

# Opening a **BUSINESS?**

*Start here!*



## WHY IS ENCINITAS A GREAT PLACE TO START AND GROW A BUSINESS?

Located along six miles of pacific coastline in northern San Diego County, the City of Encinitas offers a unique blend of old-world charm and sophistication, and new-world culture. Incorporated in 1986, the city brought together the communities of New Encinitas, Old Encinitas, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, Olivenhain, and Leucadia to create a single city, rich in history and steeped in tradition. With a population of 60,000 people, the City of Encinitas has something for everyone. With its pristine beaches and rolling hills, famous botanic garden and vibrant downtown business district, the City of Encinitas attracts visitors from all over the world. Encinitas is known for its strong arts culture. Its musical, theatrical and artistic events draw visitors from near and far.

The century-old Downtown 101 coastal shopping district features historic architecture, quaint shops, sidewalk cafes, specialty retail stores, and upscale restaurants. The beautiful Encinitas library is the most visited of all the County library campuses and has great ocean-views, a computer business center and public meeting rooms available for reservation.

Encinitas is home to some of the most beautiful beaches in California and is known for its excellent surfing conditions. The San Elijo Lagoon Reserve boasts the largest coastal wetland in San Diego County and is home to nearly 300 different bird species throughout the year.

San Diego Botanical Gardens, complete with an Amazon Rainforest, showcases the largest display of bamboo in the world, while the gardens of the Self Realization Center offer spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean in a serene garden-like setting.

Golf enthusiasts can enjoy a round of golf at the Encinitas Ranch Golf Course, a championship 18-hole, par 72 course with panoramic ocean views. This public facility has five tees and facilitates golfers at all skill-levels. The warm California sunshine provides for year-round enjoyment of our beautiful parks, beaches and trails and makes Encinitas a spectacular place to live, visit, work, and play!

## BUSINESS RESOURCES

Learn more about what it will take to get your business up and running.

### Creating a Business Plan

Having an effective business plan helps clarify and organize your business priorities. Writing a business plan will help determine your roadmap to profitability. Obtain more information about writing a business plan [here](#).

### Choosing a Business Structure

Determining the legal structure for your business is imperative to operate, register, and pay taxes. The legal structure of your business should suit the type of services or products you will provide. Consider your options to find the best fit for your business. Obtain more information about choosing a business structure [here](#).

### Choosing a Location

Choosing a great location for your business will help your business thrive and grow. Important factors such as demographics, lease terms, and zoning requirements should be considered and are critical steps in setting your business up for success. Obtain additional information about choosing a location [here](#).

### Financing your Business

Whether you are looking for start-up capital or considering a loan to finance your business, a variety of opportunities are available through lenders and other various programs. Obtain information about financing options for your business [here](#).

### Buying an Existing Business

Buying an existing business is one option to start a new venture. You can benefit from an operation that has an existing customer base and is already generating cash flow and profits. Obtain some additional information about purchasing an existing business [here](#).

# NAVIGATING THE CITY'S PROCESS

*Interested in opening  
a business in our city?*

*Here are the steps to get started:*

## 1. Identify Location

Find two or three possible locations for your business

- Determine square footage
- Share business operation with Planning Division staff
- Check zoning map
- Confirm zoning

## 2. Due Diligence

Contact the city to learn what is required by each City Department/Division to open your business

- Permit requirements
- Utility services
- Discretionary planning requirements
- Fees
- Licenses

## 3. Discretionary Planning Pre-submittal

During discussion with Planning staff, determine if a discretionary Planning Application is required and what this process entails.

- Schedule a Staff Advisory Committee meeting
- Schedule a submittal appointment

## 5. Submit

Submit application and plans to the city

- Create a Customer Self Service account (CSS)
- Upload documents
- Pay the application and or plan check fee
- Determine if a fire permit is required
- Apply for a business registration

## 4. Consult & Hire

Hire professionals to help navigate the planning, permitting and development process.

- Architect
- Designer
- Engineer
- Contractor
- Legal counsel
- Other

## 6. Obtain Approvals

- Discretionary planning approval
- Building permit
- Grading permit
- Pay permit fees

## 7. Build & Inspect

- Complete construction
- Complete City inspections
- Pay mitigation fees
- Obtain a final inspection and certificate of occupancy

**You're done!  
Congratulations**

# OPENING A BUSINESS IN ENCINITAS

## 1. IDENTIFY A LOCATION

These following sections provide additional details related to the seven steps identified on the previous page.

The first step for opening a new business in Encinitas is to find two or three possible locations for your establishment.

Once you've identified a few possible locations, please contact staff in the City's Planning Division. You may contact Planning staff via e-mail at [planning@encinitasca.gov](mailto:planning@encinitasca.gov), call (760) 633-2710, or visit the City's Planning Division in-person at 505 South Vulcan Avenue, Encinitas CA 92024. You can also look up the zoning information for a site you may be interested in using our [e-zoning tool](#).

When contacting Planning staff, please be prepared to provide the addresses or assessor parcel numbers (APNs) of your possible business location(s). It would also be helpful to know the square footage of the space, and have a detailed statement of operations to share with Planning staff. As a first step, Planning staff will verify if the zoning allows for your proposed business in the location(s) you have identified.

Choosing a location that was previously the same type of establishment as the one you want to open may save you a significant amount of money and time. (For example the previous business that occupied your proposed location was a restaurant with alcohol service and the business you are opening is also a restaurant with alcohol service).

**Find two or three possible locations for your business**



Planning staff can also help you determine if there is enough parking for your business at the proposed location, walk you through the signage requirements, identify the City's process and requirements for making interior or exterior improvements to the building, as well as any outdoor dining and/or alcoholic beverage sale requirements. This consultation with Planning staff is free, and no appointment is required.

## 2. DUE DILIGENCE - THINK AHEAD

### Think Ahead

Prior to opening your business, it is recommended that you check in with each of the various Divisions/Departments listed below to get an understanding of the specific requirements for your business/project.

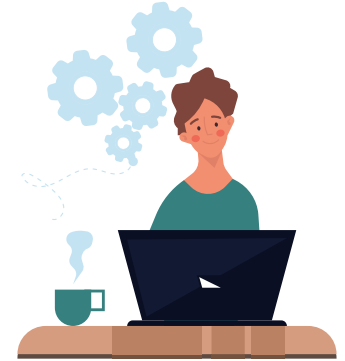
You can contact each Department/Division individually (using the contact information on the last page of this document), or visit each Department/Division in-person at the Development Services Counter located at City Hall.

The checklist below provides a preliminary list of items/topics that you should discuss with City staff during the due diligence phase. Many of the items in the list below may require additional City input/coordination, and trigger the need for permits, applications, or fees.

### Due Diligence Checklist

#### Building/Fire

- Interior improvements/tenant improvement
- Change of use within a building or suite
- Change to the existing floor plan within a building or suite



- Disabled accessibility/parking lot path-of-travel
- Occupant load/exiting
- Electric vehicle charging station requirements
- Demolition work
- Hood suppression system (restaurant uses)
- Oils separator and grease interceptor/trap requirements
- Sprinkler permit/alarm permit requirements

### Engineering

- Trash enclosure/stormwater
- Hardscape/parking lot/curb and gutter improvements
- Encroachment into the public right-of-way (i.e. streets, sidewalks, etc.)
- Utility trenching
- Outdoor dining on public property
- Bond requirements

### Planning

- Allowable use/zoning (Note: land use approval does not constitute a building permit approval - please see the "Submit your Plans" section below)
- Parking requirements
- Signage criteria
- Exterior modifications/design review thresholds
- Alcohol service - new or change to existing service
- Outdoor dining
- Staff Advisory Committee meetings
- Please also see "Planning Applications and Discretionary Approvals" section below

### Other Agencies

- Department of Environmental Health
- Hazardous materials
- Utility providers
- Schools
- Refuse collection

## Costs, Fees, Permits

Based upon the specific requirements and scope of your business/project, City staff can provide estimates for items such as planning applications fees, plan check fees, permit fees, mitigation fees, and business registration fees, to help you understand the approximate costs of opening your business establishment.

Having an idea of the scope of your project will help City staff provide you with a more accurate cost estimate. When meeting with City staff, please come prepared with the following information:

- Square footage of your business
- Proposed number of seats/occupants
- Anticipated interior improvements
- Anticipated exterior improvements
- ADA accessibility requirements
- Summary of the change between the current business occupying the space and your proposed business (i.e. change from medical office to retail, etc.)
- Signage for your business
- Desired Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) license, if applicable

**Contact the city to learn what is required by each City Department/Division to opening your business**

Additionally, if your proposed business is an eating establishment use type, a grease interceptor and/or hood system may be required if there is not currently one that exists for your proposed location.

Dependent upon your location and business type, there are some additional fees and permits that may be required:

### From the City of Encinitas:

- Planning application fees
- Plan check fees
- Permit fees/Traffic impact fees

- Sign permit fees
- Fire prevention permit fees (fire sprinkler systems, hood suppression systems, alarms, etc.)
- Use permit/entertainment license fees (required if you intend to obtain an Alcoholic Beverage Control license and/or provide amplified music or other form of entertainment)
- Mitigation fees
- Business registration fee

or

For additional information related to the City's fees, which division or department collects them and when they are due, please review the City's [fee summary sheet](#).

**Requirements from other agencies:**

- Cardiff Sanitation District, Encinitas Sewer District, and Leucadia Wastewater District may require the collection of sewer impact fees for fats, oils and grease (FOG), and can provide grease interceptor information.

**NOTE:** Encinitas has four different sewer districts within City limits (listed above).

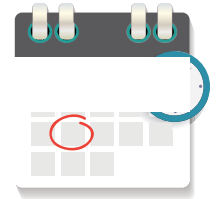
- Please contact the appropriate sewer district for your business location to obtain additional information related to fees. Fees differ for each district.
- California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)
- San Diego County Department of Environmental Health

Please be aware that if your business establishment intensifies the use of the space from what was there before (i.e. a change from a retail space to a restaurant), you may incur additional fees.

### 3. DISCRETIONARY PLANNING PRE-SUBMITTAL

#### Planning Applications and Discretionary Approvals

If Planning staff determines that a discretionary planning application (i.e., use permit, design review, coastal development permit, etc.) is required for your project or business, you are required to obtain planning approvals before you obtain your grading or building permits, and start construction/modifications to your business or site. Please [click here](#) for additional information about the discretionary planning process.



Additionally, to assist with your project or business idea, the City offers Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings. At these meetings you can present your draft project plans to various City disciplines (Planning, Engineering, Fire, Water, Traffic, etc.), and receive written feedback on the specific requirements for your project.

#### Planning Application Submittal

Once it has been determined that your business will require the review and approval of a discretionary planning application, the next step is to request an appointment to submit your planning application (and associated plans/documents). You can request an appointment by contacting the City's Planning Division at (760) 633-2710 or via e-mail at [planning@encinitasca.gov](mailto:planning@encinitasca.gov).

**During discussion with Planning staff, determine if a discretionary Planning Application is required and what this process entails**

Prior to scheduling an appointment, Planning Division staff will request to review the draft plans for your project. This pre-review process will assist staff in identifying the type of planning applications required, which fees will need to be collected, and the application submittal requirements/documents that are needed. You can obtain more information about the Planning Intake Process [here](#).

Dependent upon project scope and complexity, planning applications typically take approximately **6-12 months** to process. They may also require a public hearing and a separate public outreach process with the community, also known as a Citizen Participation Program (CPP) meeting. You can obtain more information about the CPP requirements [here](#).

## 4. CONSULT & HIRE



It is highly recommended that you hire experts to help you navigate the planning, development, and permitting review process.

If you haven't built, or previously operated a business in Encinitas, you may find it helpful to consult and hire professionals that have experience in development, planning, and permitting. It may be even more helpful to hire professionals who are specifically familiar with the City of Encinitas.

Some of these professionals include:

- Tenant broker for assistance with the lease negotiation process
- Legal counsel before signing a lease
- Architect or draftsman for creating building plans
- Land use/planning professional to navigate planning requirements
- Design professional for project aesthetics
- Civil engineer for any site improvements (i.e. grading, parking lot resurfacing, etc.)
- State licensed contractor
- Sign company

**Hire professionals to help navigate the planning, permitting and development process**

## 5. SUBMIT YOUR PLANS

### Building/Grading Permit Submittal



If the City determines that a building permit or grading permit is required, the next step will be to submit plans for a building/grading permit prior to beginning construction at your new business location.

Appointments are not required to submit your plans for building/grading permit plan check. Building/grading permit submittals are all electronic and accepted online through the City's [Customer Self Service](#) portal. A plan check fee will be assessed at the time the application is submitted. The fee will be based upon a percentage of the valuation of the construction improvement. Additional fees may also be required (see "Costs, Fees, Permits" section above).

All departments responsible for reviewing the permit will return the first round of comments within 30 to 45 days. Each subsequent review will also be 30-45 days. Revisions are processed within approximately 10 days.

## 6. OBTAIN APPROVALS

The approval of any Planning Applications (if needed) will be required (and the appeal period completed), before the City will issue any required grading or building permits.

All required permits will need to be issued by the City prior to starting any work or construction related to your business or project. If work is started prior to obtaining permits, additional costs, and significant time delays may be incurred.

Meanwhile, during the plan check process:

- Check with Fire Prevention for separate or deferred permit requirements (i.e. fire sprinklers, alarm, etc.)
- Verify with Planning about signage requirements



## 7. BUILD & INSPECT

### Build



Construction may begin as soon as the grading or building permit is issued. Additionally, a fire permit may be required before construction can begin, depending on the scope of the project.

### Inspect

A certificate of occupancy will be issued once all construction has been completed, and all construction work has been inspected and approved by City staff.

All required fees must be paid (permit fee, mitigation fees, etc.), and any required covenants must be recorded, prior to the issuance of the certificate of occupancy.

## CELEBRATE!

Once you have been issued your certificate of occupancy you are done! Congratulations on your successful opening in Encinitas!



## HOW DID WE DO?

We welcome and value your feedback, please take a minute to let us know how we are doing by filling out our [customer survey](#). Thank you!

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

### Business Registrations

To operate a business in the City of Encinitas, you will need to obtain a business registration. You can apply for a business registration through the City's Customer Self-Service (CSS) portal. You will need to register for a CSS account before you can apply. To register, [click here](#). To obtain a business registration, you will also need an Employer Identification Number or Tax Identification Number issued by the Internal Revenue Service.

In some instances, you will also need to provide City staff with a written statement of operations for your business, to assist them with classifying your business and confirming the zoning requirements.

### Important Contact Information:

**Building:** (760) 633-2730 or [building@encinitasca.gov](mailto:building@encinitasca.gov)

**Engineering:** (760) 633-633-2706 or [developmenteng@encinitasca.gov](mailto:developmenteng@encinitasca.gov)

**Fire Prevention:** (760) 633-2820 or [fireprevention@encinitasca.gov](mailto:fireprevention@encinitasca.gov)

**Planning:** (760) 633-2710 or [planning@encinitasca.gov](mailto:planning@encinitasca.gov)