

Home Based Business Licence FAQ

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General

<p>What is a home-based business?</p>	<p>Generally, home-based businesses are any commercial activity undertaken by someone from their own home.</p> <p>Home-based businesses do not include childcare, short-term rental accommodation, or renting a suite in a house as these activities are already subject to existing City regulations and licencing processes.</p>
<p>Are there activities that would not be considered a home-based business?</p>	<p>Yes, there are activities that would not be considered a home-based business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working from home (WFH) situations in which people have a home office or desk space for a job they work at remotely. • childcare or short-term rental (e.g., AirBnB) as those are covered by other policies and regulations. • Property rental (i.e., being a landlord).
<p>Are there businesses that would not be eligible to operate as a home-based business?</p>	<p>Yes, the following uses would not be eligible to operate as a home-based business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis retail store • Casino • Electronic cigarette (vape) and/or tobacco retail store • Liquor store • Small-scale pharmacy

Can products or materials be sold in the home-based business?	Yes, products or materials can be sold in the home-based business.
Do I need a business licence to operate a home-based business?	Yes, a business licence is required to operate a home-based business. For more information, please visit Get a business licence City of Vancouver .
Do I need insurance to operate a home-based business?	Business insurance is not required to apply for a home-based business licence. However, you may wish to insure your business, especially if you have employees or customers coming to your home as home insurance policies typically do not cover commercial activities.
Will operating a home-based business increase my City of Vancouver taxes?	<p>Most home-based business within Metro Vancouver are accessory to the main residential use, and therefore are only taxed at the residential rate.</p> <p>However, should a business be deemed by BC Assessment to be high visibility or occupying a significant portion of the residence, a split classification (commercial and residential rates) would be applied. Please see BC Assessment's Home Based Business Properties Policy for more information.</p>
Residence Requirements	
Do you have to own your home to operate a home-based business?	<p>Home-based businesses must be operated by someone living within the residence, but they do not need to own the residence themselves. If you live in a secondary suite or rental unit, the suite/unit must have a long-term rental business licence (obtained by rental property owner) in order for a business licence to be issued to a tenant.</p> <p>Please check with the property owner prior to pursuing a home-based business to ensure there are no other agreements preventing the operation of a home-based business (e.g. lease or rental agreements).</p>
My strata bylaw and/or rental agreement doesn't allow home-based businesses, do Vancouver regulations supersede those restrictions?	No, if your strata bylaws or rental agreement do not allow home-based businesses Vancouver's regulations will not supersede those restrictions.

<p>Can I operate a home-based business in a residence without street-level access, such as an apartment or condo?</p>	<p>Yes, home-based businesses are permitted in a residence without street-level access.</p> <p>However, if the residence is part of a strata, please check the strata bylaws to ensure there are no other strata regulations preventing a home-based business.</p>
<p>Can I operate my business out of my secondary suite?</p>	<p>A home-based business must be operated by a person who resides in the dwelling unit.</p> <p>If you live in a secondary suite, and the suite has a valid long-term rental business licence obtained by the rental property owner, you can operate a home-based business (with landlord approval).</p> <p>If you do not live in the secondary suite, or have an empty or unused suite, you cannot operate a home-based business from it unless the suite is decommissioned and incorporated back into the main residential dwelling.</p>
<p>I'm planning to rent out the residence that I operate my home-based business from. Is this allowed?</p>	<p>No, this is not permitted. You must reside where you operate your home-based business.</p>
<p>Can I operate my business out of my garage or shed?</p>	<p>No. A home-based business must be located within the dwelling unit which does not include accessory buildings such as garages or sheds. However, items related to the home-based business can be stored in accessory buildings.</p>
<p>Can my home-based business operate outdoors?</p>	<p>No, a home-based business can only operate within the dwelling unit, which does not include outdoors.</p>
<p>I am using my garage/accessory building for storage, are there limits on how much I can store?</p>	<p>Yes, there are limits on business-related storage in accessory buildings.</p> <p>Storage in garages should be ancillary to the storage of vehicles; the entire garage should not be converted into storage and should be able to accommodate the permitted number of vehicle(s) at all times. Underground parking garages are to be used primarily for vehicle storage.</p>
<p>My business involves the storage of flammable and/or combustible liquids, can I store that material in my home or accessory building?</p>	<p>Vancouver's Fire Bylaw permits storage of flammable and/or combustible material if the following regulations are maintained:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage in a residence is limited to a maximum of 30 litres, of which up to 10 litres can be a flammable liquid (Class 1 liquid, such as gasoline). • Flammable and combustible liquids shall not be stored on exterior balconies. • Propane shall not be stored in a building. <p>Because a home-based business is accessory to residential use all applicable fire and building code requirements related to residential use still need to be followed.</p> <p>For more information and specific enquiries about flammable and combustible liquid storage, please contact the Fire Prevention Office.</p>
<p>Will there be building upgrades triggered or new building code requirements if I start a home-based business?</p>	<p>If you are making alterations to the dwelling unit, you will need to get the appropriate building permits like with any home renovation. However, if you are not making alterations, no building code requirements or upgrades will be required.</p>
<p>Can I convert my attached garage into living space and operate my home-based business in that area?</p>	<p>While the Vancouver Building Bylaw does permit conversion of attached garages into living space, through renovations and upgrades to the garage, a homeowner would first need to confirm that converting the garage into living space would not exceed the floor area maximums outlined in the Zoning and Development Bylaw.</p> <p>The Zoning and Development Bylaw outlines different floor area maximums for dwellings depending on what District Schedule the dwelling is located in. Garages are typically exempted from floor area maximums as they are not considered “habitable space”. If converting a garage into living space would exceed the permitted floor area maximum, that conversion would not be permitted.</p>
<p>My detached garage was converted to living space, can I operate a home-based business in that area?</p>	<p>If a detached garage is converted into living space associated with the principal dwelling unit, not converted and used as a separate dwelling unit</p>

	<p>such as a laneway home, the detached garage would be considered an accessory building. While accessory buildings can be used for home-based business related storage, a home-based business cannot be operated from an accessory building.</p> <p>If the detached garage was converted to a separate dwelling unit, such as a laneway home, the resident(s) of the laneway home could operate a home-based business as the converted garage would be considered a dwelling unit not an accessory building.</p>
Customer and Employee Requirements	
<p>Is there a limit to how many customers visit the business at a time? If the home-based business is related to instruction (e.g. music lessons), is there a limit on the number of students that can attend?</p>	<p>Home-based business(es) can have a maximum of 3 customers or students visit at one time. If there is more than one home-based business operating within a residence, the number of customers or students would remain at a total of 3 persons.</p>
<p>Can customers come to the home-based business anytime?</p>	<p>Customers are only permitted by appointment between 8 am and 8 pm on weekdays and between 10 am and 8 pm on weekends and holidays. Customers are not permitted to come to the business without an appointment or outside the hours stated above.</p>
<p>Why are customers only permitted between 8 am and 8 pm on weekdays and 10 am and 8 pm on weekends?</p>	<p>The time restriction for customers is to manage traffic, noise, security, and other potential impacts to neighbours.</p>
<p>Can the home-based business have more than 2 non-resident employees?</p>	<p>No. There can be no more than 2 non-resident employees engaged in home-based business(es) from one dwelling.</p>
<p>I want to start a home-based business with someone else who does not live in my home, would that person be considered a business owner/operator or would they be considered a non-resident employee?</p>	<p>A home-based business can only be carried on by a person who resides in the dwelling unit. Meaning that any additional business owner/operators who do not live in the dwelling unit would be considered a non-resident employee and count towards the 2 non-resident employee maximum.</p>
Signage Requirements	
<p>Is business signage permitted?</p>	<p>One small identification sign is permitted as per Section 6.12 of the Sign Bylaw (i.e., a sign with an area no greater than 0.20 m²). Beyond that there should be no indication that there is a home-based business operating inside the residence,</p>

<p>Can I advertise my home-based business online?</p>	<p>Yes, you can advertise your home-based business online. While the City has restrictions regarding physical signage on the property or dwelling unit, there are no restrictions regarding online advertisement.</p>
<p>Can I store materials on the property or display items for sale on my lawn?</p>	<p>No. Outside storage or display of goods, equipment, materials or supplies is not allowed for Home-Based Businesses</p>
<p>Multiple Home-based Businesses within a Residence</p>	
<p>Can there be multiple home-based businesses operating within the same residence?</p>	<p>Yes, multiple home-based businesses are permitted within the same residence. However, restrictions on number of employees, customers, and total floor area apply to all businesses within the residence.</p>
<p>As an individual, can I operate more than one home-based business within my residence?</p>	<p>Yes, an individual can operate more than one home-based business as long as the applicable regulations and business licence conditions are followed (i.e. maximum number of employees involved in a home-based business, floor area maximums, customer group size).</p>
<p>If there are multiple home-based businesses within a dwelling, do the total floor area, customer group size, and number of employee maximums apply to each business or all businesses?</p>	<p>The maximum floor area, number of employees, and customer group size would apply to all businesses operating within the dwelling unit to ensure any home-based business(es) remain accessory to the principal dwelling use.</p> <p>For example, if there are two home-based businesses within a dwelling unit the maximum number of non-resident employees would remain at two persons. How those two persons are divided among the businesses is up to the business operators/owners (i.e. one business has one resident owner/operator and two non-resident employees, and the other business would have one resident owner/operator).</p>
<p>Why does the 3-customer maximum apply to all home-based businesses operating within a residence? Why can't each business have 3 customers at a time?</p>	<p>The 3-customer limit for all home-based businesses within a residence is to manage the flow and number of visitors to a residential address. Because there is no limit on how many businesses can operate within a dwelling unit, allowing each</p>

	business up to three customers at one time could be impactful on neighbours.
I live in a four-plex, both me and my neighbour operate a home-based business. We are in different dwelling units within the four-plex but located on the same lot. Are the regulations regarding customers, employees, and total floor area applied to each lot or each dwelling unit?	The home-based business regulations are applied to each dwelling unit, not each lot. Both you and your neighbour can operate a home-based business within separate dwelling units without having to “share” the customer, employee, or floor area maximums. The customer, employee, and floor area maximums are only shared between multiple home-based businesses when they are operating within the same residence (i.e. you and your roommate both have a business).
I live in a secondary suite or laneway home. Are the regulations regarding customers, employees, and total floor area applied to secondary suite/laneway home and the principal residence?	The home-based business regulations are applied to each dwelling unit, not each lot. A secondary suite, laneway home, and principal residence are considered separate dwelling units and do not have to “share” the customer, employee, or floor area maximums.
Parking and Loading Requirements	
Do I need to provide on-site parking for my home-based business?	No, there are no parking requirements for home-based business. However, business operators are strongly encouraged to provide parking on-site if the business will have employees, as employees will not be eligible to purchase permits to park in residential permit parking areas.
Are there any loading requirements for my home-based business?	No, there are no loading requirements for home-based business. However, large vehicles (over 2.2m in height or over 6.4m in length) are not allowed to park on-street overnight, between 10 pm and 6 am. As such, home-based businesses should provide overnight parking for these vehicles on-site or at another off-street location.
There is plenty of street parking near my residence, can I rely on that parking for my business?	Street parking is not guaranteed and could be converted to other uses (e.g. bus lanes, bike lanes, patios or closed to vehicles altogether). The best way to have guaranteed parking spaces is to provide them on-site.

<p>Can I purchase residential parking permits in relation to my home-based business?</p>	<p>No, home-based businesses will not be eligible to purchase permits to park in residential permit parking areas for employees or customers. The best way to have guaranteed parking spaces is to provide them on-site.</p>
<p>Can I use the visitor parking spaces in my strata building for employee or customer parking.</p>	<p>The City does not regulate use of visitor parking stalls in strata buildings. Please contact your strata council or representative to determine if use of these stalls would be permitted for customers or employees related to the home-based business.</p>
<p>Vancouver Coastal Health Requirements</p>	
<p>I want to operate a home-based business related to food product preparation (e.g. baked goods, prepared meals, catering), can I use my kitchen to make these items?</p>	<p>The approval and operation of a business involving food is a regulated activity and as such, subject to provincial regulations and guidelines administered and enforced by Vancouver Coastal Health. In general, the requirements for a food premises would prevent it from being approved as a home-based business. Please see the Food Premises Regulation for more information.</p> <p>There is a limited exception for those who wish to prepare low-risk foods, such as jams or baked goods, but these foods may only be sold at temporary markets (i.e. farmers markets). Please see Vancouver Coastal Health's website on temporary events and market permits and the Provincial Guidelines for Sale of Food at Temporary Food Markets for more information.</p>
<p>What would be considered a low-risk food item?</p>	<p>Please refer to the Provincial Guidelines for Sale of Food at Temporary Food Markets for more information, and, Appendix I for a list of examples of lower risk foods.</p>
<p>I want to operate a home-based business related to personal services (hair cutting, barber, nail technician, massage, eyebrow microblading), are there any additional requirements or licences needed?</p>	<p>The approval and operation of a personal service establishment is a regulated activity and as such, is subject to provincial regulations and guidelines administered and enforced by Vancouver Coastal Health. The ability to operate a personal service establishment as a home-based business will depend on the size and layout of a dwelling. The client and cleaning areas need to be entirely separate from the rest of the dwelling.</p>

	<p>Please see Vancouver Coastal Health’s website on personal service establishments and the Provincial Guidelines for Personal Service Establishments for more information. Please note, a floor plan will need to be submitted to Vancouver Coastal Health for review and approval prior to business licence issuance.</p>
<p>If I am registered professional (e.g. registered massage therapist, registered professional counsellor), do the Vancouver Coastal Health regulations apply to me?</p>	<p>If you are a regulated health professional governed by a regulatory college and framework and providing only the services for which you are registered, the personal service establishment regulations and guidelines that Vancouver Coastal Health enforces do not apply. Please visit Government of BC Professional Regulation webpage for more information to determine whether your profession is a regulated health profession.</p> <p>Please see the Provincial Guidelines for Personal Service Establishments for more information.</p>
<p>Why are there different rules for me offering shiatsu massages but my friend, who is a Registered Massage Therapist (RMT), doesn't have to follow them?</p>	<p>Because registered professionals, such as RMTs, have separate regulatory frameworks and professional colleges that regulate their registrants and their scope of practice. Vancouver Coastal Health regulations only apply when a person is not a registered professional, or, if they are conducting activities that are not within their professional scope.</p> <p>Please visit Government of BC Professional Regulation webpage for more information to determine whether your profession is a regulated health profession.</p> <p>For more information, please see the Vancouver Coastal Health’s website on personal service establishments or the Provincial Guidelines for Personal Service Establishments.</p>
<p>Can I operate a restaurant or café as a home-based business?</p>	<p>The operation of a food service establishment is a regulated activity and as such, subject to provincial regulations administered and enforced by Vancouver Coastal Health. In general, the requirements for a food service establishment</p>

	<p>would prevent it from being approved as a home-based business. Please visit Vancouver Coastal Health’s website on Food Service Permits & Health Approvals for more information.</p> <p>Restaurants and cafes are subject to both the City’s home-based business regulations as well as various provincial guidelines and requirements (Food Premise Regulation, Health Operating Permit, Liquor Licences, Music & Entertainment Licences). If a restaurant or café proposal can meet all the requirements, city and provincial, their application would be considered. However, the City’s home-based business regulations, such as only allowing customers by appointment, three customers at one time, and floor area maximums, would still need to be followed.</p> <p>Please note, a floor plan will need to be submitted to Vancouver Coastal Health for review and approval prior to business licence issuance.</p>
<p>Does my home-based business need to comply with health and safety regulations or guidelines?</p>	<p>While the City of Vancouver does not have specific health and safety regulations or guidelines for home-based businesses, all businesses are responsible to ensure they are in compliance with all applicable local, provincial and/or federal Acts, Regulations and/or bylaws pertaining to their business activities. Businesses, such as food preparation and personal service establishments are regulated activities in BC.</p> <p>Please see Vancouver Coastal Health’s website on Food Service Permits & Health Approvals, Temporary Events & Market Permits, and Personal service establishments for more information.</p> <p>In addition, home-based businesses that have employees are subject to WorkSafe BC requirements. See WorkSafe BC website for more information.</p>

Complaints and Property Use Inspections

<p>My neighbour’s home-based business is very disruptive and not following the regulations, how can make a complaint?</p>	<p>Issues with home-based businesses not following the regulations and/or other City Bylaws can be submitted to the City with Van311. Once submitted, the issue will be forwarded to the applicable team who will then assess appropriate next steps.</p> <p>Please visit the City’s Van311 webpage for more information.</p>
<p>A complaint was submitted about my home-based business, what happens next?</p>	<p>If a complaint was submitted to the City, staff will review the complaint to determine if further investigation is required. If further investigation is not required (i.e. the home-based business is following the applicable regulations and business licence conditions) the complaint file will be closed.</p> <p>If staff determine that a complaint does require further investigation, staff will work with the business operator/resident to come into compliance.</p>
<p>Property Use Inspections performed a site visit of my home-based business and determined that my residence is not compliant with other City regulations not related to home-based business (i.e. building code, short-term rental), what happens next?</p>	<p>If City staff discover that a residence is not compliant with applicable City bylaws, whether it be home-based business, building code, short-term rental, or any other City regulation, staff will work with the homeowner/resident to come into compliance. City staff cannot overlook compliance issues even if the issue is different than the original intent of the site visit.</p>
<p>Difference between Home-Based Business and the Live-Work Uses</p>	
<p>How are home-based businesses different from live-work use?</p>	<p>Live-work uses are specialized spaces designed and built according to regulations in the Zoning & Development Bylaw and Vancouver Building By-Law (VBBL). While live-work uses are similar to home-based business, as you can live as well as run a business from the same unit, live-work uses have their own set of regulations which are different than home-based business regulations.</p> <p>One of the most notable differences between live-work use and home-based businesses is that the business does not have to be accessory to a residential use within a live-work space, either use can operate from the unit without one being accessory to the other. However, because the</p>

	<p>business is not accessory to the residential use in live-work spaces there are VBBL requirements for commercial units which need to be adhered to, as well as taxation implications with BC Assessment.</p> <p>See the City's Live-Work Use Guidelines for more information.</p>
<p>Is my Artist Studio a home-based business?</p>	<p>A residential unit associated with and forming an integral part of an artist studio (as described in Section 11.3.5 of the Zoning and Development Bylaw) would not be considered a home-based business. While similar to home-based business, artist studios have their own set of regulations which are different than home-based business regulations.</p> <p>The most notable difference is a residential unit associated with and forming an integral part of an artist studio is limited to the production of art only. Whereas home-based businesses could support a wider range of business activities beyond artist studios.</p> <p>See the City's Artist Studio Guidelines for more information.</p>