with City of Boulder Tax and Licensing: \$25¹⁹
4. Application fee for Boulder County Retail Food Establishment License: \$155²⁰
5. Plan review fee for Boulder County Retail Food Establishment License (estimated half the maximum): \$450²¹
6. License fee for Boulder County Retail Food Establishment License: \$481²²
7. Boulder Mobile Food Vendor Application Fee: \$100²³
8. Boulder Mobile Food Vendor Annual License: \$216²⁴

Agencies Involved: 6—the number of agencies an applicant will likely have to interface with to start a food truck.

1. Internal Revenue Service
2. Colorado Secretary of State
3. Colorado Department of Revenue
4. City of Boulder Planning and Development Services
5. Boulder County Public Health
6. City of Boulder Regulatory Licensing Division

¹⁷ https://www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/info_center/fees/business.html

¹⁸ https://tax.colorado.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/CR0100_2025.pdf

¹⁹ https://boulderonlinetax.gentaxcpc.net/TAP/_/

²⁰ <https://bouldercounty.gov/records/licenses/restaurant-and-food-vendor-licensing/#application-fees>

²¹ <https://bouldercounty.gov/records/licenses/restaurant-and-food-vendor-licensing/#application-fees>

²² <https://bouldercounty.gov/records/licenses/restaurant-and-vendor-licensing-fees/>

²³ https://library.municode.com/co/boulder/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT4LIPE_CH20FE_4-20-66MOFOVESA

²⁴ https://library.municode.com/co/boulder/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT4LIPE_CH20FE_4-20-66MOFOVESA

7. City of Boulder Fire Department

In-Person Activities: 1

1. Fire inspection

Number of Forms: 22—the number of forms and applications an applicant will have to complete to start a food truck.

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS
2. Registration for LLC
3. Registration for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account
4. Registration for Family and Medical Leave Insurance
5. Registration for Colorado Sales Tax License
6. Registration for Wage Withholding Account
7. Business License Application with Boulder
8. With application, include floor plan
9. Equipment List
10. Water heater information
11. Commissary Agreement
12. Menu
13. HACCP plan
14. Complete and Submit Boulder Fire Inspection Application
15. Complete and Submit Mobile Food Vehicle Application
16. Copy of Boulder Business License
17. Copy of retail Food Establishment License
18. Copy of Vehicle Insurance
19. Certificate of Insurance
20. Copy of Valid Driver's License
21. Copy of Mobile Vehicle Registration
22. Copy of Fire Inspection Approval

Number of Steps: 32—the total number of discrete steps an applicant will have to complete to start a food truck; We identified documentation requirements using state and local instructions featured on guides and applications.

Federal:

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS

State:

2. Register LLC with CO Secretary of State
3. Create account on mybiz.colorado
4. Register for an Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account
5. Register with Family and Medical Leave Insurance

6. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License
7. With Sales Tax License, open Wage Withholding account
City:
8. Create log in for Boulder Online Tax System
9. Apply for business license
County:
10. Obtain Colorado Retail Food Establishment License for your Mobile Food Vehicle
11. With application, include floor plan
12. Include equipment list
13. Include water heater information
14. Include commissary agreement
15. Include menu
16. Include HACCP plan
17. Pay application fee
18. Pay plan review fee
19. Pay license fee
City:
20. Apply for Boulder Fire Inspection of Vehicle and send typed application to harrisk1@bouldercolorado.gov.
21. Schedule inspection (only on Wednesdays)
22. Get inspection at Boulder Fire Administration building
23. Fill out Mobile Food Vehicle Application
24. Include web registration confirmation for City of Boulder new business license or copy of existing Boulder business license
25. Include copy of a valid Colorado Retail Food Establishment License for the mobile food vehicle
26. Include copy of the food vehicle's valid vehicle insurance for motor vehicle
27. Include certificate of insurance signed by agent with auto, general liability, and property damage insurance and naming the city and its officer as additional insured on liability policy for \$1 million liability
28. Include copies of valid driver's licenses for all drivers and Motor or State Issued ID's for Human Powered mobile food vehicles
29. Include Current copy of the mobile food vehicle registration for Motor Vehicles
30. Include Fire Inspection of Vehicle and/or Trailer with Inspection Approval Date
31. Pay Mobile Food Vendor Application Fee
32. Pay Annual License Fee

Steps to Start a Home-Based Tutoring Business

Total Cost: \$141

Number of Fees: 3—the number of fees an applicant will have to pay to start a home-based business, 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. Register LLC with Colorado Secretary of State: \$50²⁵
2. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License through Department of Revenue: \$66²⁶
3. Apply for Business License with City of Boulder Business Licensing: \$25²⁷

Agencies Involved: 3—the number of agencies an applicant will likely have to interface with to start a home-based business.

1. Internal Revenue Service—oversees Employer Identification Numbers (EIN).
2. Colorado Secretary of State—oversees formation of limited liability company registrations and fictitious name registrations.
3. City of Boulder Planning and Development Services

In-Person Activities: 0

Number of Forms: 4—the number of forms and applications an applicant will have to complete to start a home-based business.

1. Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS
2. Registration for LLC
3. Registration for Colorado Sales Tax License
4. Business License Application with Boulder

Number of Steps: 7—the total number of discrete steps an applicant will have to complete to start a home-based business; We identified documentation requirements using state and local instructions featured on guides and applications.

- 1. Federal:**
Acquire EIN with form SS-4 from IRS
- State:**
2. Register LLC with CO Secretary of State
3. Create account on mybiz.colorado
4. Register for Colorado Sales Tax License
- City:**
5. Create log in for Boulder Online Tax System
6. Apply for business license
7. Verify zoning

²⁵ https://www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/info_center/fees/business.html

²⁶ https://tax.colorado.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/CR0100_2025.pdf

²⁷ https://boulderonlinetax.gentaxcpc.net/TAP/_/