

Commercial Zoning: A Plain-English Guide

Commercial properties are governed by local zoning codes that determine what types of businesses are permitted at a given location. Zoning rules vary by municipality, but most communities use similar zoning categories. This guide provides a starting point to help buyers, tenants, and sellers understand which zoning types may support different business uses.

Zoning must always be verified with the local municipality before leasing or purchasing a property.

Neighborhood Commercial (NC / CN)

Typically allows: Small retail shops, cafés, personal services, professional offices.

Often not allowed: Large restaurants, drive-throughs, manufacturing.

Good fit for: Low-impact businesses serving nearby residents.

General Commercial (C-1 / C-2 / GC)

Typically allows: Retail, restaurants, offices, medical and service businesses.

Often not allowed: Uses requiring special approvals without permits.

Good fit for: Most storefront businesses and many restaurant concepts.

Downtown / Mixed-Use Commercial (DMU / MXD)

Typically allows: Retail, restaurants, offices, residential units above commercial space.

Often not allowed: Uses restricted by design or historic guidelines.

Good fit for: Restaurants, boutiques, offices, and mixed-use developments.

Office / Professional (O / OP)

Typically allows: Medical offices, legal and accounting services, administrative offices.

Often not allowed: Retail, restaurants, manufacturing.

Good fit for: Appointment-based or low-traffic businesses.

Industrial / Manufacturing (I / M / Light Industrial)

Typically allows: Warehousing, manufacturing, distribution, contractor yards.

Often not allowed: Retail storefronts or restaurants.

Good fit for: Operational, production, or storage-based businesses.

Quick Examples

Restaurant: General Commercial or Mixed-Use zoning.

Retail shop or salon: Neighborhood or General Commercial zoning.

Warehouse or fabrication: Industrial zoning.

Professional office: Office or Commercial zoning.

This guide is intended for general planning purposes only and does not replace municipal zoning confirmation or legal advice. Zoning classifications, permitted uses, and approval requirements vary by location.



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