



AUSTIN PUBLIC HEALTH  
 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION  
 P.O. BOX 142529 Austin, TX 78714

Phone (512) 978-0300 Email: [ehsd.service@austintexas.gov](mailto:ehsd.service@austintexas.gov)  
<http://www.austintexas.gov/departament/food-establishment-requirements>



Walk-in Location: 1520 Rutherford LN, NE corner of Rutherford LN @ Cameron RD, Building 1 East Entrance (No Mail Accepted here)

## Starting a Food Business in the City of Austin and Travis County

This guide is for prospective operators of Food Enterprises (food establishments, retail food stores, food warehouses, and food processors) operating within the jurisdiction of the City of Austin (COA), Unincorporated Travis County, and seven other Municipalities contracted with Austin Public Health including: Bee Cave, Sunset Valley, Manor, Lakeway, Westlake Hills, Rollingwood and Volente. These establishments fall under the regulatory responsibility of Austin Public Health/Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD). Guidelines for Farmers Markets, Mobile Vendors and Temporary Food Events are found at 1520 Rutherford LN, Building 1, Suite 205, East Entrance, or at: <http://www.austintexas.gov/ehsd>.

Austin/Travis County and the municipalities are divided into districts, each having a designated Environmental Health Officer (EHO). Your district EHO will assist you with questions on pre-opening processes for Food Enterprises. In the COA contact the Health Department Plan Review Desk at (512) 974-3325 for questions concerning your building plans. For unincorporated Travis County and other municipalities call (512) 978-0300. Staff is also available to assist with questions concerning applications and payments. Call us at (512) 978-0300 to contact your designated EHO or our customer service staff.

The city where you operate will advise you of your jurisdiction. Almost all categories of Food Enterprises require the approval of Austin Public Health (APH). For jurisdiction questions regarding unincorporated areas within Travis County please contact (512) 978-0300.

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### Home Preparation of Food is Prohibited

Except for those businesses that meet the requirements of a Cottage Food Industry, home preparation of food for public consumption is prohibited. All food that is to be consumed by the public, whether free or for sale, must be prepared at a permitted establishment that is inspected by a federal, state, or local Health Authority.

### Cottage Food Industry

A cottage food production operation is not required to have a City of Austin food permit. Before operating a food business, check with other City of Austin Departments to determine if there are laws or ordinances, such as zoning, that will affect your business. For information on the Cottage Food Industry visit and of the Food Safety Program links at:

<http://austintexas.gov/ehsd>.

## Operating Permits - Food Enterprises

A Food Enterprise Permit application is available at Planning & Development Review Department's One Stop Shop (OSS) at One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78704, Rutherford Lane Campus at 1520 Rutherford LN, Bldg. 1, Room 205, East Entrance or our website at <http://austintexas.gov/departments/fixed-food-establishments>.

We recommend you submit a *complete* application and fees one month prior to your anticipated opening date. This gives EHSD the time necessary to process it and schedule any needed pre-opening inspections. Our staff thoroughly reviews each form to ensure accuracy of information provided. Incomplete applications will not be accepted and will delay your approval. Food permits are in effect for one year from the issuance date and are renewable each year, thereafter, when the appropriate fee is paid and the enterprise remains in compliance with Health Dept regulations.

### Permit Posting Requirements

A permit holder or person in charge of a Food Enterprise shall post a permit, required by City Code 10-3-62 and §228.248(1), in a prominent public location clearly visible to the general public and to patrons. A permit is clearly visible to the general public and to patrons if it is:

1. Posted in the front window of the enterprise within 5 feet of the front door; or
2. Posted in a display case mounted on the outside front wall of the enterprise within 5 feet of the front door; or
3. Posted on the drive-through menu board of a drive-through enterprise, in addition to posting in locations (1) and (2) of this section; or,
4. if the Food Enterprise is operated in a space that prevents posting the permit as required in (1) - (3), the permit shall be posted in the initial patron contact area, on the menu board or counter of the enterprise, or in a location determined by the Health Authority to ensure proper notice to the general public and patrons.

### Food Enterprise Pre-Opening Processes

When starting a Food Enterprise business, you are required to go either through a **Pre-opening inspection Process** or the **Health Department Plan Review process**. Read through each section below to determine which best fits your situation. Contact the Environmental Health Services Division if you need help in making that determination. Before starting either of these processes call 311 to obtain Zoning approval and a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy for your location.

#### Pre-opening Inspection Process – Change of Ownership

Before opening for business, you may be required to go through a pre-opening inspection. This inspection verifies your enterprise complies with current regulations and has a clear *Certificate of Occupancy*. **Contact the Development Services Department at (512) 978-4000 to request a copy of a Certificate of Occupancy.** The fee for this inspection is required to be paid before the inspector conducts the inspection. There is no fee for a pre-opening inspection request for those enterprises located in unincorporated Travis County outside of Austin City limits.

An application for a pre-opening inspection request is available online at <http://austintexas.gov/departments/fixed-food-establishments> or at 1520 Rutherford LN, Building 1, East Entrance. A *complete* application may be:

1. emailed to [EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov) and paid by credit card over the phone within 72 business hours;
2. walked-in at Rutherford Lane Campus at 1520 Rutherford LN, Bldg. 1, East Entrance along with payment; or,
3. mailed to EHSD, P.O. Box 142529, Austin, TX 78714 along with payment.

Once your application is submitted, an inspector will contact you to schedule your appointment within three business days. If the enterprise doesn't comply with current regulations you will be required to bring it up to code before your operating permit is approved. Many times, prospective business owners will request a Pre-opening inspection before finalizing the sale. This gives the prospective business owner a notification on any items that may be required for the enterprise to be in compliance with city codes. ***Under no circumstances may the establishment begin operations without approval from the Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD). Legal charges may be filed against you if you do.***

#### Health Department Plan Review Process- (Newly built business or remodel of existing business)

EHSD Plan Review is required whenever a building is constructed or substantially remodeled to be a Food Enterprise, whenever a substantial change is made to an existing food facility or if a building permit or other construction related permit is required by the City of Austin.

The Plan Review Application, including proposed menu, Fees, and two Sets of building plans are to be submitted as a *complete* application. Our staff thoroughly reviews each form to ensure accuracy of information provided. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Upon approval, the plans are stamped by the EHSD and the person submitting the plans will be contacted to pick up the plans.

Submit building plans after the type of food operation and menu has been determined and after receiving City of Austin Zoning Department approval if located in the City of Austin. The 2 sets of building plans are to be in a scale of 1/4" = 1ft and detail the layout of the kitchen, dining area, restrooms, storage areas, break room, wait stations and bar. The plans are to include a materials list of specifications for all floors, walls, and ceilings.

### Plan Review Application Submission

#### City of Austin Health Plan Review Office - Food Enterprises in the jurisdiction of the City of Austin

One Stop Shop, One Texas Center  
505 Barton Springs Road, 78704  
Lobby/walk-in hours: 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM Monday - Friday  
Phone: (512) 974-3325

#### Travis County Health Plan Review Office - Food Enterprises in the unincorporated areas of Travis County

Rutherford Lane Campus  
1520 Rutherford Lane, Bldg. 1, East Entrance  
Lobby/walk-in hours: 7:45 AM - 3:30 PM Monday - Friday  
Phone: (512) 978-0300

#### Contracted Cities Health Plan Review Office - Food Enterprises in incorporated areas of Travis County

Rutherford Lane Campus  
1520 Rutherford Lane, Bldg. 1, East Entrance  
Lobby/walk-in hours: 7:45 AM - 3:30 PM Monday - Friday  
Phone: (512) 978-0300

### Pre-opening Inspection Process – Certificate of Occupancy

All City of Austin Food Enterprises are required to have a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). A CO is issued after the Building and Health Officials inspect the building and find no violations of the Building or Health Codes during new construction and/or a remodel. The CO will also state the use for which the building will be used. The CO Inspection is the final inspection received before your Operating Permit is approved. The fee for the CO must be paid before the EHO will schedule and conduct your inspection.

An application for a pre-opening inspection request is available online at <http://austintexas.gov/department/food-establishments> or at 1520 Rutherford LN, Building 1, East Entrance. A *complete* application may be:

1. emailed to [EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.Service@austintexas.gov) and paid by credit card over the phone within 72 business hours;
2. walked-in at Rutherford Lane Campus at 1520 Rutherford LN, Bldg. 1, East Entrance along with payment; or,
3. mailed to EHSD, P.O. Box 142529, Austin, TX 78714 along with payment.

### Permit Approval

Once you have completed the pre-opening processes and EHO has approved your operating permit, you may open for business. ***Under no circumstances begin operations without approval from EHSD. Legal charges may be filed against you if you do.***

### Other City of Austin Approvals:

- **Building Permits:** Plans must also be submitted to the Commercial Plan Review Dept. for further review. Call 311. You may also contact them via e-mail: [commercialreview@austintexas.gov](mailto:commercialreview@austintexas.gov). Website: <http://austintexas.gov/page/commercial-building-review>
- **Industrial Waste:** If you are taking over a previous business and changing the type of operation, ensure the grease trap meets the requirements for your new operation. For example, when a “sandwich shop” becomes a “fried chicken” location, the existing grease trap may need to be modified. Call 311.
- **Fire Inspections:** Fire department representatives are concerned with grease-laden vapors and proper hood protection in food facilities. All **gas equipment** must be installed under proper ventilation. In addition, establishments in excess of 5,000 sq. ft. are required to provide a sprinkler system. Establishments with an occupancy load in excess of 50 people are required to provide fire alarms. Call 311.

## Include and Identify the Following on Your Building Plans:

- **Major pieces of equipment**
  - Refrigerator/freezer Units Vent-hood Ice machines/ bins/dispensers
  - Steamers Microwaves Warming Drawers
  - Stoves Prep tables Ice Cream Dispenser
  - Ovens Dish machine Beverage Station/dispenser
  - Grills Mixers Blender Station
  - Fryers Food Processors Salad/Food Buffets
- **Sinks**
  - Hand sinks (in food prep, ware-washing, restroom areas), ware washing sinks, service sink/mop sink/curbed floor sink, food prep sink
- **Dumpster**
- **Grease Barrel**
- **Chemical Storage area**
- **Mop drying area**
- **Employee area for belongings**
- **Dry Food Storage area**
- **Doors**
- **Mechanical ventilation in restrooms**
- **Outdoor food prep area (bars/wait station/BBQ)**
- **Water Well**
- **Underground and overhead sewer and waste lines**
- **On-Site Sewage Facility**

## ESH D Building Plan Notes

1. **Refrigeration** All refrigerated units are to hold foods at or below 41°F.
2. **Restrooms** (two are normally required). If the facility has only carry-out or seating for less than 20 people, and less than 10 employees, then only one employee restroom is required by ESHD. Two restrooms are required if alcohol is served on the premises or more than 20 seats are provided. Each restroom must have a hand sink with hot (at least 100°F) and cold water, mechanical air ventilation to the outside, and a solid, self-closing door. Restrooms may not open directly into a kitchen. The total number of restrooms for a child care facility is dependent on the “minimum standards” of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (available at (512) 834-3195) as it relates to child care.
3. **Sinks**
  - a. **Service sink, mop sink, curbed floor sink:** At least one of these 3 types of sinks must be available for mop washing and disposal of mop water in an approved waste water disposal system. A drying rack is required for mops to air dry. This sink must be provided with a backflow preventer on any threaded hose bib to protect the water supply. Note: the mop sink may be located in a different area of the building than the kitchen.
  - b. **Hand washing sink:** Shall be located to allow convenient use by employees in food preparation, food dispensing, ware wash areas, and any wait station where ice is dispensed, bar area or in a walk-in where meat is cut or trimmed. At least one hand sink will be required; additional, separate hand sinks may also be required. Small kitchens with food prep and ware washing in close proximity may be allowed to use one hand sink to serve both activities. Other hand sinks must be associated with restrooms. Provide at least 12” tall splashguards if a hand sink is located near food prep, open food, ice, or clean food contact surfaces. Otherwise, the hand sink must have at least 18” lateral separation from these. A sign or poster that notifies food employees to wash their hands shall be provided to all hand washing sinks and be clearly visible. A small, swinging door (as in a bar area) could separate a hand sink from a work area, otherwise no doors separating hand sink from work areas. Each sink must be supplied with hot (100°F) and cold water, soap and disposable towels. Child care facilities must have hot water in the diaper changing area and kitchen. If plans do not provide sufficient hand sinks to meet the requirements of the facility you will be asked to provide a revised plan with additional hand sinks.
  - c. **Ware wash area:** A commercial dishwasher or 3-compartment sink is required in most cases. Dish machines must be able to effectively sanitize all equipment and utensils. They must dispense a chemical sanitizer or provide a final rinse of at least 180°F. (single, stationary rack machines are required to reach 165°F in the sanitize cycle). Test strips are required. Above-the-counter dish machines are required to have Type II vent-hood. Ware washing sinks shall be of sufficient size to immerse the largest piece of equipment. Cold and hot (100°F minimum) water under pressure delivered through a mixing valve shall be provided. Provide at least 2 integral drain boards or 1 integral drain board and a mobile dish cart. Drying racks or shelves will aid in adequately air drying all wares. Facilities with very limited ware washing and using disposable containers may request a variance to install a 2-compartment sink

(example: convenience store). These sinks are required to have a drain board. The sinks must have an indirect connection to the sanitary sewer (at least a one-inch air gap). This includes all food prep sinks and ware wash sinks.

4. **Ceiling construction:** Ceilings over open food, ice, soda fountains, ware washing, restrooms and bars must meet construction criteria and be smooth, durable, nonabsorbent, and cleanable. Open rafters, trusses or grid work and exposed duct work, pipes or utility lines are prohibited. No open structure permitted. If drop down acoustic tiles are used, they must be properly constructed. These tiles are to be washable and have a smooth surface without pinholes. Painted dry wall or boards are acceptable.
5. **Walls/Floors:** Must be constructed of approved materials. Cleanable water-based enamel paint is acceptable for most wall surfaces. Areas that are subject to regular cleaning and splash may be covered with FRP, stainless, or galvanized metal. Floor/wall junctures shall provide no greater than 1/32" gap. Baseboards are required. Caulk wall/floor junctures to prevent the collection of food particles and water. Masonry (brick/concrete) wall/floor junctures DO NOT require baseboards since a masonry juncture provides no gap. Raw brick and concrete in the kitchen area requires sealing. The sand grout of all tiles needs to be sealed. Epoxy grout does not require sealing. VCT floor tiles require a coat of wax to seal out liquids.
6. **Solid Waste:** Dumpster and grease barrels shall rest on a machine laid asphalt or concrete pad. These containers must have tight fitting lids and drain plugs in place.
7. **Outdoor Cooking facilities:** Barbeque pits or smokers shall be enclosed, and if screened in, at least a 1/16" mesh screen is required. They shall rest on a concrete or asphalt pad. The meat may only be placed on the smoker; no food prep allowed in this enclosure. Any seasoning, cutting, etc. must take place inside the establishment. Outdoor bars and wait stations will be approved on a case by case basis by the department.
8. **Water and Sewage Systems:** All private On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSF) and wells serving a new Food Enterprise, an extensively remodeled Food Enterprise, or a Food Enterprise coming under new ownership must meet current standards. These systems are required to be evaluated with respect to whether the system (a) meets current standards and (b) is adequate for the proposed use.

**Contact the following agencies to ensure an OSSF, grease trap and/or water well is adequate:**

- **OSSF's in the City of Austin** - Austin Water Utility at (512) 972-0101
- **Grease traps in the City of Austin** - City of Austin Industrial Waste at (512) 972-1060
- **OSSF's or grease traps in Travis County** - Travis County Transportation & Natural Resources at (512) 854-9383
- **OSSF's or grease traps within 2,000 ft. of Lake Travis** - Lower Colorado River Authority at (512) 473-3216
- **Water wells** - Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Water Utilities at (512) 239-4691

Note: a well which serves more than 24 people per day for more than 59 days/year is considered a public water supply.

9. **Protecting the Water Supply:** Threaded hose bibs are required to have a backflow prevention device attached. Spray hoses and fill hoses shall hang at least 1 inch above the maximum flood rim of a basin or the hoses shall be provided with an atmospheric vacuum breaker or backflow prevention device.
10. **Indirect Connections:** Jockey boxes, ice bins, ice machines and sinks (as identified above in # 3) must be provided with indirect connections to the sewer. Floor sinks are required on new construction.
11. **Lighting:** Adequate amount of light shall be provided to all areas. At least 20 foot candles is required where food is provided for customer self-service such as buffet and salad bars or where fresh produce or packaged foods are sold. At least 50 foot candles is required at surfaces where employees are working with food using utensils or knives, slicers, grinders, saws, or where employee safety is a factor.
12. **Outer Openings:** All windows, vents and exterior doors shall be tight fitting. If needed, use weather stripping to provide a tight fit. All exterior doors shall have a self-closure. Screens on windows and doors shall be at least 1/16" mesh. Roll up doors to be screened or the proposed food service area provided with physical doors to create a separate walled room. Exhaust fans must be screened, or if they are louvered, must automatically close when the fan is disengaged.
13. **Food Contact Surfaces:** Stainless steel, Formica, polished marble, Corian, machined stone, approved ceramics or plastics may be used for food contact surfaces.
14. **Counters:** All raw wood must be painted in areas that come in contact with food, liquid or food containers of any kind. Included is the underside of the bar above the ware wash and/or hand sink (and the splash area).
15. **Toxic Materials:** Specify an area where chemicals are to be stored. A well-labeled, separate shelf or cabinet is best.

## City of Austin Food Enterprise Food Handler/Food Manager Requirements

All food employees shall successfully complete an accredited food handler training course, within 60 days of employment as required by §228.33 (d).

A Food Manager Certificate is recognition that a person has received training in food sanitation. The Austin City Code requires the majority of permitted Food Enterprises in Austin to have one employee to be currently **registered** as a Certified Food Manager with the **City of Austin** and to have their current **City of Austin** Certified Food Manager Certificate prominently **posted** in the establishment. For more detailed information visit our website at:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/food-manager-certification>.

**Exemptions:** (please call for exemption clarification at (512) 978-0300)

- A Food Enterprise that provides only beverages or pre-packaged food that is not a potentially hazardous food
- A nonprofit organization that serves food only to members of the organization
- A food processing plant that is inspected at least once each week by a state or federal food sanitation inspector or that only stores prepackaged food that is not potentially hazardous
- A Mobile Food Vending Unit that offers only prepackaged food, if a Certified Food Manager (CFM) is in charge at the Central Preparation Facility that supplies the products for the Vending Machine or Mobile Food Vending Unit.  
Note: **Unrestricted** Mobile Food Vending Units are required to have a CFM
- A Temporary Food Event
- A Food Enterprise located in unincorporated Travis County

## Resources

### Applications and Fee Schedule

<http://www.austintexas.gov/ehsd>

### Regulations

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/public-health-regulations>

### Phone Numbers

City of Austin (COA) Info/Complaint – 311 for all City of Austin offices and personnel  
Austin Public Health, Environmental Health Services Division – (512) 978-0300  
Child Care Licensing - Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – (512) 834-3195  
COA Building Inspections – (512) 978-4000, Automated Inspection Request Line (512) 480-0623  
COA Coordinator of Early Childhood Development, AHHSD – (512) 972-5028  
COA Development Services Division (Permits and Reviews) (512) 978-4000  
COA Commercial Building Plan Review – Call 3-1-1 (inside the city limits), or (512) 974-2000 (outside the city limits).  
COA Food Enterprise Plan Review – (512) 974-3325  
Austin Energy (Utility) Customer Service- (512) 494-9400  
Austin Water Utility (OSSF) – (512) 972-0000, Inspection Recorder (512) 972-0002  
Austin Water Utility (Grease Traps) – (512) 972-1060  
Lower Colorado River Authority – (512) 473-3216  
Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission – (512) 206-3333  
Texas Comptroller's Office – (512) 463-4600  
Texas Department of Health, Environmental & Consumer Safety – (512) 834-6770  
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – (512) 834-3195  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Water Utilities Division – (512) 239-4691  
Travis County On-site Sewage Facility Licenses – (512) 854-9383