

Grocery Store Launch Permit Checklist

Research date: September 23, 2026 | Last verified: September 23, 2026

Sources: Official government and regulatory sources

Research scope: Federal / State / County / City screened

No secondary-source claim is treated as authoritative without primary-source confirmation.

Business Profile

Field	Sample business details
Business name	Example Neighborhood Grocer
Location	100 S Gay St, Knoxville, TN 37902; new lease; exact suite and current CO not supplied
Opening model	Physical grocery selling packaged food and non-alcoholic beverages for off-premise consumption
Explicit exclusions	No deli, prepared/hot food, alcohol, tobacco/vape, SNAP/EBT, scale-by-weight sales, manufacturing, delivery fleet, or construction disclosed
Expected revenue	Not supplied
Change / construction	New business name; no renovation or use-change facts supplied

Executive Summary

Overall status: Likely required / Conditional. Start with Tennessee tax registration, then secure the local licenses that apply to the exact gross receipts and jurisdiction. The state food-retail plan-review path is triggered by the new business name; its official document list makes the lease and CO early blockers. It is not safe to promise an opening date until the space, approved use, and food scope are confirmed.

Recommended order

1. Freeze the actual suite, business entity/name, sales model, and whether the store will handle only prepackaged non-TCS food.
2. Register for Tennessee business tax through TNTAP; Revenue says registration can take up to 10 business days.
3. Obtain the applicable Knoxville **and Knox County** business licenses after state registration; the license threshold follows annual gross receipts.
4. Submit the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) food-retail plan-review questionnaire and supporting documents for the new name.
5. Resolve CO/use or construction review with Knoxville before relying on the food-retail approval path. Open only after required approvals are issued.

Requirement matrix

Layer	Requirement / status	Why it applies or is conditional	What to prepare / verify	Official source
State - Tennessee Department of Revenue	Business-tax registration - Likely required.	A physical grocery makes retail sales. Tennessee says businesses subject to business tax must register through TNTAP.	Legal entity/owner data, taxable-sales facts, tax account setup. Confirm any exemption with Revenue rather than assuming one.	Tennessee Department of Revenue Registration and Licensing Verified Sep. 23, 2026
City and county - Knoxville / Knox County	Business licenses - Conditional on gross receipts, likely for an operating grocery.	Tennessee says an in-state location with gross receipts over \$3,000 but below \$100,000 needs a minimal activity license; \$100,000+ needs a standard license. Knoxville says businesses inside City limits generally need both city and county licenses.	Projected receipts; confirmation that the exact address is inside Knoxville city limits; \$15 registration fee per new business to county and/or municipal clerk per Revenue. Do not operate before any required license is obtained and posted.	Tennessee Department of Revenue Tennessee registration and licensing Verified Sep. 23, 2026 City of Knoxville Knoxville Business License/Tax Office Verified Sep. 23, 2026
State - Tennessee Department of Agriculture	Food-retail plan-review submission - Required on the stated new-name fact pattern.	TDA says a retail business taking on a new name or undergoing renovation must submit the Food Retail / Plan Review Questionnaire.	Questionnaire, floor plan, applicable labels, Tennessee Revenue registration or business license, signed/notarized lease, and municipal/county CO. Ask TDA whether exclusively prepackaged inventory falls within a specific food-retail exception before calling a permit unnecessary.	Tennessee Department of Agriculture TDA Food Retail Plan Review Verified Sep. 23, 2026 Tennessee Department of Agriculture Retail Food Store Sanitation rule Verified Sep. 23, 2026
City - Knoxville Development Services	CO / commercial permit review - Needs confirmation.	TDA's new-name document list asks for a CO. Knoxville describes a limited Reissue CO review for ownership/tenant changes with no work or use change; commercial alteration has a separate full-review path.	Existing CO, approved use, tenant/ownership-change facts, proposed floor plan, and all planned alterations. Do not assume a reissue applies.	City of Knoxville Knoxville Plans Review & Permits Verified Sep. 23, 2026

Layer	Requirement / status	Why it applies or is conditional	What to prepare / verify	Official source
State/local/federal - only if facts change	Wine / alcohol - Not included; conditional.	No alcohol is in the intake. If wine is added, TABC's retail-food-store wine license has eligibility, local zoning/local-option, sales-tax certificate, CO, entity, and other prerequisites.	First confirm product, floor area, qualifying food-sales mix, local option, and opening sequence. TABC lists \$400 application and \$1,250 issuance fees on its current page.	Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission TABC Retail Food Store Wine License Verified Sep. 23, 2026
Federal - only if facts change	SNAP/EBT - Not included; conditional.	The store has not said it will accept SNAP/EBT. This needs separate federal-program screening before it is represented as a requirement.	Confirm acceptance intent and eligible inventory.	USDA Food and Nutrition Service USDA FNS retailer application entry point Verified Sep. 23, 2026

Items Requiring Confirmation

Missing fact	Why it changes the answer
Suite, current CO, approved use, lease and planned improvements	Determines whether the limited CO path, an alteration review, or further building work is relevant.
Deli, slicing, hot food, sampling, fountain drinks, or repackaging	Can change the food-establishment classification, equipment, plan-review, and inspection path.
Revenue forecast	Determines the minimal-activity versus standard local business-license threshold.
Beer/wine, tobacco/vape, SNAP/EBT, scales, delivery, outdoor sales	Each is a separate trigger and must not be rolled into the base grocery result.
Entity/DBA and ownership structure	Affects tax/business registration and later alcohol/regulated-product requirements.