

**CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Interdepartmental Presentation of Renewal Procedures for Alcohol, Common Victualler, Entertainment, Lodging House or Innholder Licenses to be Issued for 2027



License Commission Department
Inspectional Services Department
Fire Department
Department of Public Works
Department of Transportation
Community Development Department

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

When do renewals start? Non-Alcohol: October 8, 2026

Alcohol: November 2, 2026

Note: If your license is a combined license (alcohol + non-alcohol) your renewal activates on November 2.

When are renewals due? November 30, 2026, **BEFORE** 5:00 p.m.

What is due by November 30?

Non-Alcohol: OpenGov renewal application + proof of workers' compensation insurance (if applicable) + Certificate of Inspection ("CI") (if >50 capacity) + license renewal fees.

Alcohol: OpenGov renewal application + ABCC application (sent via email with the renewal instructions) + (if Club) list of members and officers + license renewal fees.

*** Note:** To complete the alcohol renewal process you will also have to provide: CI + proof of liquor liability insurance + proof of workers' compensation insurance (but these are not due before 11/30 – except the insurance if it is ready and/or already expired).

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

How can I access my renewal? Log onto our application portal using your email and going into your profile: <https://cambridgema.portal.opengov.com/login>.

Why don't I see my renewal on my profile/OpenGov account? The renewal is tied to the email of the “applicant” listed on the License Commission record. Only the person who has access to that email can access the record. If you cannot access the record, please contact us at 617-349-6140 or licenser renewals@cambridgema.gov (you will need to provide the name of the business, address and (if possible) license number).

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

When do I pay? The payment step is activated once the License Commission staff has reviewed the application for completion (meaning, the required documents and information have been provided). **Note:** *Payments must be RECEIVED before 5:00 p.m. on November 30, 2026.*

How can I get an invoice to process payment? Email licenser renewals@cambridgema.gov, provide the record(s) # on which you need a bill, and one will be emailed to you.

Can I send one check to cover multiple licenses? Yes, so long as the check is ONLY for license renewal fees for licenses/permits issued by the License Commission only (do not send a combined check for fees that are to be paid to other City Departments).

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

Where do I get my Certificate of Inspection (“CI”)? The CI is issued by Inspectional Services Department (“ISD”) also through the online portal.

For non-alcohol, you should have renewed it in the Spring/Summer.

For alcohol, you should have received an application to renew it in the late summer/early fall and by 11/2 should have already filed and paid for the CI; if not, you should file the renewal application simultaneously with your license renewal application.

Any issue with your CI should be directed to ISD at: Prazeres McDonald, pmcdonald@cambridgema.gov, 617-349-6103, Jacob Lazzara, jlazzara@cambridgema.gov, 617-349-6109, William Pugliese, wpugliese@cambridgema.gov, 617-349-9318, or isd@cambridgema.gov, 617-349-6100.

Before your CI is issued, you must be inspected by ISD and Fire. To coordinate inspections, please call: ISD at 617-349-6100 and Fire at 617-349-4967.

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

Do I need an issued Certificate of Inspection to file my renewal? **NO.** Submit your license renewal as soon as possible.

For non-alcohol, you should already have an issued CI by the time you submit your license renewal but if you don't have it, submit the renewal regardless. ***Non-Alcohol Note:*** *you cannot operate with an expired CI. If you do not have a valid CI, you will be ordered to close until one is obtained.*

For alcohol, your CI is not a required document at the time of submission. In fact, it is ISD who uploads the CI to your record when it is issued. ***Alcohol Note:*** *if the CI application is not submitted and paid for by 11/30/26 your renewal may be denied and/or you may be subject to an administrative late fees.*

You will not receive a 2027 license and will not be able to operate until your CI and license issue.

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

My insurance does not renew until after November 30 or December 31, 2026, what do I do?

The requirement is that you must have proof of active and valid insurance as of January 1, 2027. This means that if your insurance expires on 1/10/27, your current certificate is still valid and will be accepted as proof of current insurance.

However, if your insurance expires any day prior to January 1, 2027, the staff will ask for proof of insurance at the time of submission. If your insurance does not renew until mid December, that is fine. Submit the **current** proof of insurance **and comment on the record to alert the staff**. The application will not be stalled. No license will be issued without proof of insurance valid beyond 1/1/27.

Note: Many insurance companies will say they cannot issue a new certificate prior to the expiration of the current one, that is false – if you have renewed the policy, they can issue the updated certificate of insurance (and will do so).

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

When do I get my license? Upon receiving all final approvals, the license is automatically generated by the system. You will get a notification via email when the license issues and a link to print it. If you need us to print and send you the license, please email licenser renewals@cambridgema.gov. Remove all expired licenses from the premises.

What is the capacity sign/do I need it? Upon receiving all final approvals, a capacity sign is automatically generated by the system. You will get a notification via email when it issues and a link to print it. If you need us to print and send you the sign, please email licenser renewals@cambridgema.gov. Remove all expired capacity signs from the premises.

License Commission – Renewal FAQs

I have questions, who can help me? Any License Commission staff member can help you. Even if your record is assigned to a particular staff member, any team member can access the record and assist you. Remember renewals are during periods of high work volume in addition to vacation and holidays. Be respectful of City staff, your community and your business - **Do NOT wait until the last minute or last week of renewals to submit your application or payment.**

licenser renewals@cambridgema.gov

617-349-6140

Monday: 8:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday – Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Inspectional Services Department

Certificate of Inspection (CI)

When do you need one?

- A CI is required for Lodging Houses, Hotels, Alcohol Establishments, and some food establishments

When do you renew?

- A list of the different types of CI's, their expiration date, and the date that a renewal notice is sent is listed below
- Alcohol CI's which expire on December 31st must have their renewal application submitted by October 15.
- You must receive your CI **prior** to renewing your Alcohol License with the License Commission

Certificate of Inspection Type	Expiration Date	Renewal Campaign Start
Lodging Houses	May-31	March-01
Non-Alcohol Assembly	June-30	April-01
Alcohol Establishments	December-31	August-01
Hotels	December-31	August-01

Inspectional Services Department

Certificate of Inspection (CI)

What is the Process?

- Once an application is submitted, it will be reviewed for completeness by ISD Staff
 - You will be required to upload:
 - Sprinkler System Test Report (if applicable)
 - Fire Alarm System Test Report (if applicable)
 - Fire Escape Affidavit (if applicable)
 - Floor Plans stamped by an architect with bathroom fixture count (only required if increasing occupancy)
- Once the review is approved, ISD will conduct an inspection, but the CI will not be issued until the ISD and Fire Inspections are completed **AND** the fee is paid.

Certificate of Inspection Type	Expiration Date	Renewal Campaign Start
Lodging Houses	May-31	March-01
Non-Alcohol Assembly	June-30	April-01
Alcohol Establishments	December-31	August-01
Hotels	December-31	August-01

Inspectional Services Department

Food Establishment Permits

When do you need one?

- A food establishment permit is required for all establishments that sell food including packaged food.

What do you need?

- You will be required to upload:
 - ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certificate
 - Allergy Awareness Certificate
 - CPR/Choke Saver Certificate

When do you renew?

- A list of the different types of food establishments, their expiration date, and the date that a renewal notice is sent is listed below

Food Establishment Type	Expiration Date	Renewal Campaign Start
Non-Alcohol Establishments	June-30	April-01
Alcohol Establishments	December-31	October-01

Inspectional Services Department

Dumpster License

When do you need one?

- Any dumpster that is located on public/private property needs to have a dumpster license. If it is located on the street or public way you will **ALSO** need a dumpster permit with the Department of Transportation

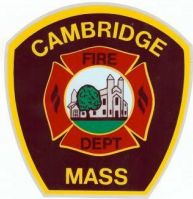
What do you need?

- You will be required to upload:
 - Dumpster Contract
 - Extermination Report

When do you renew?

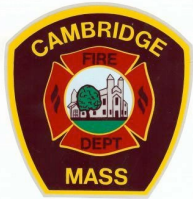
- Dumpsters renew on a rolling basis. If your dumpster license expires on February 21st, once you renew, it will expire on February 21st of the following year
- However, if you are submitting a food establishment permit, you can include the dumpster license in your application by selecting “Yes” to “Would you like to apply for a Dumpster License as part of this application?”
- If the dumpster license is included in your food establishment permit, it will follow the same renewal timeline listed for your permit. However, if you apply for a standalone dumpster license, your renewal notice will be sent out approximately 1 month prior to the expiration date.

Fire Department – Renewal Requirements



- Fire inspections are typically conducted before ISD issues the Certificate of Inspection (CI).
- The CFD reviews, inspects, and approves plans for C of O and C of I
- Schedule inspections early to avoid renewal delays.
- Systems such as portable fire extinguishers, fire alarm, fire sprinkler, kitchen exhaust hood fire suppression, ingress and egress doors and passageways, exit signs and emergency lighting are required to be in proper working order and inspection tags up to date.
- It is important that you police yourself to ensure that all systems function correctly.
- The CFD conducts periodic and annual compliance inspections per City regulations.

Fire Department – Common Deficiencies



- Obstructed means of egress including leaving one door leaf locked when both should remain open during business hours.
- Fire alarm, fire sprinkler, fire extinguishers or kitchen exhaust hood inspections by vendors are out of date.
- Missing or damaged exit signs or emergency lights.
- Unpermitted fuel for patio heaters or they are brought inside a property and other portable sources such as sterno fuel gel not being permitted.
 - ❖ Note that the CFD permits expire on 12/31.
- Open flame candles
- Changes in occupancy or floor layout without proper review.
- Missing occupant load capacity postings.
- Not having the required amount of Crowd Managers or they are not being present on site or their certificates have expired. Use this link for information about the program
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/crowd-managers>



Fire Department – Lodging House Inspection Requirements



What Triggers an Inspection

- Renewal of your Lodging House or Innholder License requires a Fire Department inspection prior to the issuance of a certificate of inspection (C of I) by ISD
- Schedule your inspection early — do not wait until the renewal deadline.

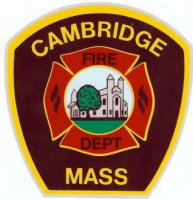
Required Systems – Must Be in Proper Working Order

- Fire alarm system — inspected and tagged by a licensed vendor (annual)
- Fire sprinkler system — inspected and tagged by a licensed vendor (annual)
- Portable fire extinguishers — current annual inspection tag required
- Exit signs and emergency lighting — operational and tested
- Means of egress — corridors, stairways, and exit doors must remain unobstructed at all times
 - When guest room and corridor doors are provided with self-closing and self-latching hardware, they must be maintained in good working order
- Required Local smoke alarms or system smoke detectors — shall be maintained in good working order
- Required Carbon monoxide (CO) local alarms or system detectors — shall be maintained in good working order

Common Deficiencies Found During Lodging House Inspections

- Expired or missing fire alarm / sprinkler vendor inspection tags
- Propped-open or non-latching corridor or guest room doors
- Missing, damaged, or non-functioning exit signs or emergency lights
- Storage blocking egress corridors or stairwells
- Missing or inoperable smoke / CO detectors in guest rooms

Fire Department – Lodging House Inspection Requirements



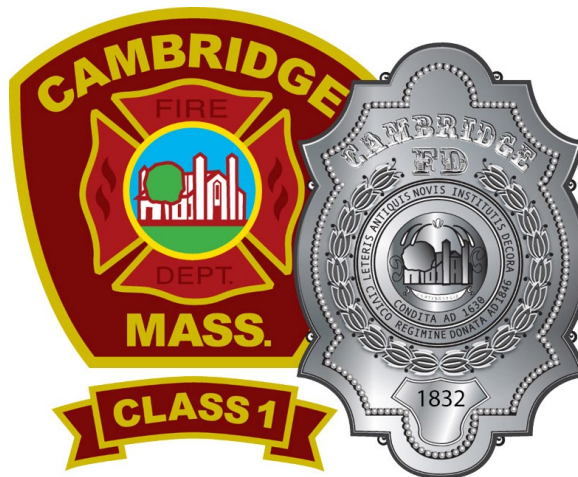
Common Misconception

- Many believe that Mass General Law chapter 148 section 26 H is all that is needed for compliance with fire sprinklers and number of occupants. It is important to know that the City of Cambridge never adopted this law.
- What Cambridge follows for infrastructure is the Mass State Building Code and it is here under the latest edition that clarifies use group designation with number of occupants, number of rooms and type of fire sprinkler and fire alarm systems.
- A brief breakdown is that five and fewer rooms with ten or fewer guests may be able to remain under the one-and-two family use group where an NFPA 13 D or R system may be adequate. Over the five rooms and ten occupants puts the use as a hotel arrangement and only an NFPA 13 system can be installed. Depending on the use and sprinkler decisions will then dictate if a full alarm system is needed or if local smoke alarms will suffice.

Fire Department Contact Information



- Cambridge Fire Department - Fire Prevention Bureau
- 491 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138
- Inspection Scheduling: 617-349-4921
- Schedule inspections as early as possible during the renewal period.



Department of Public Works

Sidewalk and Street Business Use Permit (SSBU)

- This permit is required if you are a business in the City of Cambridge and want to use an “A” framed sign, display merchandise on a City sidewalk or setup outdoor dining on a sidewalk or parking spaces in the City’s public right of way
- If you have an Annual Common Victualler License and you want to add outdoor seating in the public way, you have to apply for this permit and submit a Change to an Existing License application with the License Commission
- SSBU renewals open in mid-February, and the outdoor dining season on the public right-of-way is from April 1 through November 30.
- Outdoor dining areas on a sidewalk must be curbside and/or in a parking lane and must be contiguous to the restaurant’s storefront
- Restaurants may be allowed up to two contiguous parking spaces for patio use

Department of Public Works

Sidewalk and Street Business Use Permit (SSBU) Cont'd

- Restaurants seeking to offer outdoor dining must comply with applicable Plumbing Code requirements, which limit the number of overall restaurant seats, including those in the outdoor area, based on the bathroom facilities as well as any other applicable legal requirements
- Restaurants must ensure that outdoor dining areas remain accessible to the public in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements
- Patio barriers must be temporary in nature and limited in height to a max of 42 inches high
- For sidewalks that are 10 feet wide or less, a minimum 5 foot wide pedestrian corridor between the storefront and the edge of the curbside patio seating area must be maintained
- For sidewalks that are greater than 10 feet wide, only half of the width of the sidewalk can be used for an outdoor dining area
- The area around outdoor dining setups must remain clear of leaves and debris

Community Development Department

- CDD has a variety of resources for small businesses, including financial (e.g. grants) and technical support (e.g. workshops and coaching).
- Learn more about our programs here:
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/economicopportunityanddevelopment/smallbusinessassistance>
- Or contact us at 617-349-4637 or
edd@cambridgema.gov.

Key Contact and Information

OpenGov Online Portal: <https://cambridgema.portal.opengov.com/>

License Commission: licenser renewals@cambridgema.gov; 617-349-6140

Inspectional Services Department: ISD@cambridgema.gov; 617-349-6100

Fire Department: fprev@cambridgefire.org; 617-349-4921

Public Works Department: theworks@cambridgema.gov; 617-349-4800

Department of Transportation (outdoor dining on parking lane): Kimberly Crowe, KCrowe@Cambridgema.gov; 617-349-4734

Community Development Department: edd@cambridgema.gov; 617-349-4637