



538 North Market Street
Wooster, OH 44691
330-263-5200

QUICK GUIDE FOR NEW BUSINESSES

OVERVIEW

This guide has been created to provide information to business owners seeking to locate in the City of Wooster. Its focus is to outline approvals, reviews, licenses, and procedures involved in a new business occupying an existing tenant space or building with minor alterations. As every project is different, sections of this guide may not apply to every business locating in the City. In addition, projects that include major alterations, additions, or new construction are subject to additional requirements and review.

CONTACT THE CITY OF WOOSTER

The City of Wooster encourages prospective business owners to contact us before their location in the City. City officials will gladly discuss new business via a personal meeting, phone conversation or email. Please contact Vincent Marion (330-263-5238 - vmarion@woosteroh.com) or Jonathan Millea (330-263-5250 - jmillea@woosteroh.com) to discuss locating in the City of Wooster.

PLANNING AND ZONING

The Planning and Zoning Division ensures the use of a building and exterior changes are compliant with city codes and are appropriate for the area.

Applications can be made at <https://woosteroh.viewpointcloud.com>

Zoning Certificate

- A Zoning Certificate is necessary to determine if the proposed use is permitted and to review any changes to the exterior of the building or site (parking, landscaping, lighting, outdoor seating, etc.).
- A Zoning Certificate is also required to place seating on a public sidewalk (within the right-of-way), which is only permitted in certain areas of downtown Wooster.
- Applications can be made at the above website under “Planning & Zoning Division”.

Address Request and Verification

- An Address Request and Verification application is required to determine if a building/unit’s address is correct.
- A Zoning Certificate will not be issued until an Address Request and Verification application is approved.
- Applications can be made at the above website under “Engineering Division”.

Sign Permit

- Permanent Signs - A Sign Permit is required for all new permanent signs and changes to existing signs.
- Temporary Signs - In general, a business may have up to 12 sq. ft. of temporary sign area on a property without a Sign Permit. With a Sign Permit, an additional 24 sq. ft. in area can be displayed for a limited time. Regulations can be found at <https://www.woosteroh.com/planning/planning-documents-maps-and-examples>.
- Applications can be made at the above website under “Planning & Zoning Division”.

Design and Review Board

- Businesses in downtown Wooster must receive approval from the Design and Review Board for all exterior changes including changes to signs, doors, windows, siding, roofing, painting, parking, landscaping, or any other exterior feature. A map of properties requiring Board approval is located at the end of this guide.
- Applications can be made at the above website under “Boards & Commissions”.

BUILDING STANDARDS

The Building Standards Division requires that buildings are used and constructed in a safe and secure manner and are compliant with adopted codes. Please contact Joe Bodnar at 330-263-5258 or jbodnar@woosteroh.com to discuss the details of your project.

Applications to the Building Standards Division can be made at <https://woosteroh.viewpointcloud.com> under "Building Standards Division"

Certificate of Occupancy Application - Required when locating in an existing space and no work is planned

- Prior to a business occupying any tenant space or building in the City of Wooster, the business must have a valid Certificate of Occupancy.
- A Certificate of Occupancy application is required if a tenant is moving into an existing unaltered space.
- A Certificate of Occupancy will be issued as part of the Building Permit application when construction is occurring as part of the project and a separate application is not required.

Plan Review Application - Required to obtain building code plan approval prior to purchasing permits

- A Plan Review application showing all proposed work in detail must be submitted and approved before obtaining permits.
- Plan review applications may be submitted by owners, designers, contractors or other agents of the owner and most plan reviews are completed in two weeks.

Permit Applications - Required prior to any construction activity

- Alterations to the interior or exterior of a building require permits from the Building Standards Division. Required permit applications may include Building, Fire Protection Plan Review, Electrical, Plumbing, Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC), Demolition, or other permit.
- Work requiring permits cannot commence until the necessary permits are submitted and approved. Permit inspections must be requested by the applicant or contractor, as required by the subject work being done. Inspections can be requested online through the permit at the above website.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Prior to a business occupying any tenant space or building in the City of Wooster, the business must have a Fire Safety Inspection performed by the City of Wooster Fire Department. To request a Fire Safety inspection, call Assistant Chief Kiper at 330-263-5200 x337 or email skiper@woosteroh.com.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City of Wooster's economic development office provides businesses with support in gathering research on area statistics, project coordination, and economic assistance. Wooster's economic ecosystem is supported through a community of partnerships between the private, public, and independent sectors.

Downtown Reinvestment Incentives: Over the last few decades, Wooster's commercial and civic center has flourished with strategic investments made by businesses seeking to expand as well as by entrepreneurial start-ups, making it into an award-winning destination for out-of-town visitors. In addition to ongoing expansion of public infrastructure, the City of Wooster partners with businesses making investments to grow our downtown.

- **Loans and Grants** to cover the cost of supporting public infrastructure for new building projects.
- **Real Estate Tax Exemptions** for building rehabilitation or new construction that preserves job opportunities.
- **Assistance** for firms undertaking a historic preservation projects that support job creation.

To learn more about the CRA program, go to <https://www.woosteroh.com/economic-development/community-reinvestment-area> or contact Jonathan Millea at 330-263-5250 or jmillea@woosteroh.com.



