



MISSION VIEJO
Make Business Your Mission

Business Resource Guide

For Starting a New Business or Expanding an Existing Business



City of Mission Viejo
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BUSINESS RESOURCE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Mission Viejo! Mission Viejo, south Orange County's largest city, has an outstanding quality of life for its residents, businesses and visitors. Mission Viejo is consistently recognized as the safest city in California, and was most recently recognized as the safest city in the nation compared to cities of similar size. Mission Viejo is a business-friendly, master planned community with outstanding schools, and a talented, well-educated work force. Mission Viejo is conveniently located between San Diego and Los Angeles counties, adjacent to both Interstate 5 and State Route 241 (Foothill Toll Road). The nearby Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo Station provides both Metrolink & Amtrak service; the Irvine Transportation Center is about 5 minutes north of Mission Viejo, and the John Wayne Airport is about 16 miles north of the City via Interstate 405.

The City of Mission Viejo always offers fast-tracked permit processing, no businesses license fees, no gross receipts taxes, no utility user fees, no per employee fees and there is a talented staff to serve you.

Please use this Business Resource Guide to help start a successful new business, expand your existing business or relocate a new business to our community. If you have questions or need help with the steps necessary to secure approval and permits from the City, please contact a member of City staff.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Who is serving on the City Council and the Planning & Transportation Commission and how do I contact them?

The members of the City Council are Wendy Bucknum, Trish Kelley, Brian Goodell, Greg Rath, and Ed Sachs. To leave a message for a Council Member, call (949) 470-3050. The current Planning & Transportation Commissioners are Bob Ruesch, Joe Blum, Robert D. Breton, Peter Molinari, and Andrew Quinio. To send an email directly to a Council Member or Commissioner, enter the first initial of the first name followed by the last name @cityofmissionviejo.org (jsmith@cityofmissionviejo.org).

When are the City Council and the Planning & Transportation Commission meetings?

The City Council meets at 6:00 pm on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at City Hall, 200 Civic Center. One meeting is held during the months of July, August and December. The Council meetings are televised live by Mission Viejo Television and can be seen on Cox channel 30 in Mission Viejo. The meetings are rebroadcast each Sunday at noon and replayed on the following Monday evening. Live web streaming is also available via cityofmissionviejo.org. The Planning & Transportation Commission meets at 6:30 pm on the second Monday of the month. There is typically no meeting in August. City Council and Planning & Transportation Commission meeting agendas and minutes are available at City Hall and on the City website.

When is City Hall open?

City Hall is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., closed for lunch from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., except holidays (we are open on Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, and Veterans Day). The Building Division assists their last applicant before lunch at 11:30 a.m. and at the end of day 3:30 p.m. with the counter closing at 4:00 p.m. daily.



PLANNING INFORMATION

Where do I go to obtain permits?

The Community Development Department, which provides planning, building, economic development and code enforcement services, is located at City Hall, 200 Civic Center, near the intersection of Marguerite Parkway and La Paz Road. The public counter for Community Development and Public Works Departments are on the first floor, near the main entrance.

Where can I call if I have questions?

For building permit and plan check information, contact the Building Division at (949) 470-3054. For planning, zoning and signage questions, call (949) 470-3053. Starting a new business, need to lease a space or want to buy commercial property, call the Economic Development Division at (949) 470-3053. Code Enforcement can be reached at (949) 470-3055. The Public Works Department, which provides engineering traffic, transportation and public works inspection services can be reached at (949) 470-3056.

Do I need a business license?

No. The City does not require a business license. However, all new businesses are required to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy permit. This ensures that your business is permitted to occupy a specific building and that the use complies with Building, Fire, Health, and Zoning Code regulations. Your business may require additional approvals or licenses from Community Development Department, Sheriff's Department, or other applicable public agency (i.e. County Health, OCFA). Business establishments that offer massages are required to obtain a Conditional Use Permit and all therapists must be state licensed by the California Massage Therapy Council. If your business operates out of a home, the City has "Home Occupation" standards to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood.

Can I run a business out of my home?

Yes. A home-based business, commonly referred to as a "Home Occupation" business, is permitted when conducted as an incidental and accessory use to the residence. The resident typically conducts business by mail, phone, fax or computer. The City's zoning regulations outline several operating requirements for a home business, including: only the residents of the home may operate the business; the business shall be conducted only within the interior of the home (not in the garage); and the business shall not create any noise, traffic, or other impacts which disturb the surrounding neighbors. For more information, please contact the Community Development Department at (949) 470-3053.

How can I find out what is planned for a given piece of property in the City?

Contact the Community Development Department at (949) 470-3053.

If my business is consistent with existing use and occupancy requirements?

To answer this question you will first want to speak with a Planner from the Community Development Department. The City's Zoning Code identifies many types of businesses which are either permitted, require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) prior to operation of the business or are prohibited in certain areas. The space you wish to occupy may already have an approved CUP (with previously established regulations/conditions regarding the types of permitted businesses) and if you agree with the existing conditions, it may be possible to transfer the CUP and save you time and money.

If you find that your business is inconsistent with the City's Zoning Code or a previously approved CUP, please speak with a Planner from the Community Development Department regarding the next steps in the process before starting your business. Businesses requiring a CUP generally include restaurants and other food uses, live entertainment, hair/nail salons, and automotive uses. All businesses seeking an ABC (Alcohol Beverage Control) License require a Conditional Use Permit and will be reviewed by the Planning and Transportation Commission. If a CUP is required, you can expect the process to generally take about 60 days, sometimes longer with unusual circumstances. The cost for a CUP is \$3,500 + a \$100 environmental permit fee. The cost for a CUP for an ABC License is \$1,800 + a \$100 environmental permit fee.

If my business is consistent with the existing use and occupancy requirements and the building or suite complies with the Building and Fire Codes, what do I need to do before starting or expanding my business?

After you have verified that your business is consistent with the use requirements and the building complies with the Building, Fire and Municipal Code for your business use, the next step is to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O). The City does not require a business license. However, when a business name changes or the business owner(s) changes, a Certificate of Occupancy must be obtained from the Community Development Department. The process begins with the business owner completing a Certificate of Occupancy application, paying a processing fee, submitting a site plan/floor plan detailing the location and layout of the business along with a letter summarizing the proposed business use. A Certificate of Occupancy is issued after the City departments complete a review of the proposed use and a Building Inspector visits the site to verify compliance with City codes. The building or tenant suite cannot be occupied until a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued.

What if I want to make changes to the interior or exterior of the building or space for my new or expanding business?

Many new businesses remodel their building or tenant suite to fit the particular needs of the new business. If this is your intention, several steps must be taken before you can open for business. First, building permits must be obtained from the City. In order to obtain a building permit, building plans must be submitted for review. Typically, tenant improvement plans are reviewed (plan checked) and approved or returned to the applicant within 10 business days for corrections. An estimate of plan check and building permit fees can be requested in advance from the City's Building Division.

After the permit is issued and work has begun, building inspections will be required as the construction progresses. When the work has been completed and finalized (approved) by the Building Division, a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued. The building or tenant suite cannot be occupied until a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued.

Improvements to a building or suite can be complicated and experienced licensed professionals can save you time and money. Businesses must comply with disabled access and facility standards in addition to the Building, Fire and Municipal Code requirements. Where tenant improvements are proposed, up to 20% of the valuation of the improvements may be required to be used toward upgrading handicap-accessible facilities, such as restrooms and ramps, to meet current standards. In addition, businesses involving food preparation and service must meet Health Department requirements. Licensed architects and contractors, who have previous experience with commercial projects, ADA standards and Building, Fire and Health Codes, can help to expedite this process.

What type of sign may I have for my business?

If you intend to install new exterior business signs or wish to change the number or type of existing signs, including change of copy, you must obtain approval from the Planning Division and pull a building permit. Please speak with your property manager and a Planner to find out if there is already an approved Sign Program or regulations you need to comply with before purchasing signs for your business. The City's zoning regulations contain very specific sign regulations, and many of the shopping centers in the City have approved Sign Programs that establish sign parameters for the center.

The sign regulations are designed to provide signage exposure while maintaining consistency among each tenant. Signs also require a building permit in order to review the electrical and structural plans for safety. Please submit building plans for your new signs prior to installation. You must have a Certificate of Occupancy for your new business before the City can issue a sign permit. While your signs are in the process of being approved by the City or are under construction, the City will allow you to install a temporary sign or banner identifying your business. Please contact a Planner at (949) 470-3053 to obtain the temporary sign permit application and information.

What types of business signage is allowable and what is prohibited?

The sign code regulates temporary promotional signage, building/wall signage, window signage, free standing monument signs, directional signage, commercial real estate signage, construction signs, temporary seasonal banners and outdoor displays.

- Building signage is calculated based on one square foot per linear foot of building frontage
- Each business may have one lighted (neon is okay) or non-lighted open/closed sign that does not exceed 2 ¼ square feet in area on display in the window of the business.
- Window signage and temporary promotional signage may not cover more than 25% of the storefront window area.
- Each business can have one “now hiring” window sign up to 4 square feet in area.

What do I need to do before changing the signage for my business?

You must obtain Planning Division approval and a building permit from the City's Community Development Department prior to the installation of any signage. Most commercial centers in the City have approved planned sign programs which establish a common theme, incorporating similar design elements in terms of materials, letter style, color, illumination, sign type, and sign shape. Before purchasing a new sign, please consult with your property manager and a Planner from the Community Development Department at (949) 470-3053 to review applicable regulations.

Do I need a permit to hang a banner at my business location?

Yes. Each business can obtain a permit for one temporary banner, up to 24 square feet in connection with the opening of a new business, with major remodeling under an active building permit, when a business changes owners, when a business is preparing to close, and to promote a sale or special event at a business with prior approval from the City's Community Development Department. Such signs are limited to three (3) events and a total of 42 days per calendar year. For more information about obtaining a temporary banner permit, call (949) 470-3053.



BUILDING INFORMATION

I want to hire a contractor; how do I check to see if the person is licensed?

To check to see if a contractor is licensed, contact the California State License Board at (800) 321-CSLB. Be sure to have the contractor's six-digit license number when you call, the automated phone response system requires that number in order to provide you with an answer to the contractor's license status.

Does the building or space I wish to purchase or occupy comply with the current Building and Fire Codes established for my particular business?

The Building and Fire Codes contain specific construction requirements for all types of businesses, including exiting requirements, disabled access and facility requirements, fire walls, occupancy loads and occupancy separations. Please contact the Building Division at (949) 470-3054 to determine whether the building complies with the current codes for your particular business. The Building Division staff will likely ask you to provide information on your business along with a site plan of the building or tenant space with dimensions.

How do I schedule a building inspection?

The City offers next-day building inspection services if you call before 6:00 p.m. the day before your request. To request a building inspection, schedule online at cityofmissionviejo.org/departments/community-development/building-services or call (949) 470-3022. To find out if your inspection will be in the morning or in the afternoon, go to cityofmissionviejo.org/departments/community-development (after 8:00 am) and in the column on the left, click on [Building Services](#), then scroll down to “Next Day Building Inspections” to find the Building Inspection Run List for the day.

Scan this code with your smart phone to schedule a Building Department inspection.



How do I obtain a commercial will-serve letter from the water district?

If you need to submit a will-serve letter to the City, contact the water district that serves the commercial area where your business will be located. Mission Viejo has three separate water districts.

- El Toro Water District, (949) 837-7050, www.etwd.com
- Moulton Niguel Water District, (949) 831-2500, www.mnwd.com
- Santa Margarita Water District, (949) 459-6400, www.smwd.com

How do I reach out to someone at the County Health Department, OCFA and OCSD regarding my new or existing business?

- OC Fire Authority, (714) 573-6000, www.ocfa.org
- OC Health Department (Plan Check Services), (714) 433-6074, www.ocfoodinfo.com
- OC Sheriff's Department Substation (949) 770-6011, www.ocsd.org
- Mission Viejo Police Services (949) 470-8497, www.ocsd.org



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

What are the top 10 reasons to do business in Mission Viejo?

1. Consistently One of the Safest Cities in California
2. Beautiful, Master Planned Community in South OC
3. Strong Demographics
4. Business Friendly Local Government
5. Outstanding Quality of Life for Residents and Visitors
6. State-of-the-Art Medical Services at Mission Hospital
7. The Shops at MV an Upscale Regional Shopping Mall
8. Eight Luxury Auto Brands in Mission Viejo
9. Outstanding Schools and Saddleback Community College
10. More than 40 Parks, Multiple Recreation/Fitness/Tennis Centers and a Community and Senior Center

What business development resources are available for new businesses?

If you are starting a new business, begin by visiting city's Economic Development website and the OC Recorders Office for fictitious business name filing information.

- City's Economic Development website, cityofmissionviejo.org/departments/economic-development
- OC Recorders Office, (714) 834-2500, www.ocrecorder.com

Where can I get some advice if I am starting a new business for the very first time?

SCORE offers no-charge face-to-face mentoring services to entrepreneurs who are either launching a start-up or growing an existing business. The SCORE representatives are men and women who have had successful careers as executives or business owners. One-hour private appointments are available to help you define and analyze your opportunities and then help you find the solutions. Appointments at the Mission Viejo Library are available on Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. To schedule an appointment go to www.score114.org or call (714) 550-7369.

How do I file a fictitious business name statement to make my new business official?

The Orange County Clerk Recorders Office website (www.ocrecorder.com) has a downloadable form and an on-line form to file a fictitious business statement. This site also includes information about publishing the legal notice in the newspaper. There is a satellite office on at 24031 El Toro Road, Suite 150 El Toro Road, Laguna Hills. For more information, call (714) 834-2500.

I need some training and education as I prepare to start a new business or grow my existing business is there anything available in Mission Viejo?

The City hosts periodic low-cost or free business workshops in Mission Viejo each year. Business workshops include topics such as learning how to write a business plan, how to start a home-based business, securing start-up capital, how to market your business, recording keeping for small business owners, import/export regulations, how to use QuickBooks, understanding State/Federal payroll taxes, and how to calculate sales taxes. All of the business workshops and information about the special events is available at cityofmissionviejo.org/departments/economic-development.

Make a reservation directly with the partner agency from the list below:

- OC Small Business Development Center, (714) 564-5200, www.ocsbdc.com
- SCORE, (714) 550-7369, www.score114.org
- Small Business Administration, (714) 560-7448, www.sba.gov
- Employment Development Department, (888) 745-3886, www.edd.ca.gov/taxsem
- Board of Equalization, (888) 847-9652, www.boe.ca.gov
- Internal Revenue Service, (949) 389-4902, www.irs.gov/businesses
- OC One Stop and Business Services Center, (714) 562-9200, www.oconestop.com

Is there a local Chamber of Commerce?

Yes. The Mission Viejo Chamber of Commerce serves the Mission Viejo area and the City of Mission Viejo is a member. The Mission Viejo Chamber of Commerce website is a great resource for information at www.missionviejochamber.com and for more information call, (949) 441-0602. The South Orange County Economic Coalition (SOCEC) is the leading business advocate in South Orange County for more information go to economiccoalition.com or email at info@economiccoalition.com.

Are there any promotional opportunities for my business?

Yes. The City of Mission Viejo operates a government television station on Cox channel 30. Mission Viejo businesses may request a community notice promoting their business for only \$20 per year (no charge for non-profit organizations, comprises of a one-week publication). Go to cityofmissionviejo.org/departments/community-relations/mission-viejo-television and locate the Community Bulletin Board for more information. Non-profit organizations may also request that community wide events be posted on the electronic sign at La Paz Road and Marguerite Parkway by requesting online at cityofmissionviejo.org/form/community-sign-request.