

How to Find the Perfect Location for Your New Fitness Business

Choosing the perfect business location is probably one of the most critical decisions you'll make. Here's a checklist that will help you evaluate the location that is right for you.

Step 1: Clearly define your target market

Who will be your core customers? Are you looking to reach a broad demographic or targeted niche? If you're reaching a niche group, what are their needs? For example, do they rely on public transportation? Or do they need easy-to-access parking? If your target demographic is women, will they feel safe at the location? If the target demographic is busy parents, is it easy to get to your location? Will you need to have space for childcare?

Target age _____

Gender _____

Income _____

Education level _____

Marital or Family status _____

Attitudes/Values _____

Interests/Hobbies _____

Lifestyle/Behaviors _____

Specific needs _____

Step 2: Evaluate the location

Next, spend significant time researching the perfect area for your new business. Make sure to visit the location at different times of the day and night, and different days of the week.

Traffic patterns: What is the traffic like at different times during the day? Are there traffic back-ups on access routes that might cause your clients to avoid your location due to traffic headaches? Is it easy to turn into and out of your location?

Parking: Is there ample parking during your business hours? Is it well-lit? Is the parking lot shared with other businesses? Do those other businesses have peak hours that could conflict with yours and cause parking issues?

Public transportation: Can clients access your location using public transportation? If you're in an urban area, how close are you to subway/metro stations and bus routes?

Access for suppliers/delivery: Is there easy access for delivery of your equipment, inventory, or supplies?

Competitor presence: Check out competitors in your area that might compete for your target client audience. Is the market saturated with businesses similar to yours? Is your offering or service different enough that competitors won't be an issue?

Population density: Is there sufficient population density in your area to drive traffic to your business? More importantly, can you reach enough of your target demographic in your area? There are several sources that may be able to provide you with this information, such as the [Small Business Administration](#) and the [American Fact Finder](#) (which is the U.S. Census Bureau's portal for community-specific information).

Surrounding businesses: What other businesses are in the area surrounding the location? Do those businesses complement/reach the same audience you are targeting? Will they turn off your audience? Or conflict with your business vibe? (e.g., you may not want a yoga studio next to a dog kennel.)

Overall neighborhood feel: Does the neighborhood reflect your brand image?

Renovations: Does the space accommodate the needs of your business? If renovations are required, you will need to work with your landlord (and in some cases local municipalities) to determine what type of renovations will be acceptable, and then you should budget what those costs are. Have an architect and an engineer evaluate your space and renovation ideas before you commit.

Funding implications: Some states and municipalities may offer tax credits or incentives to entice businesses to move to the area. There are also many federal, state, and local initiatives that offer funding for female entrepreneurs.

Zoning regulations: Ensure your area is zoned for a fitness business (and don't forget to think about your future business dreams).

Size and future expansion: Does the size of the building fit your current and future goals? Will it feel too crowded? Or will it be so large you'll be paying for extra space? If your dream is to grow your business, does the space/location allow for that?

Safety: Is the location safe for your employees and clients? Is there adequate lighting surrounding your buildings? Will your employees and clients feel safe traveling to the location?

Signage: Does the location allow for adequate signage to attract customers? Are there signage restrictions?

Visibility: Is the location visible from the street? Is there foot traffic to attract new customers? Increased visibility can account for a higher monthly rent, but for a new business this may be worth the additional investment.

Talent pool: Will you be able to recruit employees/instructors from the surrounding area?

Step 3: Determine the costs

Monthly rent: What are the monthly costs of renting, both now and in the future? While it could be great to get into an "up and coming" location, if the neighborhood is likely to see significant increases in rent, can your business pay those?

Renovation costs: If renovations are needed for this space, check with the landlord about enhancing the space first. Estimate your costs for initial and future renovation plans.

Repairs: Understand who is responsible for repairs. This should be clearly outlined in the lease.

Insurance: Get insurance estimates from a couple of insurance agencies to estimate typical insurance coverage needed for the area.

Property taxes: Always get an estimate of annual property taxes before you commit to a location. Typically in commercial leases, you as the tenant will be responsible for the property taxes. The landlord should spell out these costs in the lease agreement.

Utilities: Typically this will be electricity, gas, water, heating, phone, internet, and trash removal. While your landlord may be able to give you some estimates, take into consideration any fluctuations based on the type of business you own (e.g., if you have a hot yoga studio, your heating bills could be significantly higher).

Finally, does the location and space work for your life?

You will be spending a lot of time at the facility—is it convenient for you? If there is an emergency, can you get there quickly? Is the commute one you can live with—and look forward to—for a long time?



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