

SJBA Inc.
South Jersey Business Association

PROJECT CONNECTIONS / PLANNING SERIES 07

Choose a property that supports the business.

First Commercial Property Purchase Planner

Test operational fit, permitted use, due diligence, fit-out and funding before making a first commercial property commitment.

PRINT-READY WORKBOOK / 14 PAGES

Illustrative scene; not an identified SJBA member project.

FOUNDED 1994 / CAMDEN / GLOUCESTER / BURLINGTON

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Define the business requirement

Begin with the operation the building must support. Separate current needs from growth assumptions and identify who has authority to approve a purchase commitment.

STARTING POINT / Business brief • Site search • Due diligence • Decision

Measurable operating goal, customer / staff needs and intended use

Authorized decision owner, advisers and target decision date

Access, storage, utility and growth assumptions to verify

Use the workbook in three passes

Gather facts and constraints / pages 3-6

Compare and coordinate / pages 7-10

Confirm next steps / pages 11-14

Track progress in the action plan on page 13. Keep completed worksheets private; no online submission is required.

Compare buying with leasing

Ownership and leasing create different obligations and flexibility. Compare both against the same business requirement, available cash and planning horizon. This is not an investment recommendation.

Option / provider A: _____ B: _____

Comparison point	A / evidence	B / evidence
Fit-out / ability to change space		
Upfront cash / liquidity		
Maintenance responsibility		
Flexibility / growth uncertainty		
Recurring occupancy costs		
Exit obligations / constraints		

Recommendation / information needed before choosing

Ask advisers to explain the cost and consequences of changing the plan under each option.

Build an evidence-based shortlist

Record what each site can support and what is still an assumption. A listing description does not confirm that the business can legally or practically operate there.

Operating criterion	Site A / evidence	Site B / evidence
Customer / staff access		
Deliveries / storage		
Space / configuration		
Utility capacity		
Location / transport		
Restrictions / evidence gaps		

Most important unresolved question / next action

Property A _____ Property B _____

Verify the actual permitted use

Describe the specific activity, hours, customers, equipment and planned changes to the relevant local offices. Construction and change-of-use questions depend on the proposed operation. [S1, S3]

What existing and proposed uses are documented, and who confirms zoning suitability?

What occupancy, access, signage or fit-out questions need authority review?

Which approvals or design documents are needed before work or operation?

What unresolved condition would prevent commitment or opening?

An existing business at the address is not proof that your proposed use is approved.

Coordinate due diligence

Let qualified advisers define the assessments and evidence required. EPA describes All Appropriate Inquiries as an environmental evaluation process; ask your attorney and environmental professional what applies here. [S2]

Commercial real estate / legal adviser

Align access, conditions and decision dates.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Building / design specialists

Assess condition and fit-out feasibility.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Title / survey professionals

Review ownership, boundary and recorded issues.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Environmental professional / attorney

Define appropriate inquiry and further investigation.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Utility / local authority

Confirm capacity, proposed use and approvals.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

A report is not a blanket environmental clearance. Ask about limitations, data gaps and next steps.

Budget acquisition and occupancy

Record the total commitment and the cash needed at each stage. Keep acquisition, fit-out and ongoing occupancy separate so a purchase price does not obscure operating obligations.

Cost / responsibility	Estimate	Confirmed	Source / date
Acquisition cash / transaction costs	$	$	
Assessments / professional fees	$	$	
Fit-out / approvals	$	$	
Utility / equipment work	$	$	
Financing / carrying costs	$	$	
Taxes / insurance / maintenance	$	$	
Business reserve / unknowns	$	$	

Decision owner / spending limit / next review date

Purchase price $_____; expected financing $_____; cash needed before opening $_____.

Prepare the financing conversation

Use the lender’s actual document requests and written terms. Do not assume a product, approval, interest rate, guarantee requirement or release schedule applies to your business.

What financial and property documents does the lender need, and when?

What cash contribution, reserves or other commitments need adviser review?

How are fit-out funds released, and which expenses need separate financing?

Which property, appraisal, due-diligence or timing conditions remain?

Retain terms and conditions with the date received. Ask advisers about obligations before signing.

Control transaction milestones

Have the legal and real estate advisers identify the controlling dates and evidence needed. Assign a person to obtain each report early enough to support a decision.

Milestone / source	Owner / deadline	Evidence / dependency
Property access / reports		
Title / survey review		
Environmental inquiry		
Financing / valuation		
Contract decision dates		
Closing preparation		

Most important unresolved question / next action

Copy dates from actual documents. Do not substitute this worksheet for contract notices or professional advice.

Plan fit-out and service handoffs

Make opening dependent on confirmed approvals and operational readiness. Ask the designer and contractor which work must be coordinated before equipment is installed or finishes are closed.

Work package	Deliverable / receiver	Owner / date / evidence
Design / intended use		
Permits / inspections		
Electrical / data / utilities		
Equipment installation		
Access / life-safety review		
Closeout / occupancy		

Most important unresolved question / next action

Record the receiving professional and confirmation needed at each handoff.

Protect business continuity

Plan how the business will serve customers during transition. Distinguish a planned task from an approval or service connection that has actually been completed.

Which operations continue at the current site, remotely or through a temporary arrangement?

Which services, equipment and records must be available on opening day?

Who confirms required approvals, access and utilities are complete?

What is the fallback if fit-out, delivery or approval dates slip?

Opening readiness needs evidence, not only a contractor’s projected completion date.

Ask advisers to resolve the gaps

Bring the business brief, due-diligence reports and budget. Ask professionals to identify which issues they cover and which require another specialist.



BETTER QUESTIONS. CLEARER NEXT STEPS.

Bring the relevant worksheets to your professional conversation. Record the recommendation, who owns the next action and when to follow up.

Illustrative scene; not an identified SJBA member project.

Attorney / real estate adviser: which conditions or obligations remain unresolved?

Environmental / building specialists: what limits and follow-up affect the decision?

Lender / accountant: what cash and operating assumptions need revision?

Role / contact / meeting date and documents to bring

Recommendation received / assumptions to confirm

Next action / owner / deadline / follow-up date

Roles listed are conceptual. Check current directory representation and each professional’s scope.

Make a documented property decision

Choose proceed, revise, investigate or pause based on evidence and the business requirement. Avoid treating appreciation or a future resale as a guaranteed way to recover costs.

READINESS CHECK / mark confirmed or name the unresolved issue

☐ Proposed operation and approvals reviewed

☐ Due diligence and limitations understood

☐ Funding / fit-out / reserves reviewed

☐ Continuity plan and decision authority confirmed

Decision: proceed / revise / investigate / pause | Date: _____

PRIORITY 1 / Action: _____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Dependency / evidence needed: _____

Progress / next review: _____

PRIORITY 2 / Action: _____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Dependency / evidence needed: _____

Progress / next review: _____

PRIORITY 3 / Action: _____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Dependency / evidence needed: _____

Progress / next review: _____

Review before each contractual commitment and whenever a report, quote or financing term changes.

Sources and your next connection

Use these primary resources with the relevant professional. Source checks: October 14, 2026. Blue underlined titles are clickable; [S#] references point to this list.

[S1] NJ DCA | Construction permit resources

Confirm project-specific permits and inspection questions with the local enforcing agency.

[S2] EPA | All Appropriate Inquiries

Environmental due diligence requires qualified evaluation; this planner is not a formal assessment.

[S3] NJ DCA | Rehabilitation Subcode

Background on rehabilitation and changes of use; obtain project-specific professional interpretation.

General educational planning information, not individualized legal, financial, insurance, clinical, engineering or construction advice. Requirements vary. Qualified professionals and relevant authorities should confirm applicable decisions.

Need professional guidance?

Explore current professionals in the SJBA directory. Bring the relevant worksheet and explain the decision you need help making. Not every role listed is necessarily represented; verify scope, credentials and availability.

About the South Jersey Business Association

Founded in 1994, SJBA is a structured, performance-driven, category-exclusive referral network for serious South Jersey business owners. Its trust-based professional relationships can help residents and business owners identify relevant expertise. SJBA does not guarantee member work or results.

Established business owner? Explore a meeting visit.
Visit the SJBA website for current information.