



# **THE GROSSE POINTE WOODS BUSINESS OWNERS' HANDBOOK**

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## **Welcome to the Grosse Pointe Woods Business District**

The health of any community is closely tied to the success of its commercial district. Recognizing this, the City of Grosse Pointe Woods has developed specific standards, regulations and ordinances, which work to enhance the beauty and vitality of the area, and create an optimal business environment.

This booklet was designed to assist those persons bringing in new businesses to Grosse Pointe Woods. It offers a step-by-step process for obtaining the necessary business license and certificate of occupancy. It also serves as guide for established business owners who plan to remodel or make other improvements. References to the pertinent standards, regulations and ordinances are

included, together with suggestions to facilitate compliance with the ordinances and, where necessary, on how to seek variances.

Since each particular type of business and location has its own unique set of possibilities, one booklet cannot cover all situations, and following these steps cannot guarantee approval of your application. Individual communication with the Building Department is an essential part of the process. Call (313) 343-2426 during regular business hours. The staff is eager to help you in any way possible to be successful in your business or professional endeavor.



## THE STEPS

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### PLEASE NOTE:

Every effort has been made to provide helpful and correct information in this Handbook. However, the City of Grosse Pointe Woods does not assume or accept responsibility for any errors or any change in procedures from those set out in this Handbook or any delay occasioned from reliance upon this Handbook.

Affected business and property owners should not consider this Handbook as a substitute for guidance by their attorney or other knowledgeable professional. Business and property owners should ensure that contact is made on a regular basis with the City Clerk to obtain updated or modified portions of the Handbook, especially if any change or alteration to your location is under consideration.

The City has specific Early American/ Colonial guidelines for facade designs,

and those requirements are explained in Section 50-373 of the City Code - Design Standards. It provides building owners, tenants, architects and developers with design guidelines for facade improvements, property improvements and new construction. The standards incorporate the principles of scale, rhythm, repetition and continuity to create harmony between the various building types, and still allow for variety and individuality throughout the business district.

A copy of the Section 50-373 of the City Code - Design Standards, including sample sketches of appropriate architectural elements, is available from the Building Department.

## **IN BRIEF:**

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# **HOW TO START A BUSINESS IN GROSSE POINTE WOODS**

### **FIRST:**

Visit or call the Building Department, (313) 343-2426. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

Talk with the Building Department official to determine if your proposed business meets City requirements, including:

- Does the proposed location (if you have one) meet parking requirements?
- If applicable, has the present building owner obtained the Property Maintenance Inspection?
- Is it a permitted use under "Zoning"?

### **THEN:**

Once it is determined that your proposed business and location meet the City requirements, you should obtain a Business License Application from the Building Department.

Complete the form, in full and take it to the Building Department to be signed. The Building Department will retain a copy, and direct you to the City Clerk to pay the annual license fee and submit your application. The City Clerk will process it once all inspections have been approved.

<p>City Clerk...(313) 343-2440 Building Department...(313) 343-2426 Fire Inspector...(313) 343-2415</p>
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**For more detailed information on business ownership in Grosse Pointe Woods, please refer to the step-by-step information contained in this handbook.**

**Consult the Building Department for applicable fees.**

**City Ordinances and Codes are included under the City Clerk button on the Grosse Pointe Woods website — [www.gpwwi.us](http://www.gpwwi.us).**



## STEP 1:

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### UNDERSTANDING THE COMMERCIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

City regulations describing the “Commercial Business District” are set out in section 50-369 of the City Code. These regulations are important because they define strategic locations to the best advantage of the merchant and the consumer. They describe how buildings will be used – as retail businesses, restaurants, service establishments or medical/dental clinics, for example.

They also describe “Special Land Uses” in section 50-371, such as fast-food restaurants, service stations and taverns, as well as residential or living quarters in conjunction with certain businesses.

The front of the building and its design must adhere to an Early American/Colonial

theme, with any change due to remodeling or reconstruction to be presented to the Building Department.

A copy of the Section 50-373 of the City Code - Design Standards, including sample sketches of appropriate architectural elements, is available from the Building Department.

There are restrictions as to building height, front, side and rear yard limitations, and the all-important off-street parking facilities, which are addressed in Step 8.

*Source:* City Code; see section 50-369 and 50-371, “Commercial Business District” and “Special Land Uses.”

## STEP 2:

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### THE BUSINESS LICENSE

Applying for a Business License begins the process of obtaining inspections and approvals required for a Certificate of Occupancy and opening your business.

Visit the Building Department, and ask for a Business License application. It is advisable at this time that you discuss your proposed business and location with a Building Department official to determine if they meet City zoning, parking and other requirements of specific business types.

Complete the entire application, and submit it to the Building Department for determining if it is in good order and all requirements have been met. Once the

Building Department official signs and copies it, take your application, and a check for the appropriate fee, to the City Clerk who will issue the Business License.

If your business or location do not meet one or more specific City requirements, the Building Department will direct you regarding steps to be taken should you wish to appeal. The City Clerk’s office is available to assist you in the appeal process.

Note that your Business License must be renewed annually, by March 31.

*Source:* City Code; see section 10-19, “License required,” and section 10-21, “Appeal.”

## STEP 3:

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### PROPERTY MAINTENANCE INSPECTION

If you are leasing a building, you should be aware that the building owner must obtain the property maintenance inspection for any proposed building occupancy.

When a former tenant has moved out of a commercial location and a new tenant wishes to move in, the building owner must comply with a property maintenance inspection of the building from the Building Department. The inspection includes checking certain interior and exterior structural standards such as cracks in masonry, condition of roofing, solid stairways, electrical wiring, plumbing lines and heat/air conditioning, condition of paint, miscellaneous site conditions, among others.

The owner of the building either: (a) must obtain the inspection which is valid for two years after any necessary corrections have been made, or (b) must show you a previously obtained, but still valid, Certificate of Occupancy issued from the Building Department. The Certificate of Occupancy is valid for up to four years.

You, the business owner, cannot open the business until the Building Department has a valid Certificate of Occupancy on file. Check on this important requirement.

*Source: City Code; see section 8-61, "Certificate of occupancy required," and Section 8-69, "Inspection Standards."*

## STEP 4:

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### FIRE INSPECTION

Under the MI Occupational Safety and Health Act (MIOSHA) Act No. 154, P.A. of 1974, the City's Fire Inspector is required to be aware of any firm in the community handling hazardous chemicals. This is crucial information for firefighters.

Each new business occupying a building in the city must complete a Hazardous Chemical Survey, available from the Department of Public Safety, whether or not the new business uses or produces hazardous chemicals. The Hazardous Chemical Survey is retained by the Department of Public Safety during the life of the business. If there is a change

concerning the use, production or quantity of hazardous chemicals in the future, the Department would appreciate your updating the Survey information.

Once the Survey is completed and submitted to the Department of Public Safety, and within ten (10) days prior to opening a new business, you must call the Fire Inspector to schedule an appointment for an inspection. As a new business owner, you will find the inspection beneficial, learning practical and useful fire safety tips and information. For further information, contact the Fire Inspector at (313) 343-2415, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays.



## STEP 5:

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### REGULATIONS GOVERNING SIGNS AND AWNINGS

Businesses need and like to advertise their location. The city recognizes this need, and sets minimum standards to regulate the sizes and types of signs and awnings to maintain an attractive balance.

Before you request a sign or application from the Building Department, have a clear idea of what you wish to do, and make or obtain a sketch of it. If you decide not to do this yourself, many contractors are familiar with the procedure and will approach the Building Department on your behalf. Once you have a design in mind, obtain an application from the Building Department.

An important aspect of the signage and awning regulations is color. The city closely

regulates the colors used on the exterior facade, adhering to the Early American Colors, as recommended by the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. These colors are displayed at the Building Department office. Ask to see them.

A detailed ordinance sets forth precisely how signs and awnings may be used. Refer to Chapter 32 of the City Code.

If the Building Department denies your request for a sign permit, you may appeal this decision to the Planning Commission. In addition, the City Council will hear appeals of the Planning Commission decision. For more information on how to appeal sign decisions, check with the City Clerk's office.

## STEP 6:

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### REGULATIONS GOVERNING REMODELING OF FRONT ELEVATIONS

Occasionally, the owner of a new business or someone who has occupied a commercial building for a period of time decides to re-design it, improve it or build a new one. The City welcomes your initiative.

To ensure a consistent look throughout the business district, the Council has adopted storefront design guidelines described in Section 50-373 of the City Code - Design Standard. This information, along with sample sketches of appropriate architectural elements, is available from the Building Department.

Basically, the regulations require you to have plans drawn up by an architect for any storefront facade construction. The Planning

Commission reviews your proposal. To approach the Planning Commission with your proposal, it is necessary to provide a cover letter that sets forth what you wish to do and 14 copies of the rendering and site plan. Submit these materials to the Building Department first. The Building Inspector checks the plans for the following:

- Drawn to scale with dimensions indicating location of building structure on the plot with reference to front, side and rear lot lines, and also indicating loading space, off-street parking spaces and means of ingress and egress, front and rear yard space;
- Exterior of the street elevation of the building, drawn to scale, also a longitudinal

## REMODELING OF FRONT ELEVATIONS . . . continued

section through the building indicating any variances in the roof, front elevations and vertical building lines;

- Review of your letter, or that of the property owner, indicating the intended use of the premises – include name, address and telephone number;
- Color material samples; i.e., brick, siding, shingles, etc.;
- On all plot plans and architectural drawings required to be prepared, if prepared by a registered architect or engineer of the State or Michigan, or if required by law to be so prepared, the seal of the architect or engineer must be affixed to the plans.

It is recommended that you meet with a Building Department official to discuss your plan and what specific requirements may or may not apply to your design.

Meetings of the Planning Commission are held in the Council Chambers at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month (except for holidays – check the City Calendar or with the Building Department). In order to allow for sufficient time for examination of the plans and corrections, if required, approach the Building Department around the first of the month.

All exceptions and amendments required, which perhaps you choose to contest, must be noted in writing by the Building Department in preparation for presentation to the Planning Commission for its consideration.

The proposed plans and copies of all letters from the property or building owner and the Building Department then must be submitted to the Building Department by the third Tuesday of the month to be considered at the next Planning Commission meeting.



## **STEP 7:** \_\_\_\_\_ **REGULATIONS GOVERNING EXTERIOR OF BUILDING OR FACADE**

This subject was mentioned previously in Step 4, as it applied to signs and awnings. It bears repeating because if you, as the business or the property owner, wish to paint, alter or remodel the exterior of any building in the commercial area, the Building Department must review your request.

The department will require you to use only Early American Colors, as recommended by the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

As noted, these colors are displayed at the Building Department, and a color chip pass-out is available free of charge.

*Source:* City Code; see section 8-207, "Paint color requirements in commercial zoning districts."

## **STEP 8:** \_\_\_\_\_ **OFF-STREET PARKING AND PARKING LOT REQUIREMENTS**

You, as the business owner, know that availability of parking is of primary importance for any commercial location. To help you determine if a business location provides enough parking for you, your employees and, most importantly, your customers, the City has determined the number of off-street parking spaces needed for the various businesses.

The "number of minimum parking spaces" for each business category is found in section 50-530 of the City Code.

The Building Department will help you determine if you have adequate parking spaces for your type of business. The square footage of the building, the type of business and the number of employees all play a part in the equation. Bring in the square footage of the location, a detailed description of the parking spaces in the area around the

building, and the number of employees at that location. The department evaluates the information in accordance with section 50-530.

Some commercial locations have private parking lots. The city also has provided municipal parking lots in a number of locations. Both are regulated by section 50-529, which sets forth basic maintenance requirements including ingress and egress, type of surface, street setback lines, side yard, curbs required, lighting and layout of the parking spaces.

*Source:* City Code; section 50-529, "Off-street loading requirements," and section 50-530, "Off-street parking requirements."

