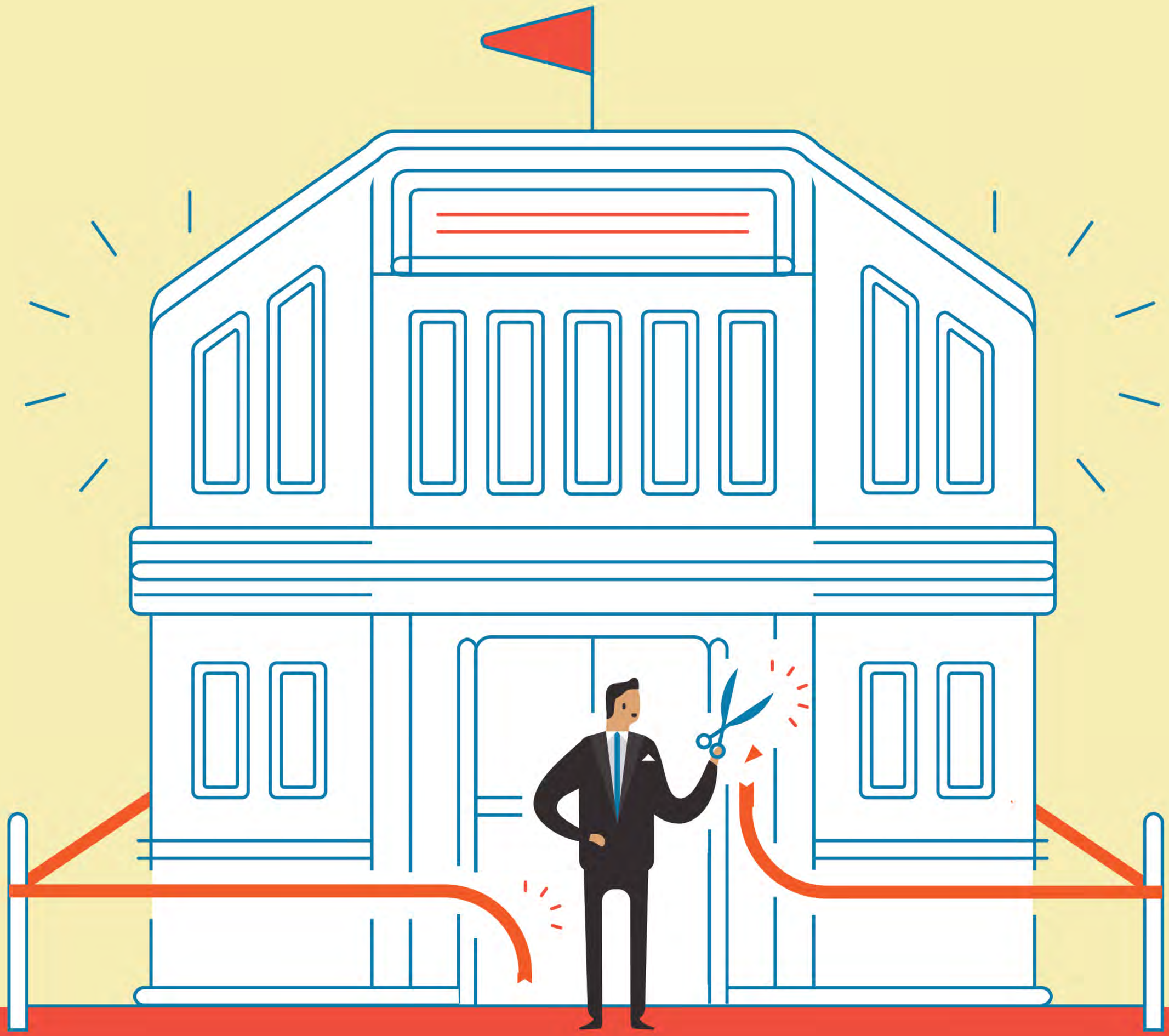


ALL-IN-ONE

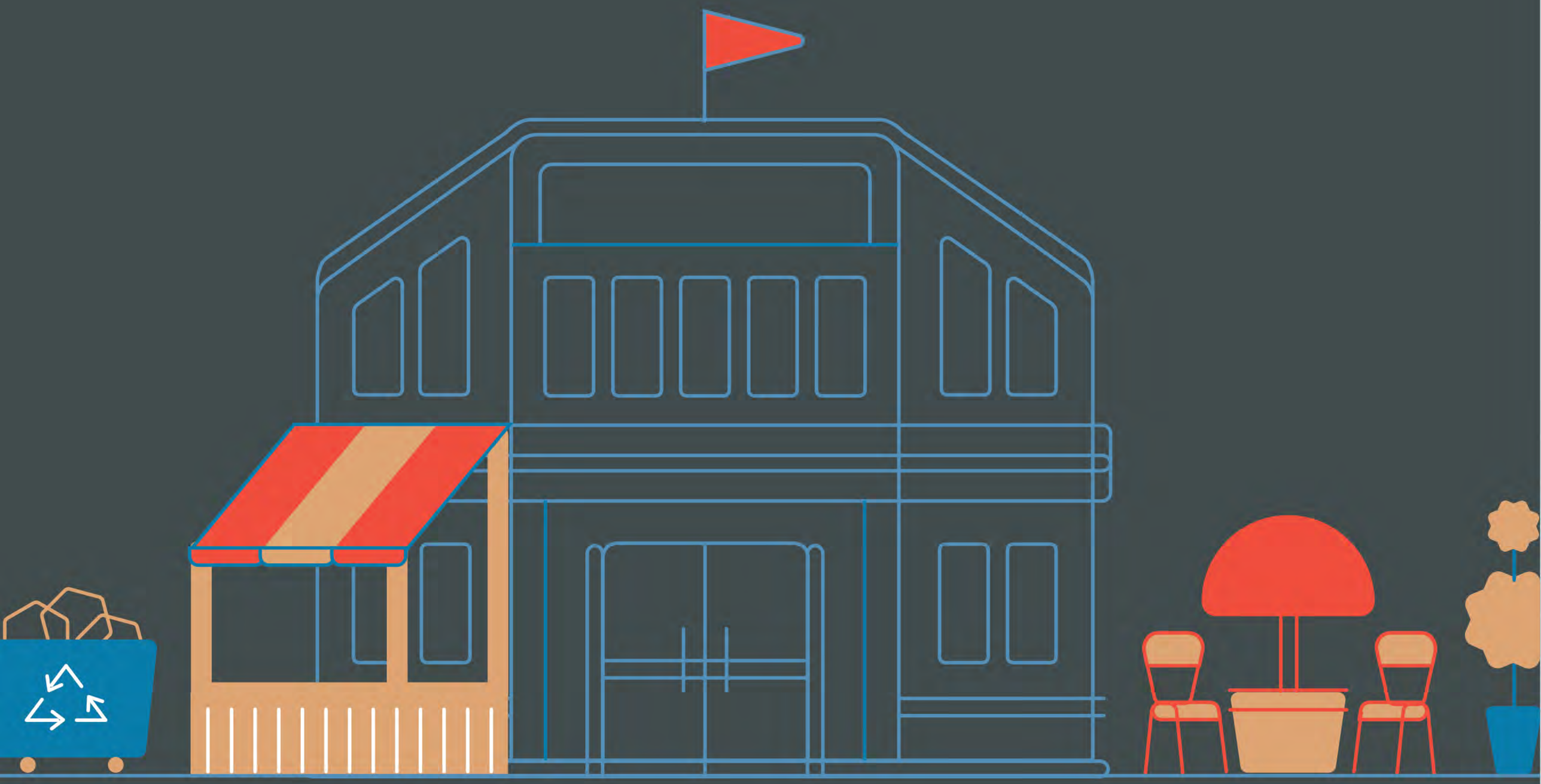
A Guide to DC Business License Process

MOAPIA MAYOR'S OFFICE ON

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & REGULATORY AFFAIRS

WE ARE WASHINGTON DC

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



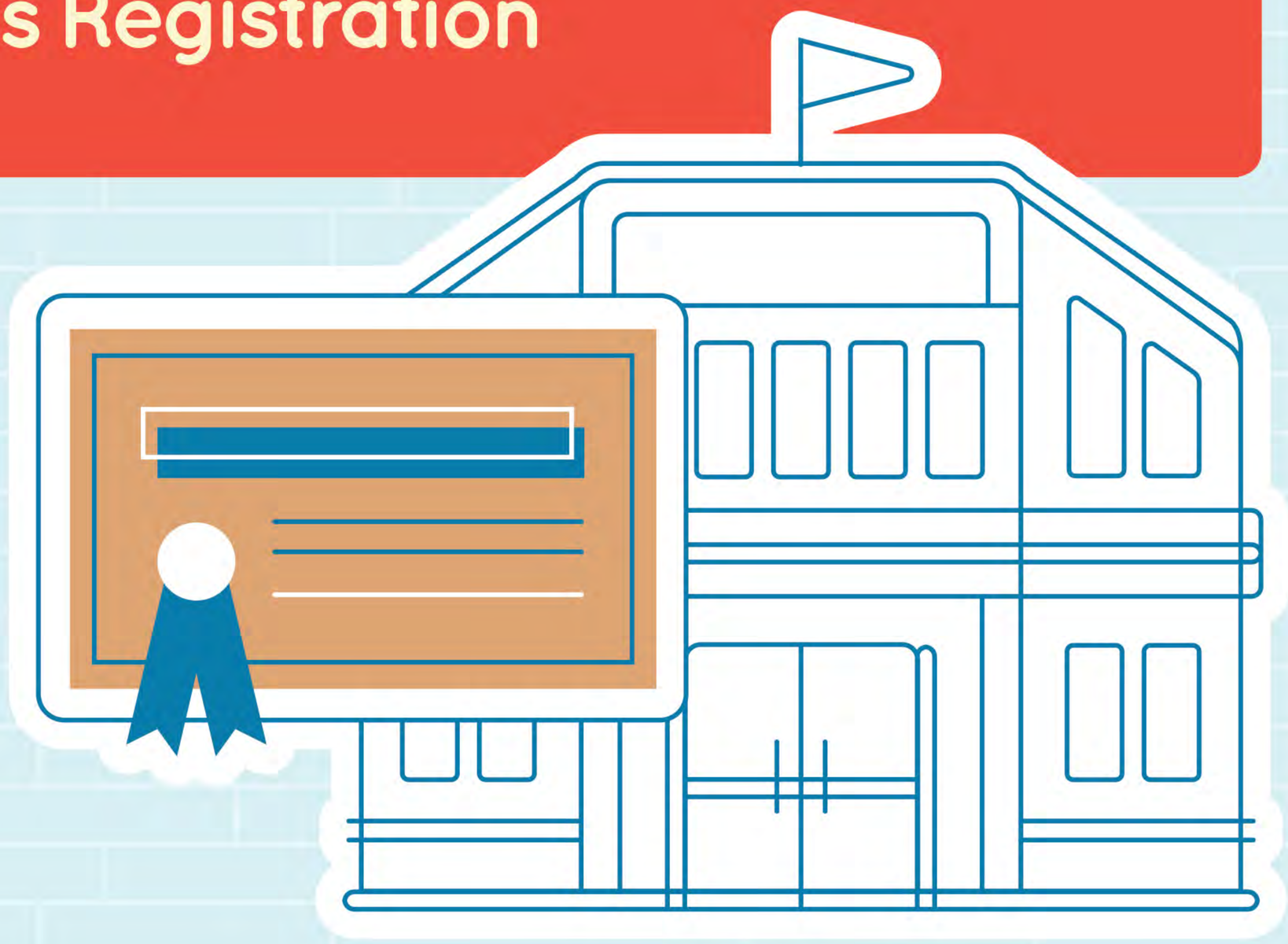
1. Business Registration
2. Employer Identification Number (EIN)
3. Certificate of Occupancy (CRA-5)
4. DC Business Tax Identification Number
5. Certification of Registration
6. Clean Hands Certificate
7. Basic Business License (BBL)
8. Business Trade Name

ALREADY KNOW THE TYPE OF BUSINESS YOU WANT TO START?

If so, please refer to “Directory of All Business Licensing Categories” for step-by-step instructions including information on required forms and fees.

DCRA’s Business Licensing Division offers a directory of business licenses. Please visit our website at **dcra.dc.gov/node/514522** and click on a specific category for your business.

1 Business Registration



The first step of the process is Business Registration. This registration must be done before an entity applies for a business license, permit, tax registration or any other registration within the District. DCRA's Corporations Division provides the service.

DCRA's Corporations Division registers all entities, domestic (DC) or foreign (non-District) that conduct business in the District.

If you would like to operate as a nonprofit or for-profit corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, general cooperative association, limited cooperative association or statutory trust, you must register with the Corporations Division of DCRA.

For more information, visit:
dcra.dc.gov/service/corporate-registration

All business entities must go through for business registration process through the Corporate Division except for sole proprietor, general partnership, unincorporated nonprofit association or other special entity type.

HOW TO FILE

ONLINE
Go to DCRA Corporations Division's web site (CorpOnline) at **corp.dcra.dc.gov**, create a profile, access the online services main page and proceed. Online filers must pay by credit card. Once filing is submitted, print the last confirmation page for your records.

WALK-IN
Visit Business Licensing Center on 2nd Floor of DCRA (1100 4th Street, SW).

MAIL
Submit all requirements including the fee via mail. You can pay with a check or money order payable to "DC Treasurer."

MAILING ADDRESS VIA US POSTAL SERVICE

Department of Consumer and
Regulatory Affairs
Business Licensing Division
P.O. Box 91360
Washington, DC 20090

MAILING ADDRESS VIA NON-US POSTAL SERVICE (UPS, DHL, FEDEX, ETC.)

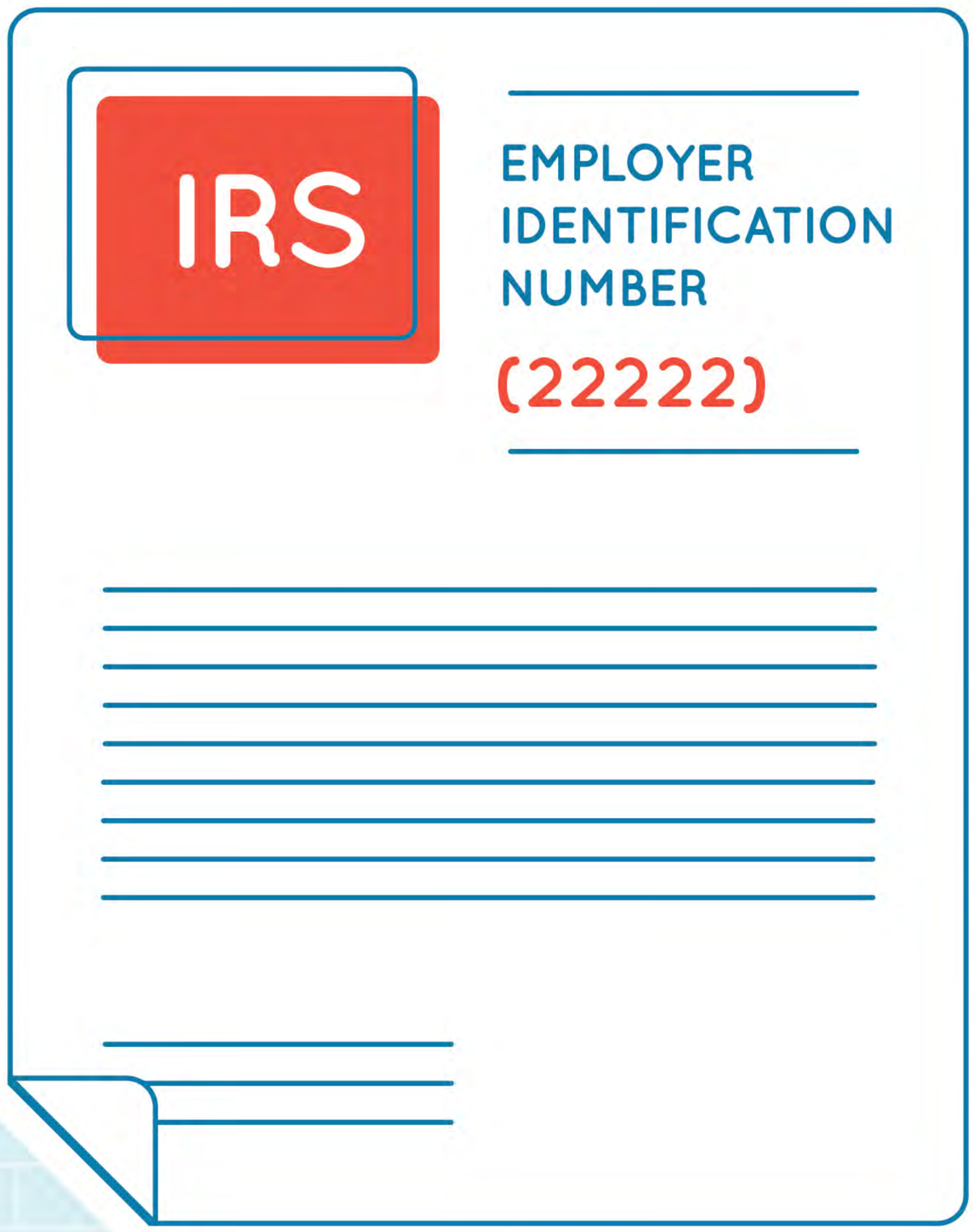
Wells Fargo Bank
ATTN: DC Government Wholesale
Lockbox 91360

7175 Columbia Gateway Drive
Columbia, MD 21046

ARE YOU A WALK-IN CUSTOMER?

- All walk-in customers will be charged expedited fee for one day service in the amount of $100 and $50 for three day service in addition to regular filing fees.
- American Express is not accepted in the Business License Center.

2 Employer Identification Number (EIN)



An EIN (also known as Tax Identification Number (TIN)) is a nine-digit number assigned by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS uses the number to identify business taxpayers who are required to file various tax returns.

HOW TO APPLY

ONLINE
Go to **http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Employer-ID-Numbers-EINs** and select "Start a Business."

FAX
Complete an IRS Form SS-4 (Application form for EIN) and fax it to IRS at (859) 669-5760.

MAIL
Complete an IRS Form SS-4 (Application form for EIN) and mail it to IRS:

Internal Revenue Service
Attn: EIN Operation
Cincinnati, OH 45999

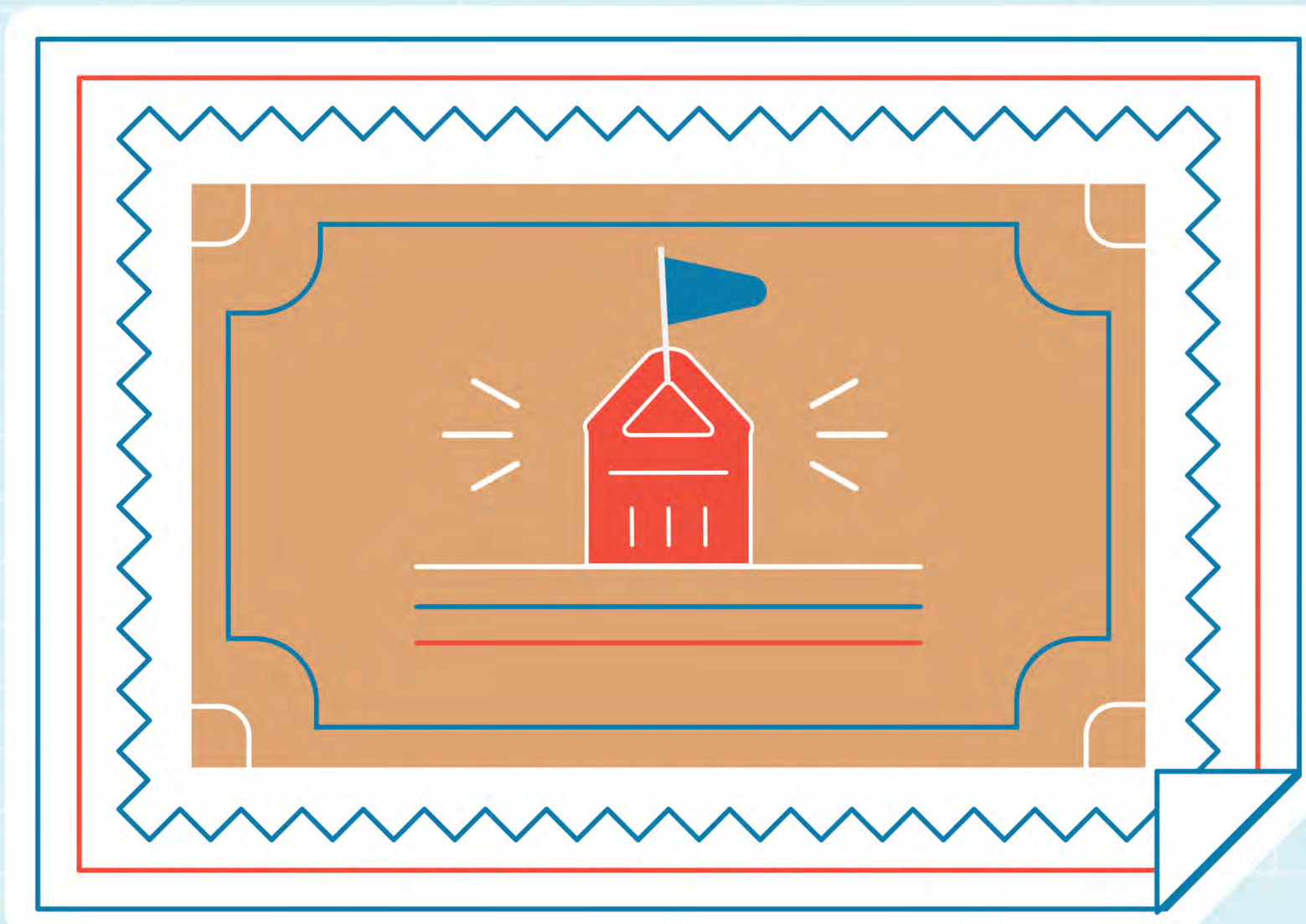
NOTE: SS-4 Form is available online at **www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss4.pdf** or local IRS and Social Security Administration offices.

3 Certificate of Occupancy (CRA-5)

A Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) or Home Occupation Permit is required to show that your business is operating in a building that meets building and zoning code requirements for its intended use.

If you are leasing space in a building that already holds a C of O, you don't need to obtain a new one. However, you need to obtain a separate certificate if the property owner's C of O does not cover your business. It's important, therefore, to ask the property owner about the C of O when entering into a lease agreement. For details about the process, checklist, application forms and other forms, please visit the website at **dcra.dc.gov/service/zoning-certificates-occupancy** or call the Office of the Zoning Administrator at (202) 442-4576.

If you use your residence as your primary business location, you should file for a Home Occupation Permit (HOP), not C of O. Please visit: **dcra.dc.gov/service/get-home-occupation-permit**

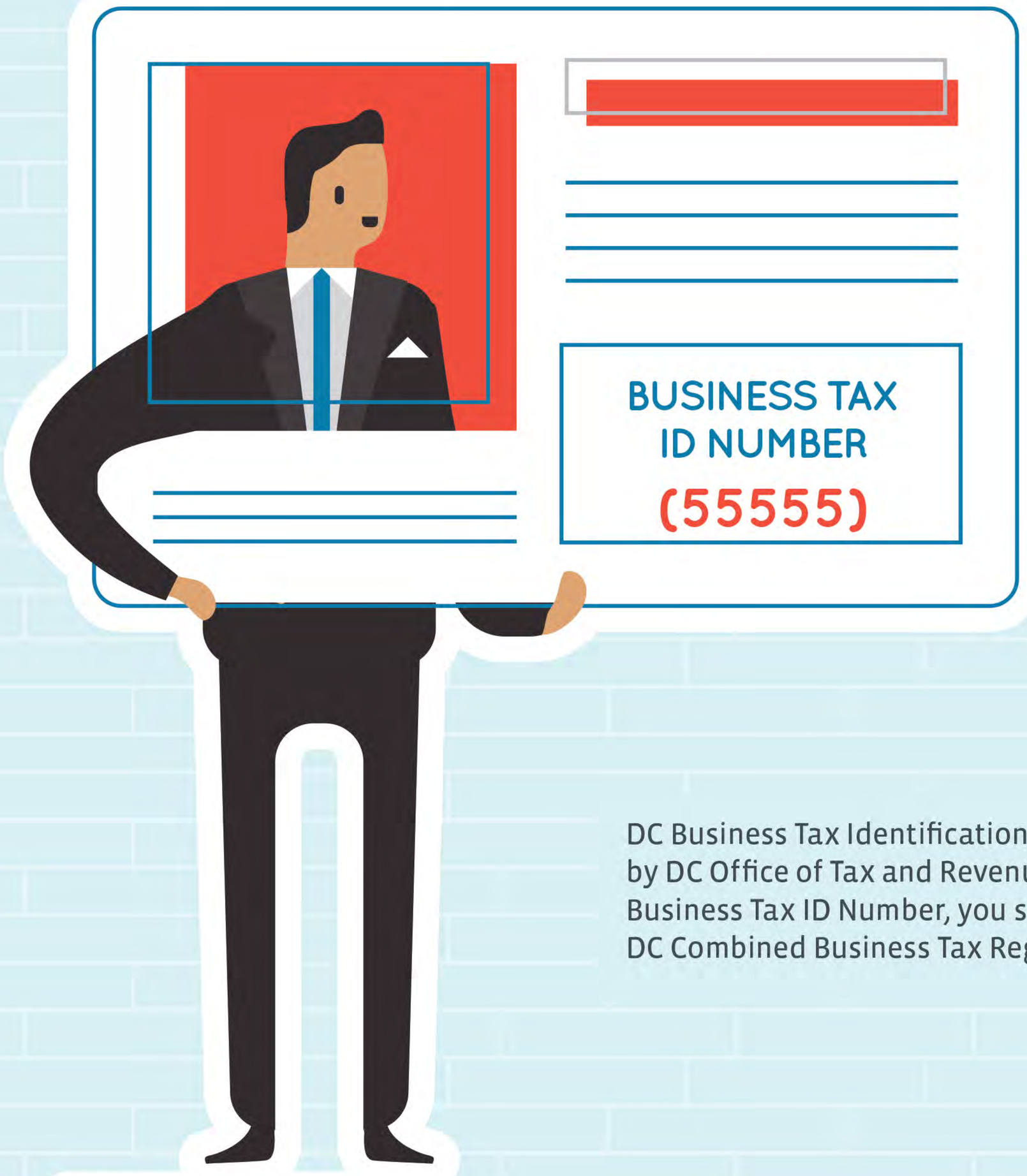


HOW TO FILE

WALK-IN ONLY

Complete a C of O application form and submit it in person at DCRA's Permit Center located at 1100 4th Street SW, 2nd Floor.

Application forms are available at the site or online at: **dcra.dc.gov/node/532452**



DC Business Tax Identification (ID) Number is assigned by DC Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR). To obtain DC Business Tax ID Number, you should file FR-500 Form, a DC Combined Business Tax Registration document.

HOW TO APPLY

ONLINE
Go to **www.taxpayerservicecenter.com/fr500** and apply online.

WALK-IN
Visit Customer Service Center at Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) and submit FR-500 Form. Forms are available online at **www.taxpayerservicecenter.com/fr500_paper.pdf** or you can request one at the Customer Service Center.

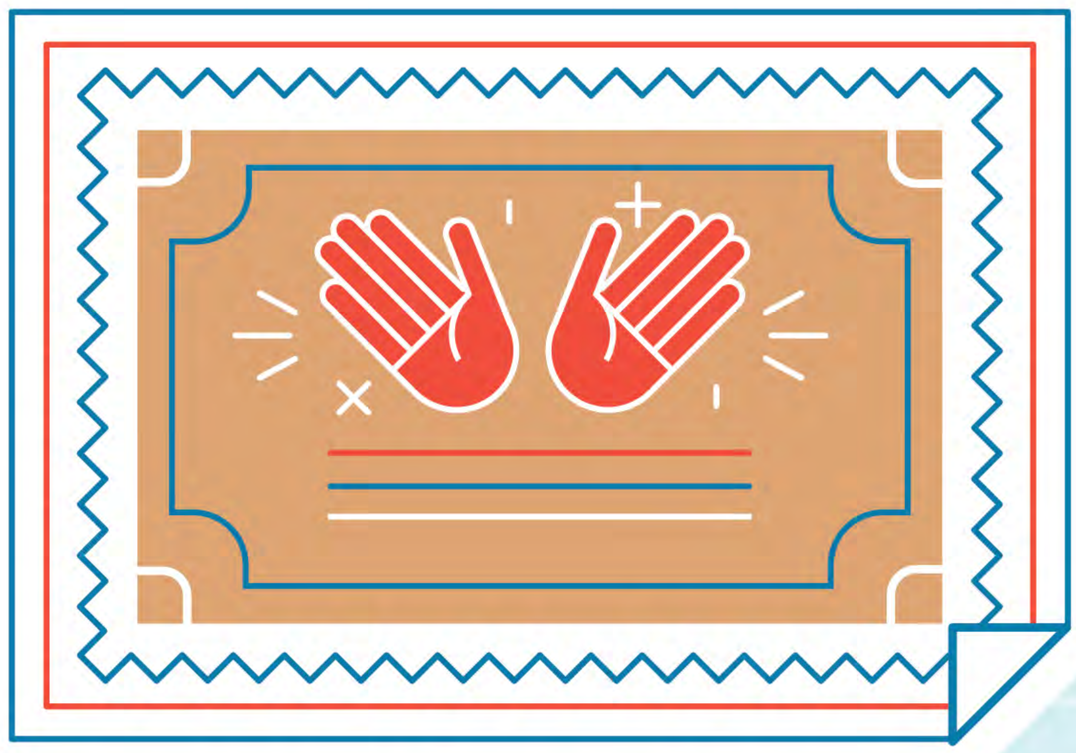
Customer Service Center
Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR)
1101 4th Street, SW, Suite W270
Washington, DC 20024

PHONE: (202) 727- 4TAX (727- 4829)

FAX: (202) 442-6890

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Monday – Friday, 8:15 am - 5:30 pm

4 DC Business Tax Identification Number



The Clean Hands Certificate is an affidavit stating that you do not owe more than $100 to the District Government. If you owe more than $100 to the District Government, you will need to resolve the outstanding debt before you can proceed.

A Clean Hands Certificate is required to be submitted together with any application for a license or permit, including a Basic Business License. For more information, visit: **dcra.dc.gov/service/basic-business-licensing-bbl-forms**

You will receive a Certificate of Registration from the Office of Tax and Revenue once you file your FR -500.

HOW TO SUBMIT

The Clean Hands Certificate form can be found in the Basic Business License (see “STEP 7”) application packet.

Clean Hands Certificate Form is available online at **dcra.dc.gov/node/530732.**

5 Certificate of Registration

6 Clean Hands Certificate

Not all companies or persons require a Basic Business License (BBL). It depends on what type of business you are doing in the District:

1. Review the directory to locate the applicable business category for your business and determine the licensing requirements for licensure at: **dcra.dc.gov/node/514522**

2. If you are required to have a BBL, please make sure to obtain all prerequisites before you apply for BBL. Prerequisites vary depending on what type of business you have, but it basically includes Step 1 to 6.

3. BBL forms are available at **dcra.dc.gov/service/basic-business-licensing-bbl-forms**

HOW TO APPLY

ONLINE
Go to **cpms.dcra.dc.gov/OSUBI/Default.aspx** and apply online. You can pay with credit/debit cards.

WALK-IN
Apply for a Basic Business License in-person with cash, check, money order or a major credit/debit card by visiting the DCRA Business License Center. No appointments are required. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

DCRA Business License Center
1100 4th Street, SW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20024

MAIL
Submit all requirements including the fee via mail. You can pay with a check or money order payable to "DC Treasurer."

MAILING ADDRESS VIA US POSTAL SERVICE

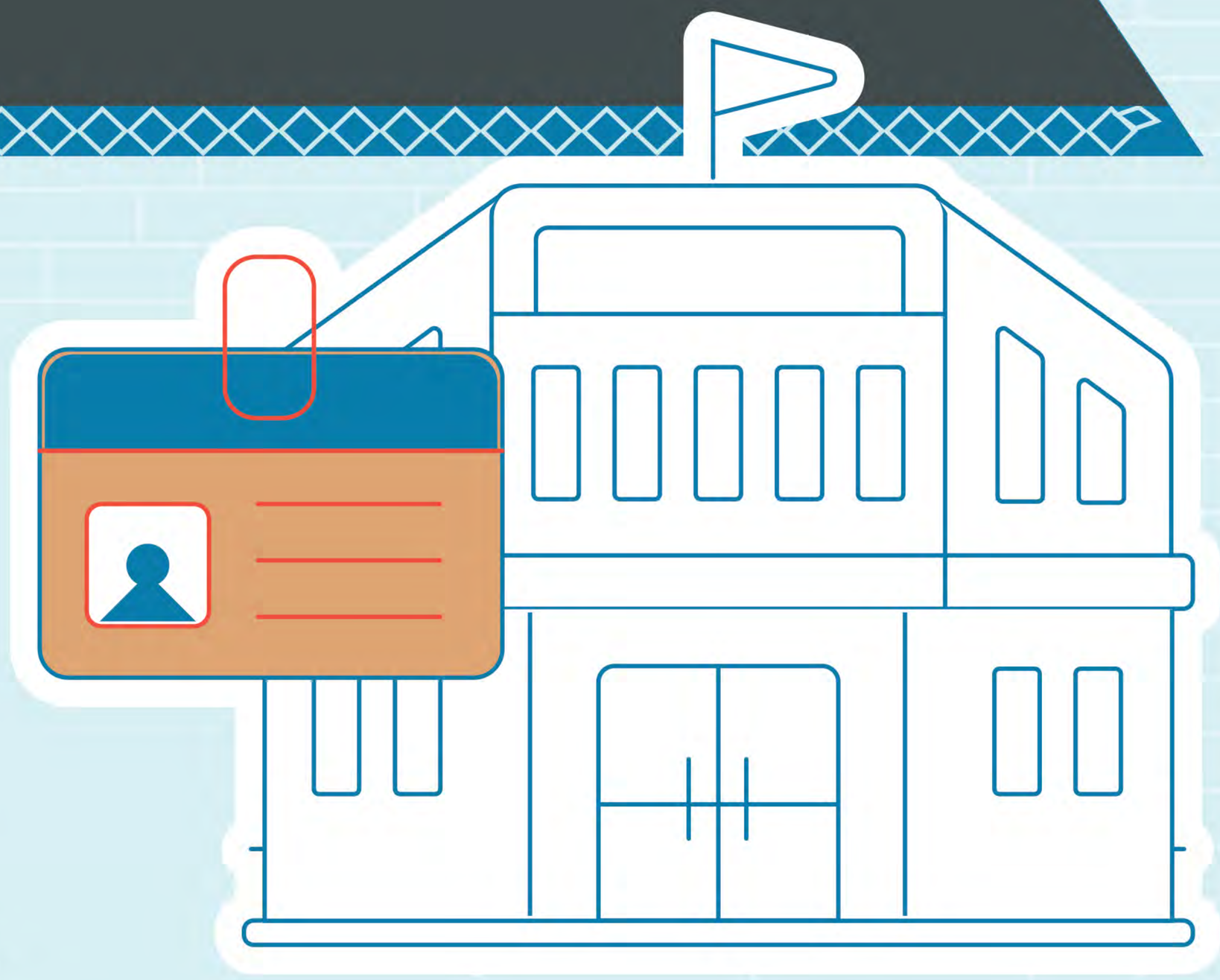
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
Business Licensing Division
P.O. Box 91360
Washington, DC 20090

MAILING ADDRESS VIA NON-US POSTAL SERVICE (UPS, DHL, FEDEX, ETC.)

Wells Fargo Bank
ATTN: DC Government Wholesale Lockbox 91360
7175 Columbia Gateway Drive
Columbia, MD 21046

NOTE: Processing times for Basic Business Licenses submitted by mail may take up to 30 business days. Please consider applying online or in-person for the fastest turnaround.

7 Basic Business License (BBL)



A business trade name is any name used in business that does not include the full legal name of the business. Your trade name is different from your corporate name; your business may have only one corporate name but as many trade names as you desire.

A business trade name allows businesses to use fictitious names (created words and names) in conducting business, including transacting business with vendors and financial institutions.

Having a business trade name is not mandatory. If a trade name is being used and you want to undertake legal action under that name, however, registration is required.

HOW TO REGISTER

ONLINE

a) Go to **corp.dcra.dc.gov** and create an account to log in.

b) After logging in, find the trade name registration form (TN-1) and register.

c) Fee must be paid by a credit card.

WALK-IN

DCRA Business License Center
1100 4th Street, SW, 2nd Floor,
Washington, DC 20024

NOTE: American Express is not accepted in the Business License Center.

MAIL

Submit all requirements including the fee via mail. You can pay with a check or money order payable to "DC Treasurer."

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Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
Business Licensing Division
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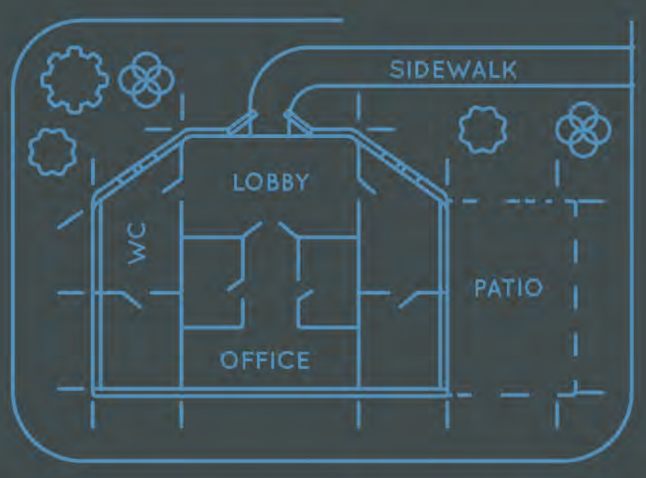
8 Business Trade Name

Other Licenses & Permits

1 Building Permits



2 Building Plats

3 Public Space Permits

4 Trade Permits

5 Inspections

Depending on your business types and locations, there are other licenses and permits you should obtain. If you need one-on-one technical assistance regarding the process, please visit Small Business Resource Centers (SBRC):

Small Business Resource Center
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
1100 4th Street SW, 2nd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20024

PHONE: (202) 442-8170

NOTE: Services are by appointment only.

1 Building Permits

You are required by law to obtain a permit for construction in the District if you are going to be constructing, demolishing, renovating or altering your building, home or business. Even if you are not doing work but are changing the use of a building or space, you will need to obtain a building permit.

YOU NEED A PERMIT FOR:

- New construction and foundations;
- Additions, alterations, or repair of existing buildings;
- Razes (demolition) and interior or partial demolition;
- Erection of a sign and awning;
- Layout of interior space for tenants in new or existing commercial buildings;
- Change of use.

HOW TO APPLY

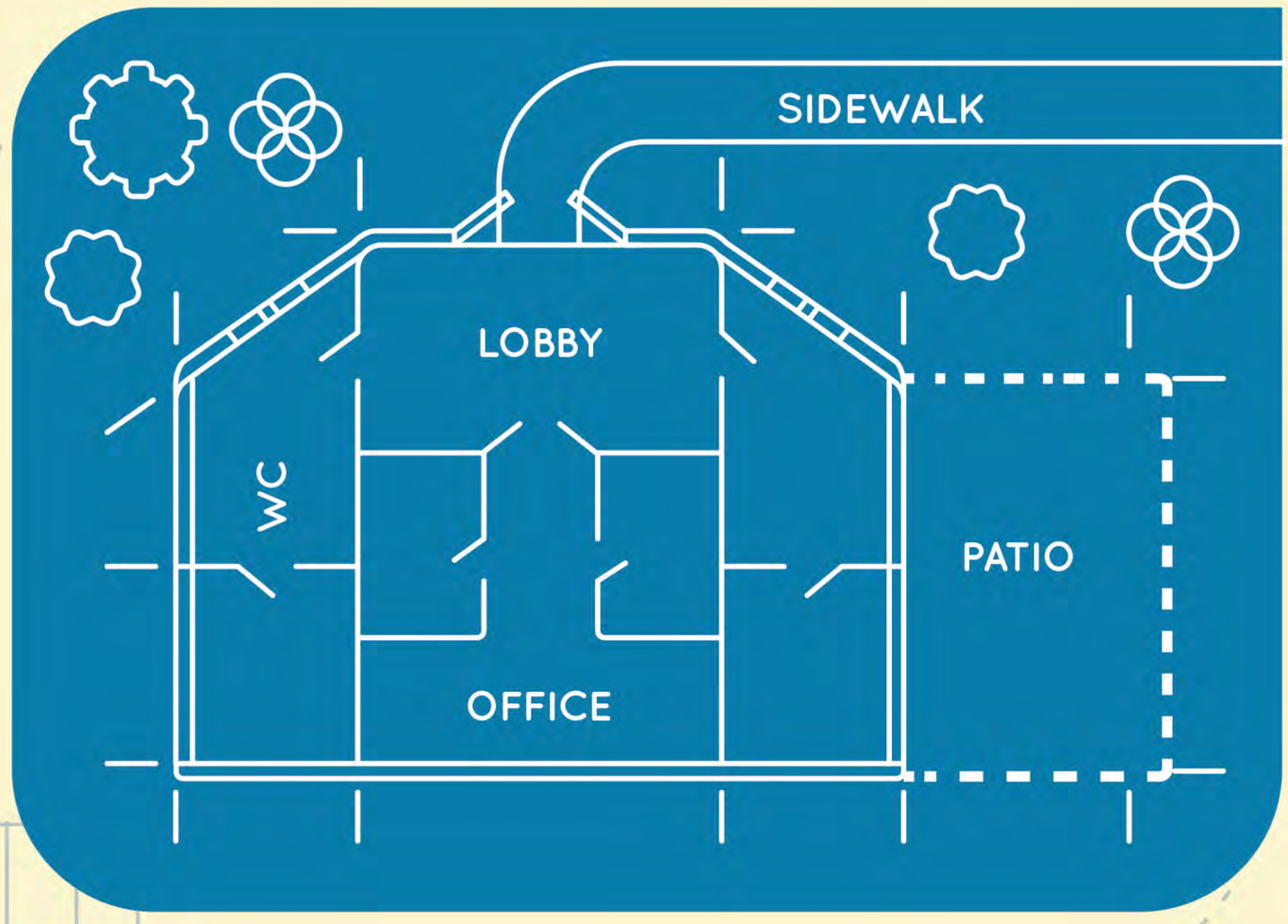
WALK-IN ONLY
DCRA Permit Service Center
1100 4th Street, SW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20024

TIPS: You can start your application online at **cpms.dcra.dc.gov/OCPI/PermitMenu.aspx** which will speed things up when you get to the Permit Center. After filling in the online form, please print it out and get the required signatures. Bring the completed application along with your plan drawings and other supporting documentation to DCRA for processing.

NOTE: other agencies (e.g. Department of Health, the District Department of Transportation and the Water and Sewer Authority) are tied into the permitting process and have their own respective approval requirements. If you need further assistance, or have multiple permits, contact DCRA's Building Permit Customer Service Section at (202)478-9292.

2 Building Plats

Building plats are drawings that show the location of all property lines and are required as the basis for all additions and new buildings. When you apply for a building permit to do exterior work on your property, such as building an addition or adding a deck, you must include a building plat.



PLATS ARE REQUIRED FOR:

- New buildings and additions
- Retaining walls and fences
- Sheds and garages
- Awnings

HOW TO APPLY

ONLINE
Go to **aca.dcra.dc.gov/dcracitizenaccess** and log in to apply for a building plat.

WALK-IN
Visit DCRA's Office of the Surveyor and apply.

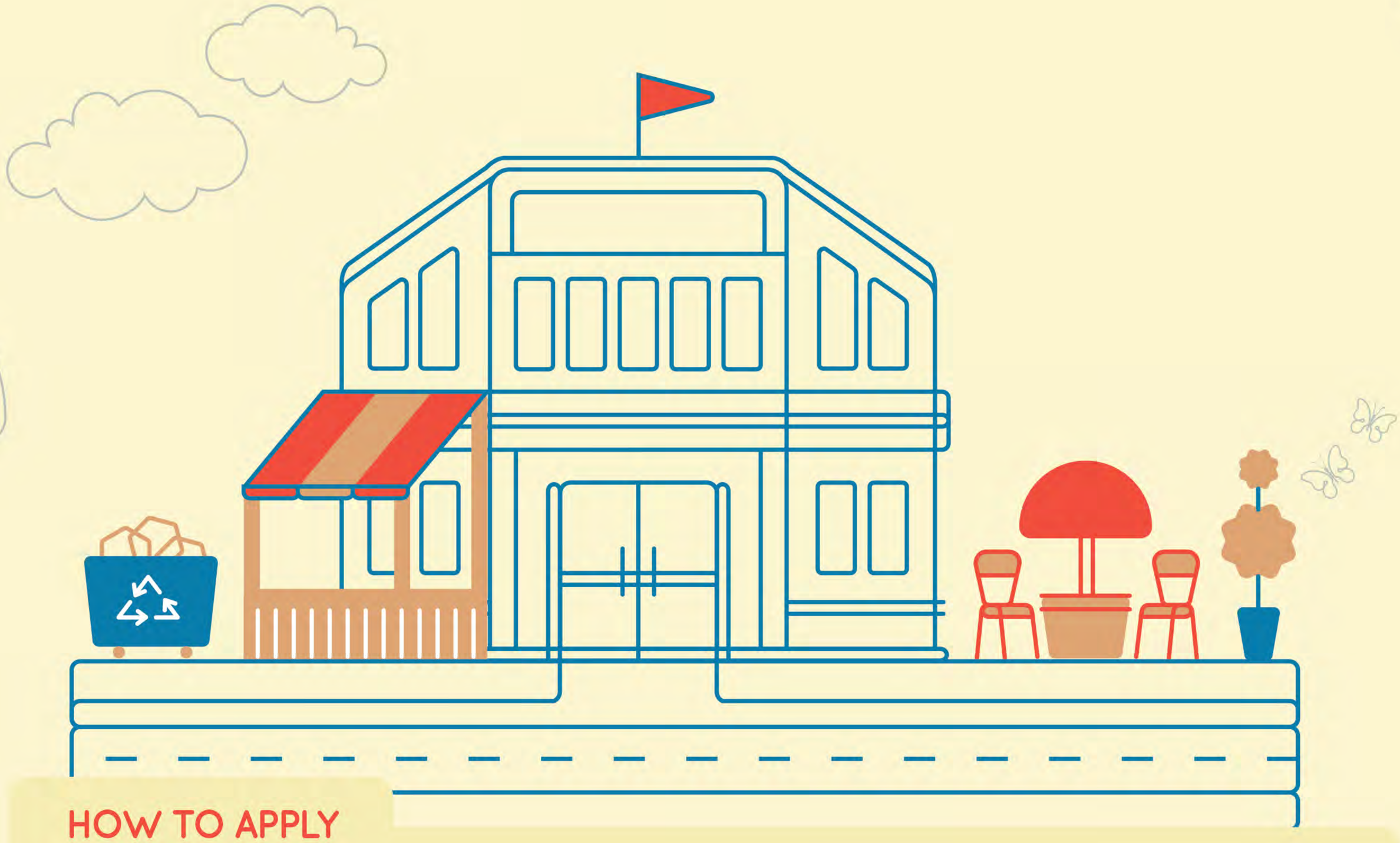
Permit Operations Division Office of the Surveyor
1100 4th Street, SW, 3rd Floor,
Washington, DC 20024

3 Public Space Permits

A public space permit is required to use or install structures on public space—the area between the building or property line and the curb.

- Dumpsters in public space
- Sidewalk construction and repair
- Sidewalk cafes
- Front patios
- Flag poles, planter boxes, retaining walls and fences in public space

Questions? Call DDOT's Public Space Regulation Administration (PSRA) (202) 442-4670.



HOW TO APPLY

ONLINE
Go to **tops.ddot.dc.gov** and log in to apply for a public space permit.

WALK-IN
Visit DC Department of Transportation (DDOT)'s Permit Office.

DDOT Permit Office – Permitting Center
1100 4th Street, SW, 2nd Floor, Washington, DC 20024

4 Trade Permits

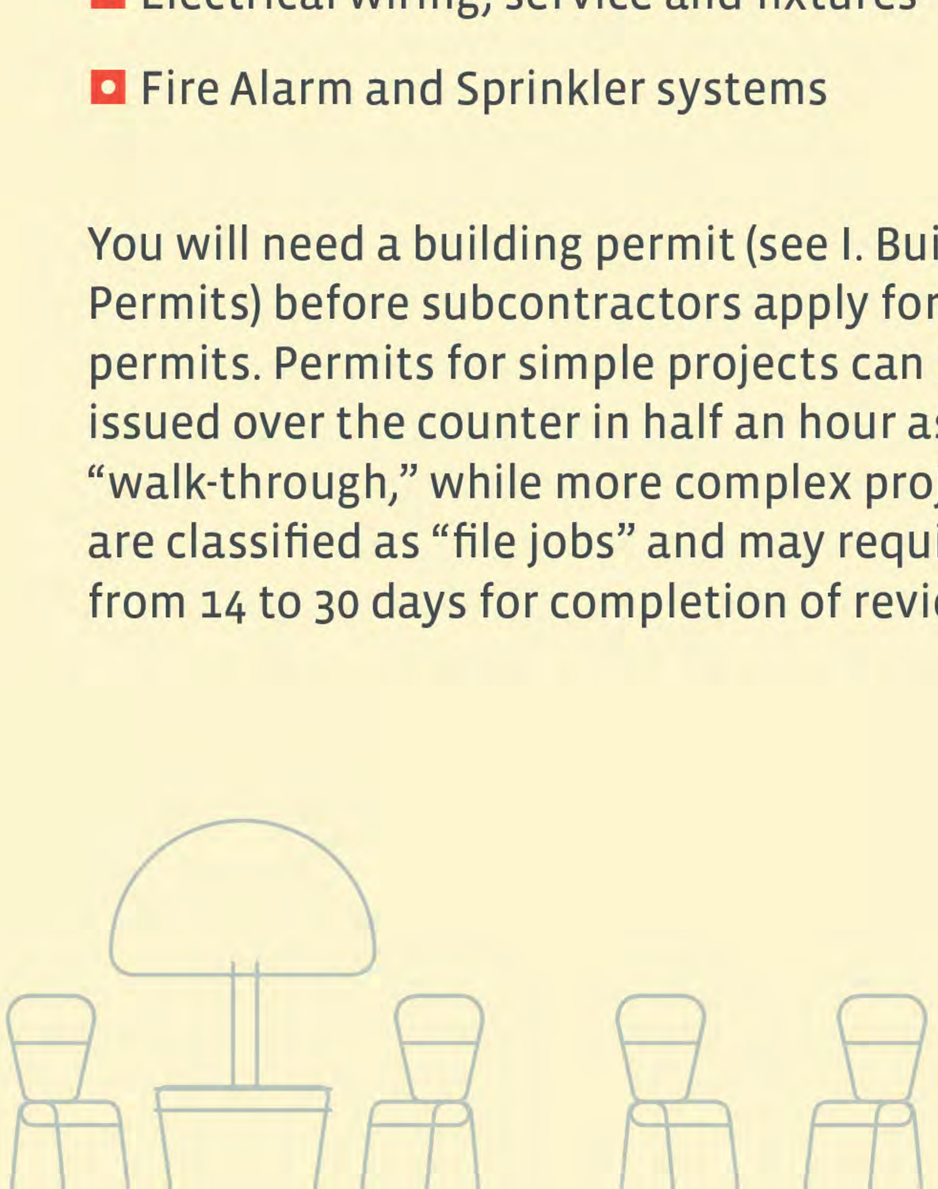
5 Inspections

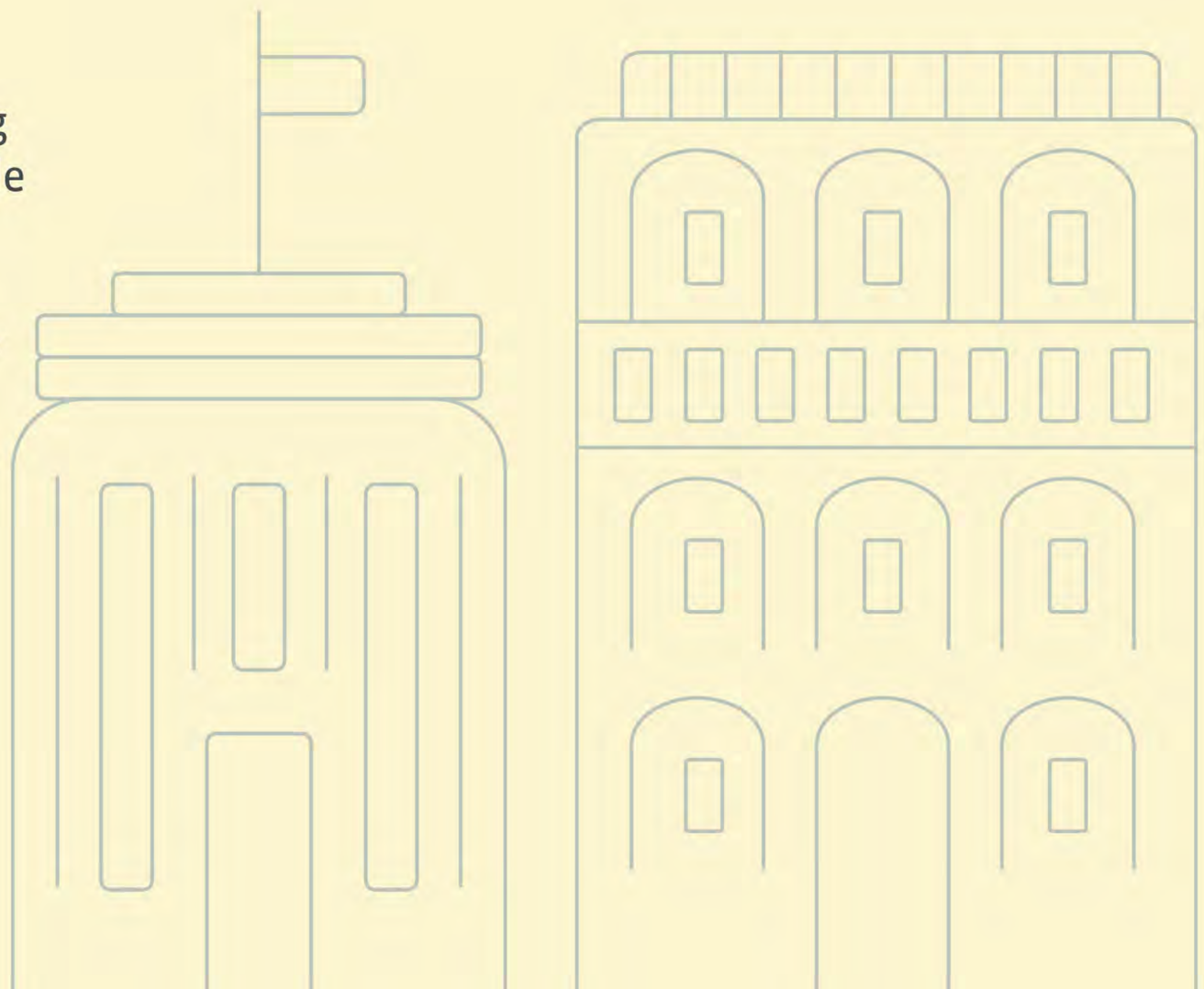
Licensed contractors are required to complete an application for Trade Permits in order to install:

- HVAC Systems Plumbing installation and fixtures
- Electrical wiring, service and fixtures
- Fire Alarm and Sprinkler systems

You will need a building permit (see I. Building Permits) before subcontractors apply for trade permits. Permits for simple projects can be issued over the counter in half an hour as a “walk-through,” while more complex projects are classified as “file jobs” and may require from 14 to 30 days for completion of reviews.

DCRA or approved Third Party Inspectors conduct inspections to verify that work complies with applicable codes, regulations and referenced standards and conforms with approved construction documents once permits are issued and construction commences. Final inspection approval is needed to obtain a certificate of occupancy.





Alcoholic Beverage Control Licensing

The Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA), as an independent DC government agency, issues licenses to qualified applicants to serve or sell alcoholic beverages.

There are several classes of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) licenses. Requirements for licensure vary greatly according to the type of establishment. Therefore, we recommend that you consult with an ABRA representative:

- To determine the type of license application needed, as determined by the proposed activities of the establishment.
- To discuss your location to ensure that a license for your location is not prohibited by an existing ABC license moratorium.

STEP BY STEP PROCESS TO FILE FOR AN ABC LICENSE:

Consult with an ABRA representative to determine the type of license application and the location.

File for a DC business tax number at the Office of Tax and Revenue

Submit required application(s)

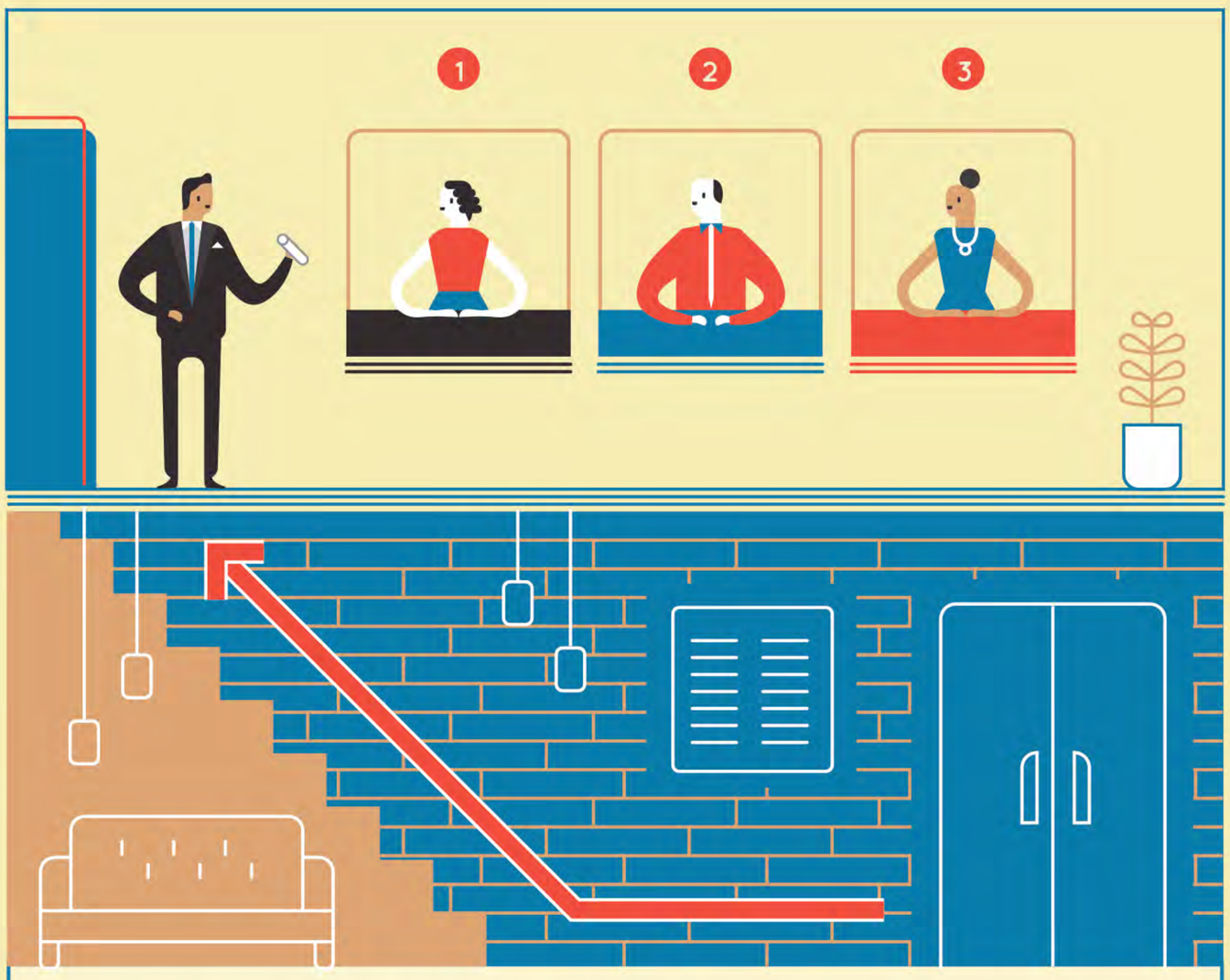
Await a 45-day placard period

Additionally, the ABC Board is authorized to conduct a background investigation including a criminal history record check on the applicant. A routine application, with no protests, will take approximately 12 weeks for approval, including the 45-day placard period and final inspections. For more information visit **www.abra.dc.gov** or call **(202) 442-4423**.

DCRA is here to help you.

All businesses operating in the District are required to be licensed and/or registered by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). The process of obtaining them can be smooth if you know what you need and where to find it. All-in-One is designed to help new and existing business owners to navigate their way through the process.

COME TO THE 2ND FLOOR FOR ONE-STOP CUSTOMER SERVICE.
WHAT'S ON THE 2ND FLOOR?



The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA)
1100 Fourth Street SW, Washington, DC 20024

PHONE: (202) 442-4400

EMAIL: dcra@dc.gov

WEBSITE: www.dcra.dc.gov

TWITTER: @DCRA

METRO: Closest stop is Waterfront-SEU on the Green Line

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30am–4:30pm
Thursday 9:30am–4:30pm

1 DCRA - BUSINESS LICENSE CENTER

The Business License Center serves walk-in customers that wish to file corporate documents, apply for various licenses, or need filing applications.

2 DCRA - PERMIT CENTER

The Permit Center is responsible for issuing construction, plumbing, electrical and HVAC permits in the District of Columbia.

3 DCRA - SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER (SBRC)

The Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) provides customers with one-on-one assistance with the licensing process. The Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) provides District-based small businesses and entrepreneurs with training, consulting, and technical assistance. For more information, visit SBRC website dcbiz.ecenterdirect.com or (202) 442-8170.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & REGULATORY AFFAIRS