Assessing a Location:

Municipality Review
Once you've found that perfect location, make sure the restaurant your planning is allowed on the property. Most cities and towns have zoning restrictions that dictate how a property can be used. Don't sign a lease or purchase a property until you fully understand the restrictions. It is possible to get some restrictions changed but try to do that BEFORE you purchase.

Talk with the building official and/or planning staff at the local municipality as early as possible to confirm how your use will be classified and which zones allow it.

Municipal staff determine use by reviewing your proposed floor plan (cooking area, seating, bar area, parking requirements, etc.). Some relevant food service establishment types include:

- **Restaurant:** Full service restaurants, cafés, coffee shops, and delicatessens.

- **Establishment with Liquor License**: These are businesses that serve food, as well as, alcohol. These businesses must have a menu and may also have a bar. There are typically full liquor licenses or beer and wine licenses, and they may have extended hours.

- **Caterer/Commissary:** Or similar place in which food or drink is prepared for sale or for service on the premise or elsewhere.

Once you know what zoning and use classification you need for your restaurant, you can better evaluate potential properties.

Local Fire Code Review
Verify whether you'll need to install or upgrade the sprinkler system, the ancillary/exhaust system over the stove, etc. You may want to check with the municipality or local Fire Marshal. Permits may be required for installing or upgrading a sprinkler or fire alarm system. You may need to hire expert help in this area.

Link to a list of municipality websites: http://www.ri.gov/towns/

If the permitted use does not fit your need, you may have to apply for a land use permit to allow your use. Below are some of the permits and/or licenses you might need from the local municipality.

Potential Municipal Permits/Licenses You May Need

Each municipality treats these differently so check with the municipality where your business will be located. This is only a partial list, depending on your specific circumstances, there could be additional permitting or licensing needs.

- Zoning Conformance - Land Use Permits/Variances and Special Use Permits
- Building Permits (electrical, plumbing, mechanical, building)
- Fire Plan Review - Sprinkler and Fire Alarm inspections
- Liquor License (if applicable) and related Background Checks – (*Learn more about the Liquor License process in Step #2 Location, Location, Location!).*
- Victualling License – (*Victualer is a restaurant, coffee shop, cafeteria, lunch cart, delicatessen, caterer, ice cream parlor, café, bar, luncheonette, tavern, sandwich stand, soda fountain and all other types of eating or drinking establishments.)*
- Historic Commission approval/permits (if applicable)
- Sign Permits
- Sewer connection and/or pre-treatment permits
- Right-of-Way Physical Alteration Permits (Curb cuts, outdoor seating, etc.)
- Other permits: Games, music, caterer, dances, entertainment, exhibits, holidays, video, sound, tavern, outdoor dining/sidewalk, etc.

Other Permitting Entities:

- **Municipal Sewer or Wastewater Authorities** - contract the local municipality where your business will be located to determine which wastewater system you are on.

- **Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC)** – for sewer and/or pretreatment permits within the NBC jurisdiction.

  NBC - *A Guide to Understanding Your Wastewater Discharge Permit*: Link: https://www.narrabay.com/media/1546/guide%20to%20understanding%20ww%20discharge.pdf

  - **NBC Sewer connection permits**: Link: https://narrabay.com/customer-service/permitting/sewer-connection-permits/

  - **NBC Pretreatment permits:** Link: https://www.narrabay.com/customer-service/pretreatment/pretreatment-applications/

- **For Drinking Water –** Check with the local **Water Authority/Water Supply Company** – for water supply to your establishment, depending on jurisdiction, this could be either the local municipality or local Water Authority in your area.