

Home Occupations

WHAT IS A HOME OCCUPATION?

Generally, people living in residential areas expect the character of their neighborhood and the visual amenities around them to be protected from intrusion by commercial businesses. However, under certain circumstances, the zoning ordinance allows a small-scale business to be carried out in a residential dwelling. Such a business, called a "home occupation," may only be carried out by a resident of the dwelling and in such a manner as not to cause a nuisance to neighbors. Home occupations can cover a wide range of activities such as professional services like law offices or accounting, or personal services like salons, dance studio, or music lessons. Things to consider when thinking about a starting a home businesses is, "If someone looks at my house with the home occupation, will it appear any different than before I had the home occupation?" The rule of thumb is that a home-based business should not affect your neighbors in any way.

WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

Any time a citizen conducts business from their home or uses their home address as the place of business, they must obtain a home occupation permit.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR HOME OCCUPATIONS?

Home occupations differ from typical commercial businesses because they must also comply with certain standards specified in the zoning ordinance. The following are the required general standards and structural standards that must be met in order to conduct a home occupation.

General Standards

1. The business must be conducted entirely within the principal building and must be clearly incidental and secondary to the use of the building as a residence.
2. The business must be conducted by a person residing on the premises. No more than one person, other than members of the family residing on the premises in which a home occupation is conducted, shall be regularly engaged in such occupation.
3. A home occupation must not produce any offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odors, heat, gas, glare, electrical or audible interference, or otherwise create a risk to health, safety or property of neighbors.
4. Customers, clients, and deliveries are not permitted to enter the premises between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Depending on the nature of the business and the neighborhood, city staff may reduce the hours of operation.

Structural and Parking Standards

1. No more than 25 percent of the floor area of the home may be used for the business.
2. There must be no evidence of the home occupation on the outside of the building except for a sign and off-street parking as is set forth below.
3. One unlighted sign is allowed, but it can be no larger than 4 square feet in area or taller than 6 feet in height.
4. If there is one full-time equivalent employee in the operation of a home occupation, at least one off-street parking space shall be provided.

PROCEDURE

Application and Notification

Any person proposing a home occupation must file an application with the City. City staff will notify the Police, Fire, and Emergency Services Departments as well as all property owners within 300 feet of the proposed business. The notice will include the nature of the home occupation, whether there will be any employees other than the resident conducting the home occupation, and whether or not customers or clients will visit the site. The notice will also contain an acknowledgment that the applicant is willing to meet with neighboring residents and property owners before the permit is issued. In addition to the above listed standards, staff will accept and consider written comments from neighbors when determining whether the home occupation permit should be granted and what restrictions, if any, should be placed on it.

Permit Issuance

Staff will either issue, with or without conditions, or deny the issuance of a home occupation permit and provide written notice of its decision to the applicant. If approved, the applicant will receive a certificate of home occupation. The permit is not transferable, either as and between successive occupants of the property in question, or from one property in the city to another.

Once you have received a permit for a home occupation, we encourage you to reach out to your neighbors to let them know how they can contact you if there is any disturbance being caused by your business. This often goes a long way toward good neighbor relations and keeping the peace.