



How To Do Business In Topsfield

Topsfield is home to many flourishing businesses. Some are located in Topsfield's business districts – along Route 1 and in the Village Center. Others are located in residents' homes. Depending on the nature of the business, various factors must be considered. This guide provides information about permitting, zoning, licensing and Town Department contacts who can be helpful. We invite those interested in starting a business in Town to meet with Town officials who can provide guidance.

1. Filing a DBA Business Certificate.

Any person conducting business under any title other than the complete real name of the owner, whether individual or as a partnership or any corporation doing business in a name other than the corporate name must file for a business certificate. Any person doing business as a sole proprietor under his or her own complete name or corporations doing business under the corporate name do not have to file. Contact Town Clerk Mary Willis (978-887-1505) for more information.

The packet with instructions for filing the DBA Business Certificate is available at:
https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/business_certificate.pdf

2. Zoning.

The first step in establishing a business in Topsfield is to determine whether it is allowed and where it can be located. Individuals are encouraged to meet with the Inspectional Services Department to review their plans. Contact Building Inspector Raymond Chesley in Town Hall (978-887-1522) to arrange for a meeting to review zoning, permitting, and building code requirements.

Zoning Bylaws govern uses that are allowed in the districts in Town. There are four commercial districts: Business Village, Business Highway, Business Highway North, Business Park. Uses allowed in these districts can be found at:

https://www.topsfield-a.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/article_iii_as_of_5.07.19_correction.pdf

The complete Zoning Bylaws are available at:

<https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/zoning-board-appeals/pages/zoning-laws>

Of particular interest for the business community is the Sign By-law:

https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/article_13_xiii_as_of_05012018_1.pdf

Home Occupations:

There are many home-based businesses in Topsfield. A “Home Occupation” is one customarily carried on at home with the use of a room as an office, studio or work room by a person residing on the premises and in which there are no commodities sold on the premises. There may be no more than two additional employees and the enterprise must not be offensive to the neighborhood by reason of nuisances such as odors, noise, vibration and the like. See Zoning Bylaw Article I, 1.50 and Article III, 3.07 a and b.

3. Permitting.

Some uses require Special Permits that are issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals or the Planning Board. Should the business need a Special Permit, the application is available at:

https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/special_permit_application_form_a.pdf

Town Administrator’s Office, (978-887-1500) can provide information about the permitting process.

4. Licensing.

The Select Board issues licenses for food establishments, alcohol sales, and certain other licenses. Contact Debra Moring (978-887-1500) for further information.

Common Victualler’s License – (Nothing about this seems to be on the Town website.)

Rules and Regulations for alcohol sales can be found at:

<https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/alcohol-advisory-committee/files/rules-and-regulations-relating-alcoholic-beverages-v24>

5. Other approvals.

Food Establishments also need a permit from the Board of Health: https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5086/f/uploads/annual_food_permit_application_revised_12-28-2020_0.pdf

Contact Health Agent Wendy Hansbury (978-887-1520) for all Health-related matters.

Many permits and licenses require review by public safety officials:

Fire Department – (978-887-5148) topsfieldfire.com

Police Department – (978-887-6533) topsfieldpolice.com

Board of Health – (978-887-1520) [Health Department](#)

Why Topsfield?

Location! Location!

Located in the center of Essex County, Topsfield is a semi-rural town with a strong sense of community. Easily accessible by Routes 1 and 95, Topsfield nonetheless retains its historic character and natural beauty. “Old Route 1” is lined by stone walls and rolling hills. The Town Common, a National Register Historic District, is one of the best preserved Town Commons in New England.

With a population of around 6000, Topsfield is a family-oriented community with excellent schools, a bustling Library, and many organizations offering programs and activities. Businesses in the Village and along Route 1 provide goods and services to the loyal “shop local” community. Neighboring Boxford with a population of around 8,000 is largely residential and relies on Topsfield’s businesses for many of its needs.

Residents and visitors alike enjoy the wealth of recreational opportunities in Topsfield. The Ipswich River invites canoers and kayakers. The Rail Trail – Topsfield’s Linear Common – starts at the Boxford line and connects Topsfield to Wenham, Danvers, and points to the south. Tens of thousands of people visit the Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary and Bradley Palmer and Willowdale state parks annually. Whether one needs a bike repair or a picnic lunch Topsfield’s Village businesses can accommodate.

The Town’s Economic and Community Development Committee works on Downtown Beautification and Revitalization. The non-profit Topsfield Community Partnership supports their projects while preserving Topsfield’s rich heritage. To learn more, [visit https://www.topsfieldcommunitypartnership.org/](https://www.topsfieldcommunitypartnership.org/).

Five major events mark the seasons. The Grow Spring EXPO, the Strawberry Festival, The Tomato Festival, the Topsfield Fair and the Holiday on the Green. Each of these attracts visitors from far and wide. In between, many smaller events – lectures, programs, activities – take place.

Why fight traffic and the hectic pace of the city? Enjoy the beauty and peace of this vibrant town.