

Information on Applying for ABC Licenses

INFORMATION BULLETIN

143

May 2025

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This Information Bulletin (IB) provides information on zoning reviews for ABC License applications and Alcoholic Beverage Outlets

All ABC License Types

This Information Bulletin describes the process for obtaining City approval for [ABC Licenses](#). All applicants requesting an ABC License from the [California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control \(ABC\)](#) must also submit an application for a Zoning Use Verification (ZUV) through the City's [online permitting account](#). To apply for a Zoning Use Verification, select "Others" under "Miscellaneous Applications" when creating a permit application. The application for a ZUV includes the [ABC-255](#) [PDF](#) and the standard review fee.

Alcoholic Beverage Outlet

Any establishment that applies for a Type 20 Off-Sale Beer and Wine License or Type 21 Off-Sale General License for permission to sell alcoholic beverages for off-site consumption shall be regulated as an Alcoholic Beverage Outlet subject to San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) [§141.0502](#) [PDF](#). Applications for a Type 20/21 License may require further review and fees, which are detailed below.

Exemptions from this Review Process

The following Alcoholic Beverage Outlets are exempt from the Limited Use Regulations and the administrative review process described in the following section; please see [SDMC 141.0502\(a\)](#) [PDF](#) for more information.

Standard zoning reviews may be completed for projects identified in this section:

- Hotels, motels, or any other lodging establishments where the area devoted to selling alcoholic beverages for off-site consumption does not exceed 10% of the gross floor area of the entire premises.
- Establishments of more than 15,000 square feet of gross floor area, provided the area devoted to alcohol sales does not exceed 10% of the gross floor area of the entire premise (the premise is defined as the leasehold in which the outlet is located, not the entire multi-tenant building).
- Alcoholic Beverage Outlets that were in existence on Dec. 20, 1995, if the outlet retains the same type of retail liquor license within a license classification and has been in continuous operation without a substantial change in the mode or character of the operation. See SDMC [§141.0502\(a\)\(4\)\(A\)\(B\)](#) [PDF](#) for more information.

Downtown

Establishments with alcoholic beverage sales that are located within the [Downtown Community Plan area](#) [PDF](#) are separately regulated uses that are subject to the regulations of Section 156.0315 of the [Centre City Planned District Ordinance](#) [PDF](#) or Section 157.0305 of the [Gaslamp Quarter Planned District Ordinance](#) [PDF](#). For questions about sites within the Downtown area, please contact the [Urban Division](#).

Administrative Review

If an Alcoholic Beverage Outlet does not qualify for an exemption to the limited use regulations as listed above, it is subject to the comprehensive administrative review process detailed in this section and must provide all the paperwork listed in the Application Requirements section.

Alcoholic Beverage Outlets that are permitted as limited use in zones will be indicated with an "L" in the Use Regulations tables in Chapter 13, Article 1 (Base Zones) and are subject to the regulations in SDMC [§141.0502\(b\)](#) [PDF](#). Planned Districts may permit these outlets as regulated use.

Alcoholic Beverage Outlets are not permitted in any of the following locations:

- Within a census tract, or within 600 feet of a census tract, where the general crime rate exceeds the citywide average general crime rate by more than 20%.
- Within a census tract, or within 600 feet of a census tract, where the ratio of alcoholic beverage outlets exceeds the standards established by the California Business and Professional Code, Section 23958.4.
- Within 600 feet of a public or private accredited school, a public park, a playground or recreational area, a church, a hospital, or a San Diego County welfare district office; and
- Within 100 feet of a residentially zoned property.

The applicant must agree to comply with the operational standards as indicated under SDMC [§141.0502\(b\)\(2\) through \(12\)](#) [PDF](#) and must complete the Agreement to Comply Affidavit as a part of their application.

All applications will be reviewed and a response will be provided within 15 business days from the date the application is deemed complete.

Application Requirements

To apply for an ABC Type 20/21 License, please submit a Zoning Use Verification through your [online permitting account](#). For all Alcoholic Beverage Outlet applications, please provide a copy of all prior discretionary permits. Staff will review the conditions of approval to determine if an Alcoholic Beverage Outlet is permitted by right. Applicants can determine if a site has prior discretionary permits through our records section.

 All documents listed below must be submitted prior to review: [ABC Form-255](#) [PDF](#) (Zoning Affidavit) – City staff will complete #9-14

1. 600-Foot Radius Map

Provide a copy of an [Assessor's Parcel Map](#) outlining a 600-foot radius around the subject property. This step is necessary to confirm that the premises is located outside of the locational constraints listed in the previous section. Please refer to [Information Bulletin 512](#) [PDF](#) for information on how to prepare a radius map.

The map shall identify the following information:

- Public or private accredited schools
- Public parks, playgrounds or recreational areas
- Churches
- Hospitals
- San Diego County Welfare District Office
- Residentially zoned properties within a 100-foot radius around the subject property
- Adjacent census tract(s), including the number of beverage licenses and crime rate

2. ABC Form-245 – Off-Sale & Public Premises Licenses Form

This form must be obtained from the ABC. It contains critical information, including the number of off-sale facilities within each census tract and the high-crime area statistics; it is needed to process your Alcoholic Beverage Outlet application.

3. Form DS-3119 – Agreement to Comply Affidavit [PDF](#)

The applicant must provide the City with a signed [DS-3119](#) [PDF](#) acknowledging that their proposed Alcoholic Beverage Outlet complies with the Limited Use Regulations per [§141.0502\(b\)](#) [PDF](#). This form directly pertains to the 600-foot radius map explained above.

4. Conditional Use Permit Regulations

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is not required for Alcoholic Beverage Outlets that fall outside of the location limitations listed in SDMC [§141.0502\(b\)](#) [PDF](#). Any Alcoholic Beverage Outlets that do not comply with these regulations may be permitted with CUP in accordance with Process Three. For additional information, refer to [Project Submittal Manual Section 4](#).

Fees

All ABC License applications are subject to the standard Alcoholic Beverage Review Fee. Applications requiring the Administrative Review detailed above will also be subject to the Mapping Fee.

Alcoholic Beverage Review Fee Additional fees may be assessed at an hourly rate for fees not covered. Please note that the plan check fee and some administrative fees are non-refundable. See Refund Policy noted within Refund Application Form DS-721 for additional refund information.	\$658.53
Mapping Fee This fee is charged at submittal when plans, drawings, maps or other graphical documents are utilized for project review.	\$11.34

References

- [San Diego Municipal Code \(SDMC\)](#)

Previous Versions of this Information Bulletin

This section contains previous versions of this Information Bulletin by the last day they were effective.

- [2025-05-02 | IB-143](#) [PDF](#)
- [2024-12-31 | IB-143](#) [PDF](#)
- [2024-06-30 | IB-143](#) [PDF](#)

Council Districts

Council President Joe LaCava (District 1)
 Councilmember Jennifer Campbell (District 2)
 Councilmember Stephen Whitburn (District 3)
 Councilmember Henry Foster III (District 4)
 Councilmember Marni von Wilpert (District 5)
 Council President Pro Tem Kent Lee (District 6)
 Councilmember Raul Campillo (District 7)
 Councilmember Vivian Moreno (District 8)
 Councilmember Sean Bo-Rivera (District 9)

City Officials & Independent Offices

Office of Mayor Todd Gloria
 City Attorney Heather Ferbert
 Ethics Commission
 Office of the City Auditor
 Office of the City Clerk
 Office of the Independent Budget Analyst
 Personnel Department

Government Agencies

County of San Diego
 State of California
 Federal Government