

Starting a Business in Washington

Steps to Opening a New Business in the City of Washington

Starting a new business can be an exciting experience, but before you can open the doors and get started, there are several approvals and permits that are required. This guide will provide you with a checklist of the offices within the city that need to be consulted before you can open your business. Information has been provided regarding parking, landscaping, signage, as well as building code requirements and utilities. The name and phone number of a person within each department has also been provided, allowing for a point of contact at every level of approval.

Before you are ready to open the doors to your new business, there are steps that you can take to make sure your plans will be successful. The Small Business Center that is located at Beaufort Community College is a resource that can help writing a business plan, how to market your business and the financial aspects of starting a business. They are also available to help established business owners as they continue to grow. While these aren't required steps, they are strongly encouraged and they will aid in providing a thorough understanding of what to expect when starting a business, identify strengths and weaknesses in your business strategy, and help to ensure a successful outcome when you do open your business.

Also provided is a list of organizations within the city to help promote new business, as well as websites that can provide additional information beyond what is offered here.

CHECKLIST

General:

___ Create a business plan

- For any business, the first step is to turn your basic idea into a written, viable plan of action. A well-thought out business plan is necessary for obtaining loans and is a model for your success. Refer to the [Business Planning and Resource Section](#) on website: blnc.gov/start-your-business/planning-checklist. Other resources are also available to help you prepare your business plan. See "Other Resources" section below for contact information for the BCCC Small Business Center.

___ Identify sources of financing

- Refer to the [Financial Resources Section](#) on our website for an overview of financial resources available for small business owners in North Carolina.

___ **Decide on your business structure and register your business name**

- Careful consideration must be given to the management, structural and tax implications of your decision. While not a replacement for sound legal or tax advice, see Selecting a Business Structure and the Business Forms on website: blnc.gov/start-your-business/planning-checklist.
- To register a business name for a sole proprietorship or general partnership: Contact the County Register of Deeds Office where you intend to do business.
- To file a Corporation, LLC, LLP, or Limited Partnership: Contact the North Carolina Secretary of State, Corporations Division or call (919) 807-2225.

___ **Get State, Federal and County license requirements**

- The State of North Carolina does not issue a single business license. Your business may be subject to state, city, county and/or federal requirements. Call Business Link NC at (800) 228-8443 or (919) 807-4280 to determine your state license needs. Business Licenses & Permits listed by State Agency and/or Licensing/Occupational Board are available on website: blnc.gov/start-your-business/planning-checklist or you may contact the **North Carolina Business Service Center at 919-715-2864**.

___ **Obtain the necessary tax information**

- Taxation for small businesses may be simple or complex, depending on the size and business structure. The tax liability for each business will be different and you should consult your attorney and accountant regarding comprehensive tax planning. See the Business Tax Information on website: blnc.gov/start-your-business/planning-checklist for help with identifying tax requirements.

___ **Learn about employer reporting requirements and responsibilities**

- Visit the Employer Requirements Section on website: blnc.gov/start-your-business/planning-checklist for instructions on how to register as an employer, unemployment insurance and worker's compensation insurance. This includes applying for federal and state withholding numbers.

- For Federal Identification Numbers (EINs) contact the Internal Revenue Service or call (800) 829-4933
- For State Sales Tax and State Withholding Tax Numbers contact the North Carolina Department of Revenue or call (877) 252-3052

City of Washington/Beaufort County:

___ City Planning Office *Contact the Planning Department at: 252-975-9317*

- How is the building zoned?
 - If the building will need to be rezoned or usage changed (from residential to commercial, etc.) there is an application/approval process that must be completed
 - Complete the application
 - Submit the application to the Planning Board
 - Planning Board makes recommendation to City Council
 - City Council votes on rezoning
 - Possible fee
- Is the building in a flood plain? If so, a variance will have to be applied for and approved prior to any construction.
- Submit Site Plan
 - Are there any parking and landscape requirements? This should be covered in the site plan submission
- Sign Permit
 - There are requirements regarding the size and number of signs that are allowed
 - An application must be filled out and approved prior to installation of signs
- Historic District
 - Depending on the project planned, work may need to be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. Check with the planning office for more information.
 - Design guidelines: Check the City of Washington, NC website for guidelines

___ City Building Inspectors Office *Contact: Chief Building Inspector: 252-975-9304*

- Change of Use Application
 - Depending on the use of the building, you may need to apply for a change of use. An example is changing a clothing store to a restaurant
- Building Inspection
 - Prior to opening, the building must be inspected to ensure that all building codes are met
- Building Permit

- Any changes that are made to the interior or exterior of the building require a permit. All permits must be submitted through the building inspector's office

___ **Restaurant/Bar Contact: Stacey Harris, RS (Health Inspector): 252-946-6048**

- A restaurant or bar requires an inspection prior to opening.
- If you are obtaining an ABC permit, you may also be required to have the police inspect the restaurant/bar
 - You should also contact the North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission for an application **(919-779-0700)**

___ **Public Utilities Contact: Customer Service: 252-975-9300**

- The utilities on the building must be put into your company name.
- An inspection of the building may be required prior to the transfer
 - Dependent on how long the building has been vacant
 - Fees is \$51 plus a deposit
 - List of Information needed to establish new service: <https://www.washingtonnc.gov/>

___ **Fire Inspection Contact: (252) 948-9401**

- Ensures that the building meets all fire codes
- Must be done by the Fire Marshall
- Fees are determined on a case by case basis

___ **Helpful Websites and Software**

- In addition to the contacts that have been listed, there is a great deal of software and information available on-line that can help guide you as you get started. Below is a list of links regarding starting a business:
 - Software to guide you through preparing a business plan: www.businessplanpro.com
 - Information on Starting and Growing your Business: BLNC.gov

___ **Additional Resources**

- **Chamber of Commerce** (Catherine Glover): **252-946-9168**
- **Washington Harbor District Alliance** – downtown/harbor district businesses (Meg Howdy): **252-947-1487**
- **Small Business Technical Development Center** : **252- 737-1385**
- **NC Business License Information Office**: **800-228-8443**
- **Beaufort County Tax Assessors Office**: **252-946-7981**
- **NC Department of Revenue**: **877-252-3052**
- **Internal Revenue Service**: **866-816-2065**

- **Beaufort County Community College (BCCC) Small Business Center** *Contact: (Lentz Stowe): 252-940-6306*

Classes are offered through the community college on how to start a small business. These courses offer insight into the steps that might face a new or existing business owner. Below is an example of some of the courses that are offered.

- Business Plan
- Marketing
- Finances

Further Considerations:

___ **Consult with an accountant for bookkeeping and tax purposes**

___ **Obtain insurance (liability, fire, health, etc.)**

___ **Review contracts with legal counsel**

___ **Review applicable regulations (OSHA, EPA, Labor, etc.)**

___ **Join trade associations, chamber of commerce organizations**