

WELCOME TO POULSBO

POULSBO
AT THE CROSSROADS OF PUGET SOUND

Your Guide to Starting & Growing a Business

Permits • Licensing • Resources • Connections

Updated November 2026

WHY POULSBO?

A Great Place to Do Business

Poulsbo serves as a commercial, employment, residential, and visitor center for North Kitsap and the greater West Sound. Its location provides access to the Kitsap Peninsula, Olympic Peninsula, and the greater Puget Sound region.

The City's adopted Economic Development Element specifically describes Poulsbo as North Kitsap's commercial, employment and residential center and emphasizes the relationship between economic vitality, quality of life, and Poulsbo's identity.



WELCOME + START HERE



Velkommen til Poulsbo!

Poulsbo is a great place to start, grow, and invest in a business. Our local businesses are an important part of what makes Poulsbo a vibrant place to live, work, shop, and visit.

The City's Planning & Economic Development Department is here to help you understand the City's requirements, navigate the permitting process, and connect with resources that can help your business succeed.

Found the perfect location?

Talk to us before you sign a lease or purchase property.

A location that worked for one business may not necessarily work for another. Zoning, parking, building requirements, utilities, and the previous use of a space can all affect what is required to open your business. A quick conversation with City staff early in the process can help identify potential requirements before you make a major investment.





Not sure where to start? Start with us.
Planning & Economic Development
360-394-9748, plan&econ@cityofpoulsbo.com

BEFORE YOU OPEN



What Will My Business Need?

Every business is different. Your location, type of business, building improvements, signage, and site changes determine which permits and approvals may apply.

OPENING IN AN EXISTING SPACE

YOU MAY NEED:

- Zoning/use confirmation
- Business license
- Building or fire review if the use of the space changes

REMODELING A SPACE

YOU MAY NEED:

- Building permit
- Mechanical, plumbing, or electrical permits
- Fire review
- Planning review for exterior changes

BUILDING OR EXPANDING

YOU MAY NEED:

- Land use approval
- Building permits
- Engineering review
- Utility review
- Grading/site development permits
- Design review

OPENING A FOOD OR BEVERAGE BUSINESS

YOU MAY ALSO NEED:

- Kitsap Public Health District approval
- Fire review
- Grease interceptor or utility coordination
- State liquor licensing, if applicable

ADDING A SIGN

Most permanent signs require City review and/or permits. Different standards apply depending on location and sign type.

WORKING FROM HOME

Home-based businesses may be subject to the City's home occupation requirements.

Not sure what applies? That's normal.

You don't need to figure out the City's codes on your own. Contact PED and tell us what you're proposing, we'll help identify the next steps.

Zoning Map

Applications/ Handouts

Municipal Code

YOUR OPENING CHECKLIST

Your Poulsbo Business Checklist

1 BEFORE YOU CHOOSE YOUR SPACE

- [ ] Identify the location you're considering
- [ ] Confirm the proposed business is allowed by zoning
- [ ] Ask whether parking or site requirements apply
- [ ] Ask whether the previous use of the space affects permitting
- [ ] Identify any improvements you plan to make

2 BEFORE YOU START WORK

Depending on your project:

- [ ] Planning approval
- [ ] Building permit
- [ ] Engineering or right-of-way permit
- [ ] Fire review
- [ ] Health District review
- [ ] Sign permit
- [ ] Other state or local approvals

3 BEFORE YOU OPEN

- [ ] Obtain your Washington State business license
- [ ] Obtain your City of Poulsbo business license endorsement
- [ ] Complete required construction and inspections
- [ ] Establish utilities and services
- [ ] Complete applicable health/fire approvals
- [ ] Review City B&O tax requirements
- [ ] Install approved signage

4 AFTER YOU OPEN

- [ ] Connect with local business organizations
- [ ] Add your events to community calendars when eligible
- [ ] Explore local marketing and tourism resources
- [ ] Keep City and State licenses current
- [ ] Stay connected with the City

KEEP THIS PAGE!

Use this checklist as a starting point. Not every item applies to every business.

When in doubt, ask. We're happy to help.

SIGNAGE At a Glance

Planning & Economic Development reviews signs for compliance with zoning standards, including size, location, and content. Sign permits are obtained through the Building Department, which reviews the sign for installation and safety requirements.

C-1
DOWNTOWN / FRONT STREET

WALL SIGNS

- **30 SF**, or 1 SF per 1 linear foot of facade
- Maximum **50 SF** total signage
- Combined sign length: max **55%** of building frontage
- Up to **3** wall-mounted signs per building (special rules apply to multiple-business buildings)
- Hanging + awning signs preferred

FREESTANDING SIGNS

- Maximum **50 SF** per face
- Maximum **12 FT** high
- Monument signs required
- Generally **1** per street frontage

Awning copy counts as wall signage; sign length on awning max 40% of awning length. Wall-painted business signs require a permit and count toward sign area.

C-2 • C-3 • C-4
COMMERCIAL

WALL SIGNS

- **50 SF**, or 1 SF per 1 linear foot of facade
- Maximum **250 SF** total signage
- Combined sign length: max **70%** of building frontage
- Up to **4** wall-mounted signs per building (special rules apply to multiple-business buildings)
- Channel letters preferred

FREESTANDING SIGNS

- Maximum **75 SF** per face
- Maximum **15 FT** high
- Generally **1** per street frontage
- Minimum **100 FT** between freestanding signs on same property
- Landscaping required at base

Directional signs max 6 SF per face and do not count toward freestanding-sign maximum. Drive-through menu boards max 30 SF and 7 FT high.

OCI • BP • LI
BUSINESS + EMPLOYMENT

WALL SIGNS

- Maximum **50 SF**, or 1 SF per 1 linear foot of facade
- Maximum **250 SF** per sign
- Combined sign length: max **70%** of building frontage
- No wall sign above roof line/parapet
- Multi-occupancy: generally 1 wall sign per tenant/use

FREESTANDING SIGNS

- Maximum **75 SF** per face
- Maximum **15 FT** high
- Generally **1** per street frontage
- Landscaping required at base

Business directory wall sign allowed per street frontage, max 16 SF. Directional signs max 6 SF per face.

TEMPORARY SIGNS

- Generally no permit when temporary-sign standards are met
- Grand opening / sale / promotion / special-event signs: max 14 consecutive days
- Longer than 14 days requires a permit
- Temporary signs cannot be used as continuous business advertising
- Must not block sidewalks, streets, driveways, traffic controls, transit stops, hydrants, or create a safety hazard

SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS

A simple way to let people know you're open.

SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS

Sandwich board signs can help businesses attract pedestrians and let customers know they're open. In Poulsbo, sandwich boards are allowed subject to location, placement, size, and other requirements.

WHERE CAN IT GO?

KEEP IT WITH YOUR BUSINESS.

Place the sign directly in front of your business, or in the right-of-way on the same side of the street and immediately adjacent to your business.

Off-premises sandwich board signs are not permitted.

Sandwich boards may only be placed on sidewalks in the C-1 Downtown zoning district, and must maintain the required sidewalk width.



HOW BIG?

KEEP IT COMPACT.

- Maximum sign face: 6 square feet per side.
- Maximum height: 4 feet.
- One sign per street frontage, with no more than two total per business.
- Signs cannot be elevated off the ground to increase their allowed height.

KEEP THE WAY CLEAR

DON'T BLOCK PEOPLE, VEHICLES, OR VISIBILITY.

- Maintain required pedestrian/ADA clearance on the sidewalk.
- Do not obstruct pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, building entrances, steps, or driveways.
- Keep out of sight-vision clearance areas and at least 5 feet from wheelchair ramps.
- Do not place signs in a roadway, traffic island, median, or traffic circle.

WHEN CAN IT BE OUT?

ONLY WHILE YOU'RE OPEN.

- May be displayed between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. on days the business is open.
- Must be removed daily.
- Signs left continuously displayed may be removed by the City and the permit may be revoked.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED. Sandwich boards displayed more than 14 days in a calendar year require City registration. There is no registration fee. A current Poulsbo business license number is required.



LICENSES, TAXES + CITY SERVICES

Getting Down to Business

BUSINESS LICENSE

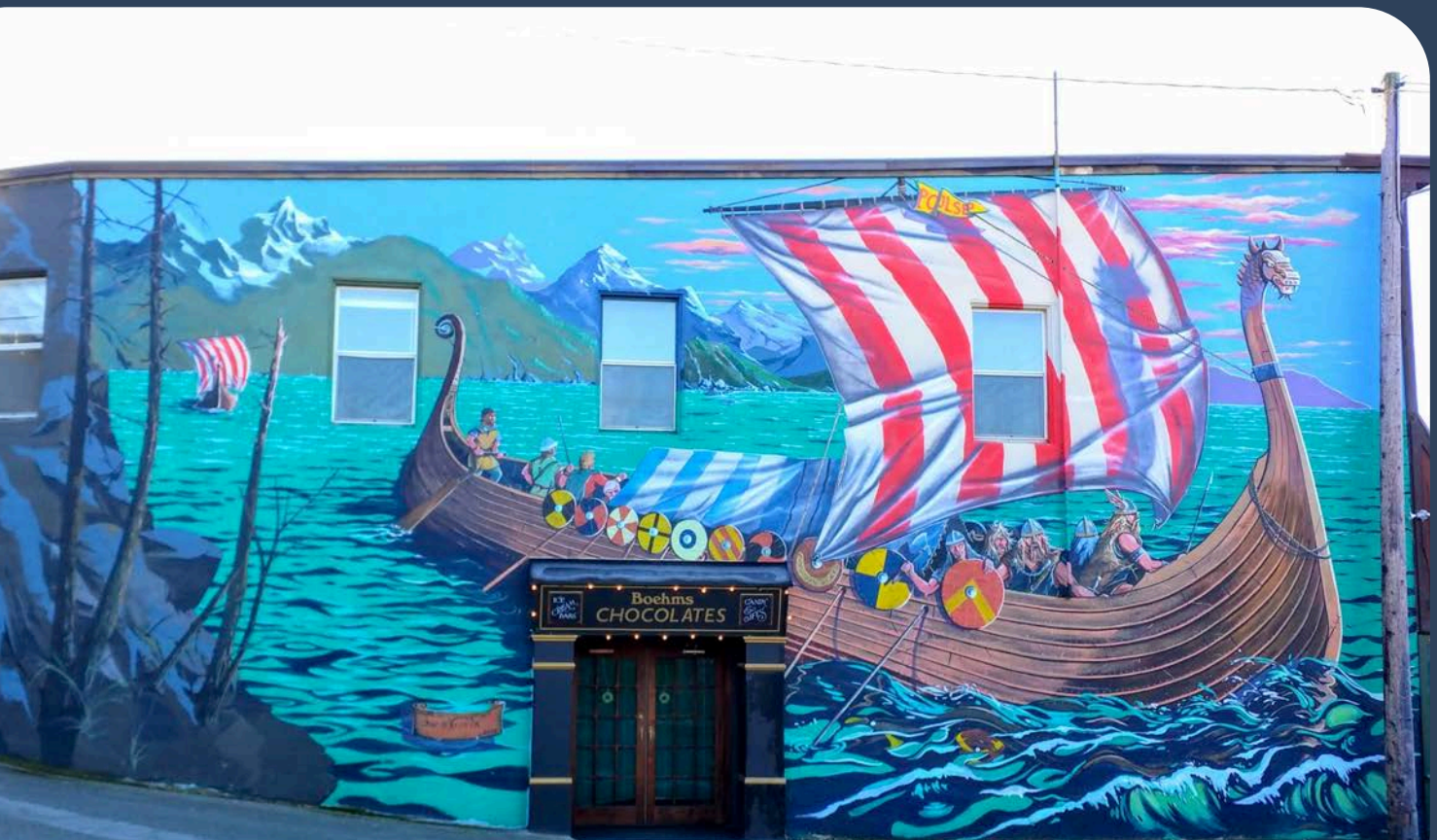
Businesses operating in Poulsbo generally need an endorsed City of Poulsbo business license, issued through Washington State's Business Licensing Service.

https://poulsbo.gov/licensing/

CITY B&O TAX

Poulsbo has a local Business & Occupation (B&O) tax. This is separate from Washington State's B&O tax. Requirements, thresholds, forms, deadlines, and filing information can change, so visit the City's B&O Tax webpage for current information.

https://poulsbo.gov/b-and-o-tax/



WHO DO I CALL?

ONE CALL IS ENOUGH TO START.
You don't need to know which department you need before contacting the City. Start with Planning & Economic Development: 360-394-9748

Planning & Economic Development
Zoning • Land Use • Signs • Site Development

CONTACT
(360) 394-9748
planning@poulsbo.gov

Building
Construction • Remodels • Building Permits • Inspections

CONTACT
(360) 394-9882
building@poulsbo.gov

Engineering
Utilities • Streets • Right-of-Way • Civil Improvements

CONTACT
(360) 394-9737
engineering@poulsbo.gov

Finance
B&O Tax • City Financial Requirements

CONTACT
(360) 394-9881
finance@poulsbo.gov

Public Works
Water • Sewer • Stormwater • Garbage/Recycling

CONTACT
(360) 394-9888
publicworks@poulsbo.gov

Poulsbo Fire Department
Fire alarms • Safety inspections • Permits • Fire prevention

CONTACT
(360) 779-3997
adminsupportservices@poulsbofire.org
(not a city department)

Kitsap Public Health
Food permitting • Food safety • Health and sanitation requirements

CONTACT
(360) 728-2235
(not a city department)



RESOURCES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

You Don't Have to Do It Alone

Poulsbo businesses have access to local and regional organizations that can help with planning, financing, workforce needs, networking, promotion, and growth.

START + GROW

Kitsap Economic Development Alliance
Business assistance, economic development, and regional resources.

Washington Small Business Development Center
Confidential business advising and educational resources.

SCORE
Business mentoring and education.

CONNECT LOCALLY

Greater Poulsbo Chamber of Commerce
Business networking, advocacy, and community connections.

Historic Downtown Poulsbo Association
Resources and promotion for downtown businesses.

Port of Poulsbo
Port and waterfront economic-development resources.

PROMOTE + WELCOME VISITORS

Visit Poulsbo
Visitor information, tourism, and local promotion.

Visit Kitsap Peninsula
Regional tourism and destination marketing.

WORKFORCE + EDUCATION

Olympic College

Western Washington University – Peninsulas

WorkSource / regional workforce resources

GET CONNECTED



You're Part of Poulsbo Now.

Opening a business is about more than permits and licenses. It's also about becoming part of a community.

Calendar of Community Events:
https://poulsbo.gov/community-events-calendar/









Velkommen to Poulsbo.
We're glad you're here.

Questions? Start with us.
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