



Sarasota County Assistance for small business owners

If you're opening a business, or making changes to your business, Sarasota County government can help you get started.

Here's what you need to know to do business in Sarasota County.

Certificate of Occupancy (CO)

What is it?

It's a document required by the Building Code that certifies that a building is suitable for use.

Who needs a CO?

Anyone who opens a business in a commercial location in unincorporated Sarasota County must get a CO.

How do I get it?

The application is available in the office or on our website at www.scgov.net. Go to "Permits/Contractor Licensing," then "Permit Applications and other forms." The applications should be submitted in person at a Permit Center location, 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd in Sarasota or at 4000 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice. After the application has been approved by all departments and a fire inspection is approved, the certificate will be mailed to the applicant.

What does it cover?

The application is reviewed by the Building, Zoning and Health Departments which verify that the type of business is allowed in the zoning district, that restroom facilities comply and that it meets fire codes.

When is the fire inspection done?

After the Building, Zoning and Health Departments have approved the application, and before opening for business, contact the Fire Marshall at 941-861-2290 to schedule a fire inspection.

What does a CO cost?

If the application is signed and notarized and on central water/sewer service the cost is \$252.50, which includes a \$15 Records Fee. If it is signed and notarized and is on a well or septic system, the charge is \$302.50. If the application needs to be notarized, there is an additional \$5 fee.

Do I need to post the CO in my business?

Yes, the CO must be posted in a conspicuous location.

Fire Inspections

Who needs one?

Anyone who opens a new business in unincorporated Sarasota County must get a fire inspection as part of the requirements for a Certificate of Occupancy.

How do I get one?

After the Building, Zoning and Health departments have approved the Certificate of Occupancy application, contact the Fire Marshall's office at 941-861-2290 to schedule an appointment.

Fire Protection System Permits

Who needs one?

Permits are required for modifications or work on a building that affects any fire protection system – fire sprinkler, fire alarm or fire suppression system.

How do I get one?

Contact the Fire Marshall's office at 941-861-2290 to schedule any fire inspection that must be permitted.

Building Permit

Who needs a permit?

A permit is required for construction or work on a building, or to any of its systems. This includes work to construct, enlarge, repair, move, demolish, or change the occupancy of a building. It also includes work to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace impact-resistant coverings, electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing systems.

Where can I get more information?

Go online to www.floridabuilding.org to find Florida Building Code 105.1
Sarasota County also provides a publication called "When do I Need a Building Permit?" It's available online through the Sarasota County website at scgov.net. Click on "Permits/Contractor Licensing," then "Permit Applications and other Forms."

Commercial property owners who act as their own contractor

Who is eligible?

Building or improvement costs can't exceed \$75,000.
Only the owners can use or occupy the space.
The building or space can't be sold or leased within a year after completion.
The owner must sign a disclosure statement agreeing to the provisions for a contractor exemption.

Where can I get more information?

Go online to www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes and refer to FL Statute Chapter 489.103(7).

Expedited tenant build-out program

How does the program help me?

It provides same-day review and permit issuance for interior renovations.
There's no additional cost for this service.

Are there any restrictions?

It's limited to business/office and mercantile occupancies with a maximum square footage.

Where can I get more information?

Contact the Sarasota County Permitting Center at 941-861-6678

Business Tax and Number

Where can I get information?

Contact the Tax Collector's office at 941-861-8300.

Zoning

Change in use – Call Zoning through the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 before signing a lease to determine if the zoning is appropriate.

Parking – Call Zoning at 941-861-5000 to determine parking requirements, which typically don't change unless the new use is for a restaurant with over 100 seats.

Restaurant and/or liquor license – Contact Zoning for zoning and license sign-off.

Signage and Banners

When can banners be used?

Banners are permitted for a grand opening with a Temporary Use Permit. Banners are for three consecutive days, with the banner to advertise displayed for a total of 10 consecutive days including days prior to the sale and the sale days. A single banner can be up to 32 square feet, or a maximum of two banners can be 16 square feet each.

What do I need to do for a banner?

Permits – Permits are required except when performing general maintenance/repair or window signs Contact Zoning for clarification on requirements.

A licensed sign contractor is required for any sign.

Temporary Use Permits

When do I need a temporary use permit?

Temporary Use Permits are required for events with activities that will extend beyond the confines of the business. Properties are allowed four temporary use permits per calendar year.

Impact Fees

Will I have to pay impact fees on a tenant space?

Contact transportation planning or planning services staff when you're considering a tenant space. Staff will estimate any impact fees that may be required for the proposed project.

Fees for re-occupying a tenant space may be reduced or zero from a credit for the prior use.

Most construction with a net increase of enclosed floor area will require fees for the new floor area.

Most new shell buildings have fully paid impact fees for all tenants, but older buildings may not. Contact staff for any first time occupancy.

Resource Protection

What's the role of resource protection?

Resource Protection reviews proposals for consistency with Sarasota County's natural resource standards for native habitats, trees and wildlife. It also includes construction along the Gulf of Mexico and bays, creeks and canals, activities along the Myakka River, and general earthmoving, stockpiling, filling and excavating.

How do I determine if I need a permit or variance?

Contact the Resource Protection staff early in the planning stage to determine if natural resource standards apply to your project. For more information, contact an environmental specialist through the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000.

When is Site and Development Approval needed?

Site and Development approval may be required for construction or work on a site such as enlarging or adding a structure, changing parking, stormwater or access.

Where can I get more information?

Contact Land and Development Services at 941-861-5000. Applications and forms are available online at www.scgov.net on the Land Development Documents page.

Flood Risk Prevention Requirements

New construction and substantial improvements and other development in designated high-risk flood zones are subject to flood risk prevention requirements.

Where do I get more information?

Contact the County Certified Floodplain Manager at 941-915-3110 before applying for building permits for additional information.

Health Department Permits

North County 861-6133

South County 861-3310

Licenses to sell food

What kind of license do I need to sell food?

Three state agencies issue licenses, depending on the type of food and service:

- **Department of Business and Professional Regulations** – full service restaurants that operate for a profit and are not affiliated with a civic organization. Contact 850-487-1395
- **The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** – grocery stores, gas stations, produce stands, seafood markets and road-side vendors. Contact: 1-800-435-7352
- **The Department of Health** – nonprofit civic organizations such as The Elks Lodge, Eagles Lodge, Kiwanis Clubs and establishments that serve a limited menu of food that requires minimal cooking such as drinking establishments and Internet café's that serve hot dogs, pop corn or basic microwave foods.

For additional information, contact the Sarasota County Health Department, Division of Environmental Health Services at 941-861-3310.

Biomedical waste operating permit

Who needs a biomedical waste permit?

A healthcare facility must apply for a permit. Services include dentist, medical doctor, osteopath, surgery center, walk-in-clinic, hospital, veterinarian, podiatrist, clinic, lab, home health, abortion clinic, blood bank, nursing home, tattoo, body piercing, dialysis clinic, acupuncturist.

Body piercing license

A body piercing business must apply for a body piercing license.

Child care facilities

What do I need to do to open a child care facility?

A license is required to operate a child care facility or to keep several children in your home.

Contact an inspector for more information on requirements:

South County office – Jill Jacoby, 941-861-3317

North County office – Eva Balcar, 941-861-6081

Septic systems

Who regulates septic systems?

Environmental Health issues permits for new systems, replacement systems and additions to septic systems. It also evaluates existing systems for compliance with local and state laws and ordinances.

Environmental Health conducts plan reviews, permitting and field inspections for new, repaired or modified septic systems.

It also regulates septic tank contractors, septic disposal service companies, portable toilet service companies, septic systems serving industrial properties and related enforcement actions.

The Sarasota County Health Department regulates the installation and repair of septic systems in Sarasota County. The Health Department issues permits for system construction, system repairs, abandonment permits, holding tank and Industrial/manufacturing operating permits.

Septic system evaluation

When do I need a system evaluation?

An evaluation usually is conducted when a business plans to move into a building served by a septic system. The evaluation will determine if the system can handle the flow that will be generated by the establishment. A new business that's served by a septic system can get information on sizing requirements by calling the North County office, 941-861-6133, or the South County office, 941-861-3310.

The Sarasota County Building Department normally sends septic system applications to the Health Department for review.

Utility connections

How do I arrange for utility connections and billing?

- If a business plans to connect to a central utility or if it's reoccupying an existing site on central water, it should contact the utility provider to set up or transfer a business account.
- If a business will use an on-site well or is reoccupying an existing site with an on-site well, it should contact the Sarasota County Health Department at 941-861-6133.

Locating business sites

The Economic Development Corporation (EDC) can help business owners find sites that meet their needs. Contact the EDC at 941-309-1200.

Trash pick-up

To schedule trash collections, contact Waste Management at 866-807-2267.

How can I get more information?

You can get additional information on these topics or to talk to a member of the Business and Neighborhood Relations Office. Contact us through the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or email us at business@scgov.net.

Sarasota County ... Good for Jobs ... Great for Business