

DeKalb County Small Business Resource Guide





Welcome to Doing Business in DeKalb County

DeKalb County is one of Georgia's most dynamic and diverse economic hubs, offering businesses access to a large and skilled workforce, robust transportation infrastructure, proximity to metropolitan Atlanta, and a strong network of public- and private-sector partners. Home to a wide range of industries—including professional services, life sciences, manufacturing, logistics, film and creative industries, and small-business entrepreneurship—DeKalb provides opportunities for businesses at every stage, from startup to expansion. Whether operating in one of DeKalb's municipalities or in unincorporated areas of the county, businesses benefit from a business-friendly environment grounded in collaboration, innovation, and community investment.

This Business Resource Guide was created to help entrepreneurs and business owners navigate that environment. Because DeKalb County includes 13 cities located wholly or partially within its boundaries—along with unincorporated DeKalb County—business requirements, services, and points of contact can vary by location. DeKalb's cities include Avondale Estates, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Clarkston, Decatur, Doraville, Dunwoody, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain, Tucker, and cities that are partially located within DeKalb County, such as Atlanta and Stonecrest. Businesses located outside city limits are served directly by DeKalb County Government. Understanding where your business is located is an important first step in determining licensing, zoning, and regulatory requirements.

This guide brings together trusted partners who support business success across DeKalb County, including the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, which serves as the voice of business and a connector for networking and advocacy; the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (UGA SBDC), which provides no-cost consulting and training for entrepreneurs and small businesses; each of DeKalb's cities, which issue local business licenses and manage city-specific requirements; and unincorporated DeKalb County Government, which serves businesses located outside municipal boundaries. Together, these partners work to ensure businesses have access to accurate information, technical assistance, and growth opportunities.



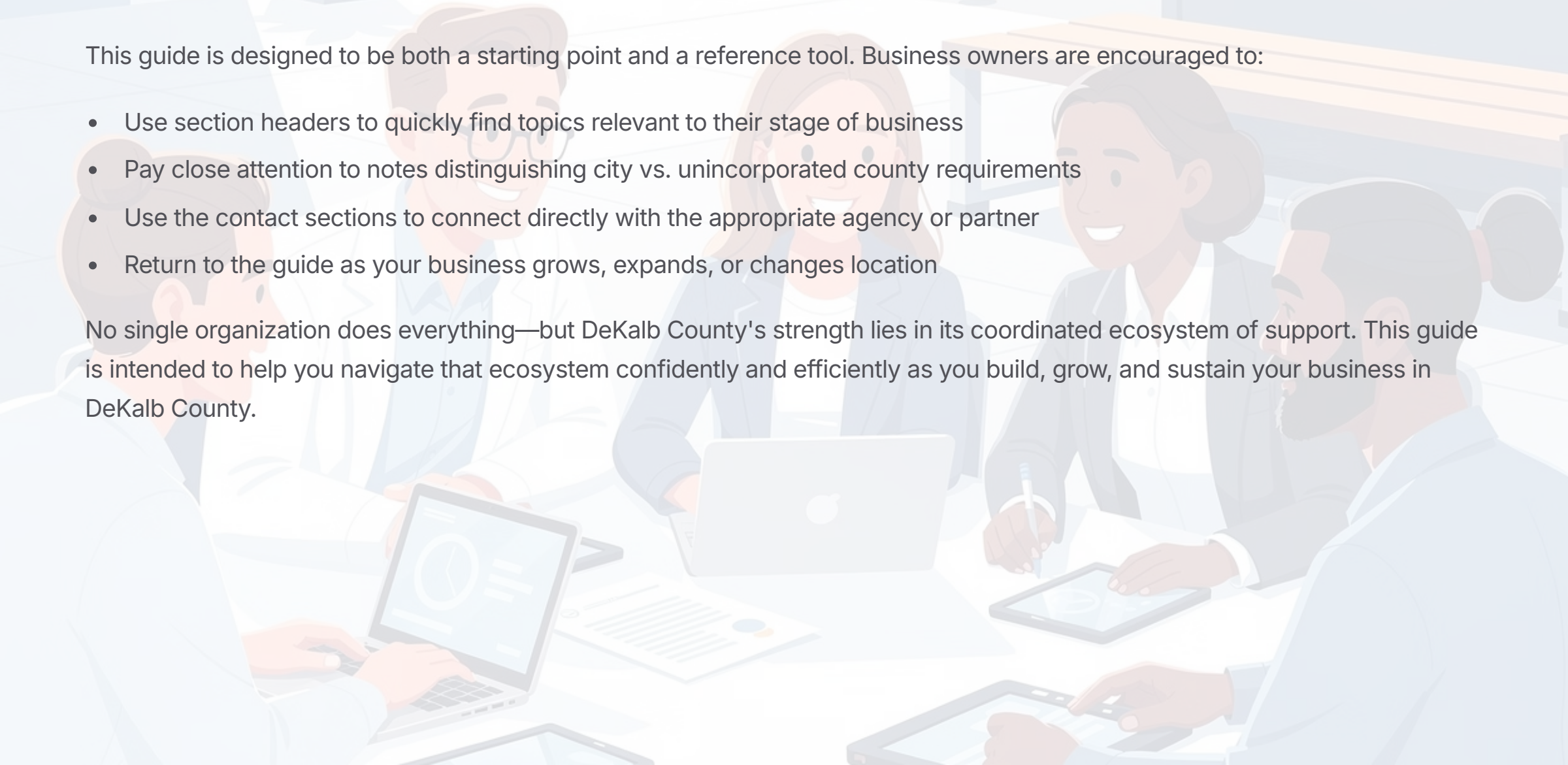


How to Use This Resource Guide

This guide is designed to be both a starting point and a reference tool. Business owners are encouraged to:

- Use section headers to quickly find topics relevant to their stage of business
- Pay close attention to notes distinguishing city vs. unincorporated county requirements
- Use the contact sections to connect directly with the appropriate agency or partner
- Return to the guide as your business grows, expands, or changes location

No single organization does everything—but DeKalb County's strength lies in its coordinated ecosystem of support. This guide is intended to help you navigate that ecosystem confidently and efficiently as you build, grow, and sustain your business in DeKalb County.





How to Start a Business

Understanding Business Structure

Sole Proprietorship

A sole proprietorship is the simplest and most common form of business ownership. It is a business owned and operated by one individual, with no legal separation between the owner and the business. The owner receives all profits and is personally responsible for all aspects of the business, including debts and obligations. Sole proprietorships are often used by freelancers, consultants, independent contractors, and small service-based businesses because they are easy to start and have minimal formal requirements. While simple, a sole proprietorship carries several important risks:

1. **Unlimited Personal Liability:** The owner is personally responsible for all business debts, lawsuits, and obligations.
2. **Limited Access to Capital:** Sole proprietors may have difficulty raising funds because they cannot issue stock and often rely on personal savings or credit.
3. **Credibility and Growth Limitations:** Some clients, vendors, or partners may perceive sole proprietorship as less established than LLCs or corporations, which can limit larger contracts or expansion opportunities.

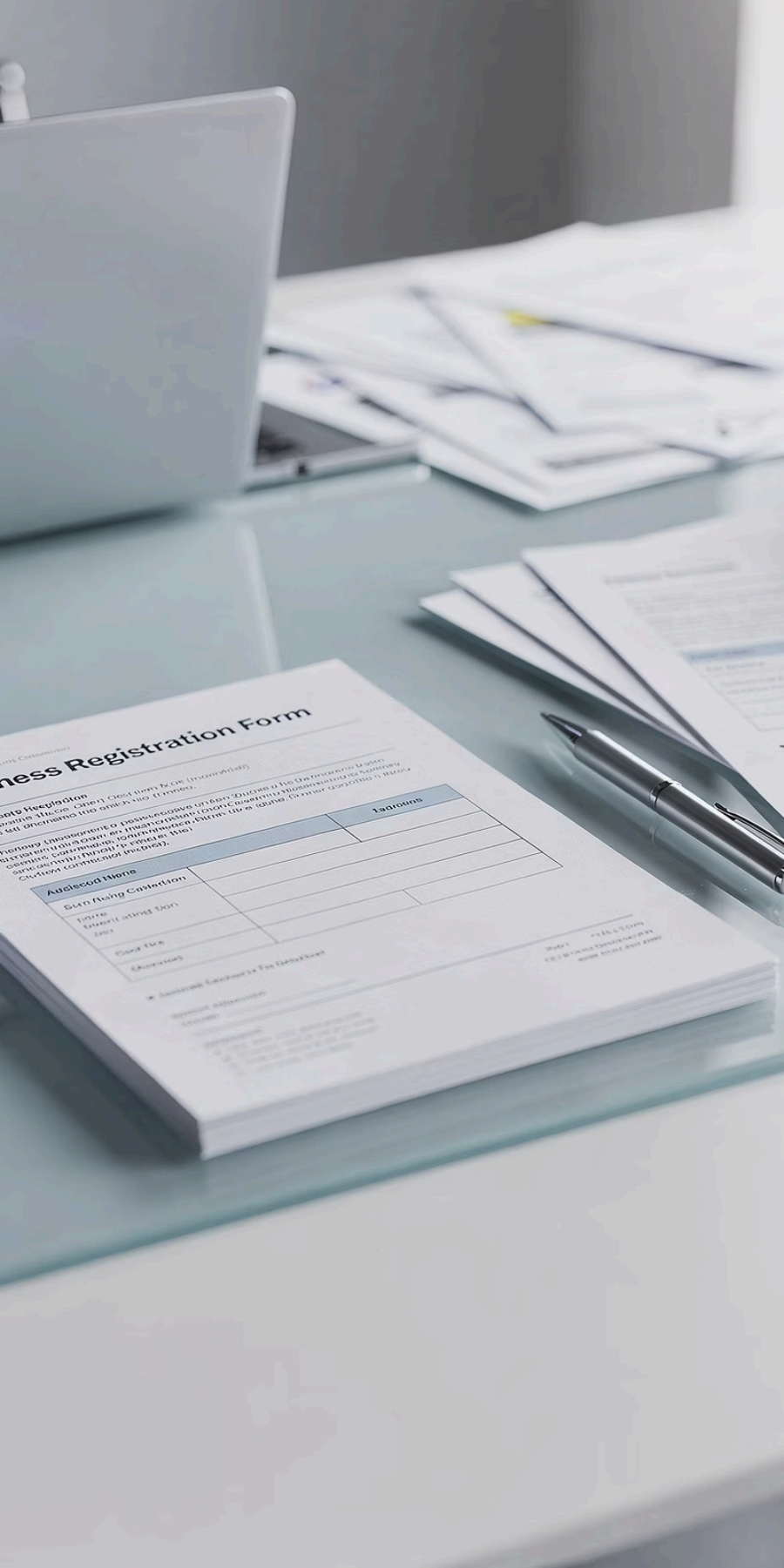
Partnership

A partnership is a business structure in which two or more people own and operate a business together. The partners share profits, losses, management responsibilities, and decision-making, unless otherwise specified in a written partnership agreement. Partnerships are commonly used when individuals want to combine skills, experience, or financial resources to operate a business but do not want the formality of a corporation. Common types of partnerships include General Partnership (GP), Limited Partnership (LP), and Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).

Some of the risks of a partnership include:

1. **Shared Personal Liability:** In a general partnership, each partner is personally responsible for the business's debts and legal obligations. In many cases, a partner can be held liable for actions or decisions made by another partner, even if they were not directly involved.
2. **Partner Disputes:** Disagreements over finances, strategy, workload, or decision-making can disrupt operations.





Limited Liability Company (LLC)

A Limited Liability Company (LLC) has one or more owners (called members) and combines the liability protection of a corporation with the flexibility and simplicity of a partnership or sole proprietorship. An LLC is considered a separate legal entity from its owners, which helps protect members' personal assets from most business debts and legal claims. LLCs are popular with small businesses because they offer limited personal liability, flexible management options, and pass-through taxation by default.

While LLCs provide important protection, they are not risk-free. Key risks include:

1. Limited Liability Is Not Absolute
2. Higher setup and ongoing cost
3. Self-employment taxes

Corporation

A corporation is a formal business structure that exists as a separate legal entity from its owners (shareholders). It offers strong protection of personal liability, can raise capital by issuing stock, and continues operating regardless of ownership changes. Corporations are often used by businesses planning to scale, attract investors, or operate long-term. They require strict compliance and formal management. Common pitfalls include double taxation (for C-Corporations), higher startup and ongoing costs, and complex governance requirements (boards, meetings, formal records).

Once a business structure is established:

- Register your business with the Secretary of State: <https://sos.ga.gov/>
- Apply for an Employer Identification Number with IRS: <https://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>
- Register for state taxes with GA Department of Revenue: <https://dor.georgia.gov/>



Business Licenses

A business license is a required authorization issued by DeKalb County and/or the city in which a business operates that allows a business to legally conduct operations at a specific location. In DeKalb County, business licenses help local governments ensure businesses comply with zoning, safety, and operational requirements, and that they are properly registered to operate within the county or municipal limits. Having an active business license is essential because it establishes legal compliance and credibility. Operating without one can result in fines, penalties, or delays in opening.

A valid license is often required to open business bank accounts, obtain insurance, apply for permits, access grants or contracts, and do business with government agencies. For DeKalb County business owners, securing the proper license is a foundational step toward operating legally, reducing risk, and positioning the business for growth.

Please

FYI: Some businesses will require additional permits or inspections before receiving an OTC.

Disclaimer: please contact your local government for the most up to date information.





DeKalb County GEORGIA

- Commercial Based Businesses: Must obtain a Certificate of Occupancy before an application is submitted; applications without will get returned as incomplete or voided. Must also have proof of sanitation service.
 - Requirements for sanitation services based on your circumstance can be found on the application.
- Complete business license application along with required fees
- Commercial: **[Commercial Business License](#)**
- Home Based: **[Home-Based Business License](#)**

Email

Website

The logo for the City of Dunwoody, Georgia. It features the words "City of" in a green, italicized serif font above the word "Dunwoody" in a large, blue, serif font. Below "Dunwoody" is the word "Georgia" in a smaller, green, italicized serif font. A green, curved line underlines the text.

City of Dunwoody Georgia

- Check with the planning and zoning department to determine if your business is allowed in zoning district
- Prepare the space for customers—a building permit is needed for anything more than carpeting and painting
- Register and collect sales tax if business is going to be selling items or products
- Occupational Tax Certificate (OTC) can be completed through the online portal on city website or at City Hall:
<https://dunw.csqrcloud.com/community-etrait/>
 - Physical OTC application must be notarized—found at City Hall for Free
- Link to city of Dunwoody Business License Information:
<https://www.dunwoodyga.gov/government/departments/communitydevelopment/licenses-special-events/business-licenses>

Email

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Step 1: Make sure your business is in the proper zoning district for your type of business. Email your business address and dominant business activity to the Brookhaven Zoning Department for zoning confirmation; helps reduce denied application due to improper zoning. (planning@brookhavenga.gov)

Step 2: Non-home-based businesses should verify whether the business will need a Certificate of Occupancy from the Community Development Department. (planning@brookhavenga.gov)

Step 3: Complete and submit all required forms and documents online at <https://brookhavenga.munirevs.com/> to obtain OTC.

- Required for all applicants:
 - Completed, signed, and notarized occupational tax certificate application
 - Notarized SAVE Affidavit form with appropriate ID
 - Notarized E-Verify Private Employer Affidavit
 - Penalties, Conditions, and Certifications form
 - Copy of secure and verifiable ID
 - Payment for the correct fee amount
- Required for all commercial applicants:
 - Copy of lease agreement or deed
 - Copy of Brookhaven fire Marshal Inspection report
 - Copy of Certificate of Occupancy issued within the last year
- Required for home-based applicants:
 - Copy of lease Agreement (if you do not own your home)
- Additional Requirements based on business type:
 - Copy of Certificate of Incorporation/Organization—corporation or LLC
 - Copy of Professional State License—Attorneys, Physicians, CPAs, Engineering, Cosmetology, etc.
 - Copy of DeKalb County food permit—grocery stores, restaurants, bars, food trucks, bakeries only
 - Copy of FOG (Fats, Oils, Greases) Compliance Inspection from DeKalb County Dept. of Watershed
 - Massage Regulatory Permit and Massage work permit
 - Additional requirements for pain management clinics

For assistance, contact Paula Clark, Accountant Liaison City of Brookhaven: paula.clarke@brookhavenga.gov, 404-637-0579

Email

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New businesses must first obtain an approved Zoning Verification and Life Safety Certificate (if applicable). Once approved, the business license application and required documents can be submitted through the licensing portal.

Home-Based Businesses

Must receive an approved Zoning Verification Form

Required Documents:

- [Home-Based Occupational Tax Certificate Instructions](#)
- [S.A.V.E. Affidavit](#)
- [List of Secure and Verifiable Documents](#)
- [E-Verify Affidavit](#)
- [Home-Based Business Questionnaire](#)
- [Emergency Contact Form](#)
- [Home Occupation Regulations Form](#)
- [Zoning Verification Form](#)
- [Application for Home-Based Occupational Tax Certificate](#)

Commercial Businesses

Must receive an approved Zoning Verification Form AND Life Safety Certificate

Required Documents:

- [Commercial Occupational Tax Certificate Instructions](#)
- [S.A.V.E. Affidavit](#)
- [List of Secure and Verifiable Documents](#)
- [E-Verify Affidavit](#)
- [Emergency Contact Form](#)
- [Zoning Verification Form](#)
- [Commercial Questionnaire](#)

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- New businesses in the City of Doraville are required to have a current Occupational Tax Certificate (OTC) in order to conduct business within city limits.
- Use of the online **Cloudpermit** portal is the most convenient and efficient way to submit your OTC application and is strongly encouraged.
- Once an application is received and all required documents have been submitted, it generally takes ten (10) business days to go through the review process.
- Certain businesses require additional permits prior to submitting an OTC application
 - **[https://www.doravillega.us/business/occupational_tax_certificates_\(otc\)/index.php](https://www.doravillega.us/business/occupational_tax_certificates_(otc)/index.php)**

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- New Business Owners will need to sign up for [ATLBIZ](#), the City of Atlanta's new hub for Occupational Tax and Permitting
- Once signed up, complete the Occupational Tax Application along with required fees
- The following documents may be required to complete your online application process, depending on the nature of your new business.
 - Notarized [E-Verify Affidavit](#)
 - Notarized [SAVE Affidavit](#)
 - Copy of applicant's government issued photo ID
 - Regulatory Permits (If applicable)
- Important information to note:
 - a. An Occupational Tax Certificate is required of all businesses operating within the city limits of Atlanta and are not transferable.
 - b. Businesses located in Atlanta may be taxed on statewide receipts, if you do not have a physical location in any other jurisdiction within the State. ([Atlanta Municipal Code § 30-51](#)).
 - c. Out-of-state businesses with no location or office in Georgia, doing business in Atlanta are subject to the City of Atlanta's Occupation Tax ([Atlanta Municipal Code § 30-77](#)).

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City of Tucker

- Businesses and non-profits looking to operate within the city of Tucker will need to complete a three-step application process, which includes a Zoning Use Approval (ZUA) application, a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for a New Business application, and an Occupational Tax Certificate (OTC) application. The ZUA will be processed and reviewed first to ensure the use complies with zoning before the city will process the CO-New Business and OTC.
- In order to make the process easier for business owners, a business application packet has been created that includes all application pages and other relevant signature pages. Failure to comply with any required steps can result in a citation.
- [Link to Application Packet](#)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW BUSINESSES

- Amusement Game Room License. Businesses that wish to have coin operated amusement machines are required to obtain an Amusement Game Room License from the city and comply with the regulations in Chapter 10, Article XIV, as well as those in the City of Tucker Zoning Ordinance.
- Alcohol. The sale of alcohol (retail and/or on-site consumption) requires a City of Tucker and State of Georgia Alcohol License.
- Building Modifications. If you plan on doing any construction or modifications in the space, including exterior modifications, you will likely need a building permit.
- Signage. All signage, both temporary and permanent, requires a sign permit. The sign permit should be obtained before the signage is manufactured/installed.
- [Additional Business Considerations](#)

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- The City of Clarkston requires anyone involved in a business, trade profession, or other occupation (including home occupations) within the City limits, to obtain an Occupational Tax Certificate and pay an Occupational Tax, prior to opening a business. Occupational Tax Certificates expire on December 31st of each year regardless of when the account was opened and should be renewed annually.
- Submit the 2026 New Business License Application for new businesses. Please be aware that the only way to obtain a new Occupational Tax Certificate is directly through the City of Clarkston.
- Applicants must meet business type, zoning, location, and other requirements per local, state or federal agencies.
- If the business is a Corporation, Limited Liability Company (LLC) or a Limited Partnership, it must be registered with the Georgia Secretary of State's office (even if you are registered in another state).
- The Business will undergo verification of Occupational Tax (business license) as well as status of any fees or taxes due to the city.
- The completed application is reviewed by the department staff and submitted to the City Manager for approval or denial.
- Each new business must pay a \$130.00 Administrative Fee upon application.
- Only applications considered 100% complete will be accepted, so be sure to include all necessary information as detailed in the application.
- **[New Business License application](#)**

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- An Occupational Tax Certificate (aka Business License) is required for all businesses and practitioners that conduct business in an office or location within Pine Lake, including home occupations. The application form and required fees linked below.
 - [Application Form](#)
 - [Fee Schedule](#)

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- Before signing a lease we recommend that you make sure your business location is in the proper zoning district for your type of business.
 - Disclaimer: For home-based businesses, there are certain zoning rules and regulations governing the business location. If you are not a home-based business, we recommend that you verify whether or not your business will need a Certificate of Occupancy from Lithonia at City Hall. Please call 770-482-8136, ext. 128.
- Required for all applicants:
 - New Occupational Tax Certificate Application w/ lease agreement or purchase agreement
 - SAVE Affidavit Form with appropriate identification
 - E-Verify Affidavit or Private Employer Exemption Affidavit Pursuant to O.C.G.A§ 36-60-6(d)
 - Copy of Applicant's Identification
 - Payment for the correct fee amount
 - On-Line, Cash, Checks or Money Orders are acceptable forms of payment
- **Occupational Tax Certificate/Business License Checklist**
- Optional depending on business type:
 - Home Occupational Supplemental Form
 - Only needed if business will be operated from home
 - Copy of the first page of the Certificate of Incorporation
 - Only needed if business is a Corporation or LLC, (Includes non-profits)
 - Copy of Professional State License
 - Only if applicable: Attorneys, Physicians, CAP's, Engineering, Architects, Surveyors, Cosmetology, etc.
 - Copy of health inspection report with the grade and/or fire inspection report (Restaurants only)
 - Copy of FOG (Fats, Oils, Greases) Compliance Inspection from DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management (Restaurants only)

Email

Website



Required Documents for Commercial Businesses:

- A New Certificate of Occupancy
 - (Note: New Construction or Existing Building issued by the City of Stonecrest Building Official)
- A completed new business license application
- A current lease agreement or proof of ownership
- Proof of Dekalb County sanitation services
- A valid government issued ID
- Business License fee \$125.00 (includes: \$75.00 Admin Fee and \$50.00 Minimum Tax) plus applicable fees based on the estimated gross receipts and the number of employees.

Required Documents for Home-Based Businesses:

- Approval from the Community Development Director
- A completed new business license application (check YES box for Home Based Occupation)
- A current lease agreement or proof of ownership
- A valid government issued ID (Note: Home Address on application must match ID)
- Business License fee \$125.00 (includes: \$75.00 Admin Fee and \$50.00 Minimum Tax) plus applicable fees based on the estimated gross receipts and the number of employees.

Note: Home-based businesses require a Special Administrative Permit Application (SAP) approval through Planning and Zoning before applying for a business license.

All NON-PROFIT Organizations must provide proof of 501-C status with completed application (Fee: Zero)

[Email](#)

[Website](#)



CITY OF STONE MOUNTAIN, GA

Complete and submit the following forms:

- [Zoning Certification Request Form—Commercial Businesses](#)
- [New Business Application \(Commercial\)](#)
- [Zoning Certification Request Form—Home Based Businesses](#)
- [Home Occupation Tax Certification Application](#)

Submit the Form:

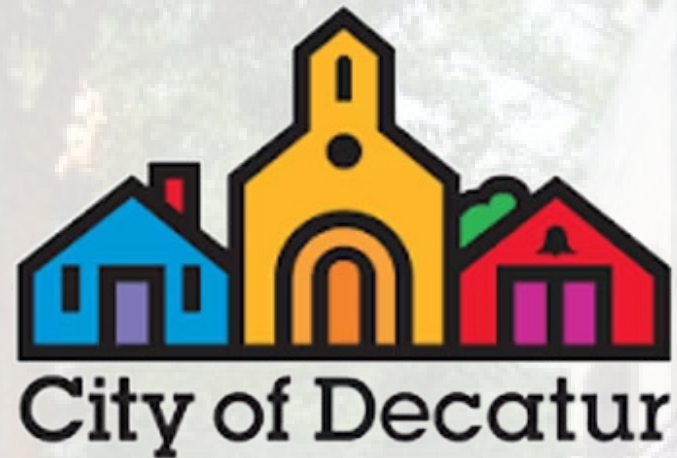
- In Person: Bring it to the Administration Office at 875 Main Street, Stone Mountain, Georgia.
- By Fax: Send it to 770-498-8609.
- By Email: Send it to the City Clerk at administration@stonemountaincity.org.

For detailed instructions, [click here for Home Occupation Tax Application Instructions](#).

Note: If you have a permanent business location in the city, your occupation tax certificate must be displayed in a visible area at your place of business.

[Email](#)

[Website](#)

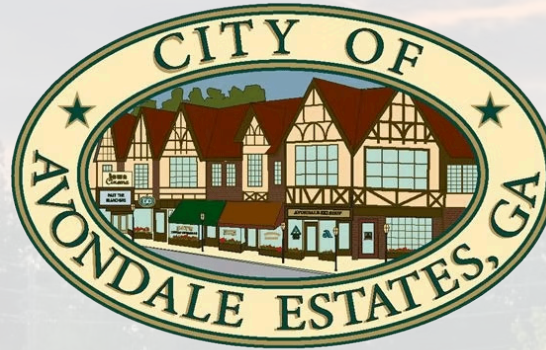


If you are a new or existing business in the City of Decatur and you own, lease or sublease a commercial space or have a home business, you are required to obtain approval first. Read over the [Occupancy Paths PDF](#) first before filling out the appropriate form.

- [Application for Occupancy for Business Use](#)
- [Application for Home-Based Business Occupancy](#)

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Applicants will need to upload or complete the following documents while submitting the application through the secure online application:

- Tax ID Number - a Federal Employee Identification Number (EIN) or Social Security Number (SSN),
 - Business License applicants who are serving alcohol, hiring employees or who are part of a corporation/partnership must obtain an EIN through the [IRS](#).
- Certificate of Occupancy, Certificate of Completion or Commercial Fire Marshal Permit when applying for a new business license in a physical location,
- Affidavit Verifying Status for City Public Benefit Application,
- Private Employer Affidavit, and
- Driver's License in lieu of notarizing the affidavits if not notarized.

Business License Application: [Avondale Estates Business License Application](#)

Email

Website

Zoning



North Park

Low Island

City

Zoning

Zoning is a city/county planning tool that determines how land and buildings can be used in different areas of a city—such as where businesses, housing, industrial uses, or mixed-use developments are allowed. Zoning rules set standards like permitted business types, building height, parking requirements, and operational limits to protect public health, safety, and overall community welfare.

For business owners and entrepreneurs, zoning is a critical early consideration because it determines whether a business can legally locate, operate, expand, or change its use at a specific site in DeKalb County. Understanding zoning requirements helps businesses avoid delays, plan for necessary approvals or rezoning, and align property decisions with the County's development and permitting process administered by the DeKalb County Development & Planning Department.

Before signing a lease or purchasing property, business owners should confirm which jurisdiction applies to ensure the site is properly zoned and to understand which entity will review permits, licenses, and potential zoning changes.

Use link to locate your business here: [**Locate my DeKalb Business**](#)

Disclaimer: please contact your local government for the most up to date information.



Zoning Ordinances by Jurisdiction

Unincorporated DeKalb:

https://library.municode.com/ga/dekalb_county/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 27

Dunwoody

https://library.municode.com/ga/dunwoody/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 27

ZONING questions:

Allegra DeNooyer | 678-382-6800

allegra.denooyer@dunwoodyga.gov

Brookhaven

https://library.municode.com/ga/brookhaven/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 27

Chamblee

https://library.municode.com/ga/chamblee/codes/code_of_ordinances

Appendix A, Title 2

Doraville

https://library.municode.com/ga/doraville/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 23; Articles 3 & 4

Tucker

https://library.municode.com/ga/tucker/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 46

Clarkston

https://library.municode.com/ga/clarkston/codes/code_of_ordinances

Appendix A

Pine Lake

https://library.municode.com/ga/pine_lake/codes/code_of_ordinances

Appendix A

Lithonia

[https://lithoniacity.org/Assets/Files/Ordinances/Zoning%20Ordinance%20No.%202014-05-01%20\(Adopted%20July%206%20201%20\(3\).pdf](https://lithoniacity.org/Assets/Files/Ordinances/Zoning%20Ordinance%20No.%202014-05-01%20(Adopted%20July%206%20201%20(3).pdf)

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Stonecrest

https://library.municode.com/ga/stonecrest/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 27

Stone Mountain

https://library.municode.com/ga/stone_mountain/codes/code_of_ordinances

Part 2, Appendix A, Article 5

Decatur

https://library.municode.com/ga/decatur/codes/code_of_ordinances

Part 4

Avondale Estates

https://library.municode.com/ga/avondale_estates/codes/code_of_ordinances

Chapter 21

Atlanta

https://library.municode.com/ga/atlanta/codes/code_of_ordinances

Part III, Part 16



Business Compliance

Taxes and Record Keeping

Understanding your taxes early helps you stay compliant and avoid costly penalties. Every business in DeKalb County must report and pay taxes at the federal, state, and local levels. Additionally, businesses may be required to make estimated payments on a quarterly basis. The specific requirements will vary depending on the legal form of the business.

- Federal Taxes: Income, Self-Employment, Payroll
- State Taxes: Sales and Use, Withholding (for employers paying wages to employees), Corporate Income
- Local Taxes (DeKalb County): Occupational, Property

Keep Detailed records of receipts and invoices, payroll reports, expenses, and annual filings and tax returns. Good bookkeeping makes tax filing easier if you ever need business financing.





Hiring and Employment Compliance

Before you hire employees for your business, Georgia and federal law requires specific guidelines to follow, protecting both you and your team. Business owners who plan to hire employees in Georgia are required to follow federal and state employment laws to ensure their workforce is legally compliant. This includes completing Form I-9 for every new hire to confirm their identity and authorization to work in the United States. Many employers must also use E-Verify, which is required for all public employers, government contractors and subcontractors, and private businesses with more than 10 employees—particularly as part of business license applications and renewals. Employers must also report all newly hired and rehired employees to the Georgia New Hire Reporting Center within 10 days, regardless of whether the role is full-time, part-time, or temporary.

In addition, employers must collect Form W-4 for tax withholding, keep accurate payroll records, and meet federal and state tax obligations, including registering with the Georgia Department of Labor for unemployment insurance. Georgia law also requires businesses with three or more employees to carry workers' compensation insurance, and employers must post required federal and Georgia labor law notices in a place where employees can easily see them. Although most hiring requirements are set at the federal and state levels, businesses operating in DeKalb County should make sure their business license is current, as E-Verify affidavits or exemption documents may be reviewed during the licensing process.

Before you hire:

- Register with the IRS for an Employer Identification Number (EIN).
- Register with the Georgia Department of Labor to report new hires and pay unemployment insurance taxes.
 - <https://dol.georgia.gov>
- Use the federal E-Verify system to confirm new employees are eligible to work in the U.S.
 - <https://www.e-verify.gov>
- New hire reporting must be filed within 10 days of hiring via Georgia New Hiring Reporting.
 - <https://newhire.georgia.gov>

A woman with dark, curly hair and black-rimmed glasses is looking at a laptop screen. She is wearing a blue and white vertically striped short-sleeved shirt. The background is a blurred office environment with a whiteboard and wooden cabinets. The text "Financing Your Business" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Financing Your Business

Financing Your Business

Financing is especially important for startups and small-to-medium-sized businesses as they move from idea to stability and then into growth. Many early-stage businesses begin with self-funding, using personal savings, early sales revenue, or support from family and friends to get started. This approach allows owners to maintain full control, but it can limit how quickly a business can grow. As expenses increase and operations expand, access to financing becomes critical for managing cash flow, especially when customer payments do not line up with the timing of bills, payroll, or inventory purchases.

As businesses mature, establishing business credit and accessing traditional loans become important tools for expansion. Business credit allows companies to borrow under the business's name rather than relying solely on personal credit, helping owners protect personal finances and secure better terms over time. Traditional loans—such as bank or SBA-backed loans—can provide larger amounts of capital for growth-focused uses like hiring staff, purchasing equipment, or expanding operations. Financing should be used strategically, with the amount and type of credit matched to the business's needs and ability to repay. Responsible borrowing helps businesses grow sustainably, manage risk, and strengthen long-term financial stability rather than creating unnecessary financial strain.

Other common financing resources include:

- Business lines of credit – Flexible access to funds as needed; pay interest only on what is used
- Invoice factoring (accounts receivable financing) – Get cash quickly by selling unpaid customer invoices
- Merchant cash advances (MCAs) – Lump sum in exchange for a percentage of future sales; fast but higher cost
- Crowdfunding – Raise funds from the public through reward-based, equity, loan-based, or donation models
- Grants – Competitive funding that typically does not require repayment and is tied to specific purposes
- Angel investors – Individual investors who provide capital in exchange for equity, often with mentorship



Decide DeKalb Revolving Loan

Additionally, local communities can offer financial resources for businesses to utilize, like the DeKalb Small Business Revolving Loan Fund, offered by Decide DeKalb Development Authority.

The Decide DeKalb Small Business Revolving Loan Fund and Technical Assistance program was created to provide local entrepreneurs with the capital and resources they need to grow, hire, and build stronger communities.

Businesses Will Have Access To:

- Training Programs
- Business Coaching
- Wrap-Around Support

Loan Funding Will Support:

- Working Capital
- Leasehold Improvements
- And More...

Loan Terms:

- \$50K-\$150K
- 5-7 Year Terms
- Maximum 5% Interest Rate

Email

Website

A smiling man in a light blue dress shirt and dark tie stands in a modern office, holding a red folder. He is looking directly at the camera. In the background, other office workers are seated at a table with laptops and documents, engaged in a meeting. The office has large windows and a bright, professional atmosphere.

Business Support and Technical Assistance

Running Your Business

Getting your business operational properly is the first step of being a successful business owner; keeping your business running is where the real work begins. Understanding how to promote your business, engaging with community and business networking, and utilizing community/county resources can help your business not only survive, but to thrive.

Marketing, Visibility & Customer Growth

Effective marketing and visibility are essential for attracting customers, building brand recognition, and increasing revenue—especially for small and growing businesses. In a competitive market, businesses that consistently communicate their value and engage customers across multiple channels are better positioned for long-term success. Marketing not only helps businesses reach new audiences but also reinforces trust and loyalty with existing customers.

Key strategies include maintaining an active online presence, particularly through a well-managed website and social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google Business Profiles. These tools allow businesses to share updates, promote products or services, highlight milestones, and engage directly with customers at relatively low cost. Additional effective strategies include email marketing, participation in local events, partnerships with neighboring businesses, and inclusion in trusted directories and guides.

In DeKalb County, businesses can increase visibility by engaging with DeKalb's promotional initiatives, such as locally focused business guides, spotlights, digital campaigns, and county-led events that highlight DeKalb-based businesses. Examples include themed business guides (such as women-owned business directories) and community campaigns tied to Economic Development Week and other county initiatives. By combining smart, consistent marketing strategies with county-supported visibility opportunities, businesses can expand their reach while strengthening their local brand.



University of Georgia Small Business Development Center

The University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (UGA SBDC) provides tools, training and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed. Designated as one of Georgia's top providers of small business assistance, the SBDC has 18 offices ranging from Rome to Valdosta to serve the needs of Georgia's business community. Since 1977, their network of partners has helped construct a statewide ecosystem to foster the spirit, support, and success of hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs and innovators.

The UGA SBDC offers access to confidential, no-cost, one-on-one professional business consulting for Georgia small business owners who want to grow or start their business. Their expert consultants have earned advanced degrees in business or management and have extensive practical experience helping both emerging and growing businesses design strategies to make better business decisions and reach their goals.

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The SBDC's consultants can help:

- Update business plans from statistical and demographic data
- Identify sources of capital
- Set up record-keeping systems and analyze financial records
- Conduct specialized research geared to specific needs of the business-owner
- Create marketing strategies and advertising campaigns
- Explore suitable ways to conform to government regulations
- Increase opportunities to sell to federal, state, and local governments

The UGA SBDC is a Public Service and Outreach unit of the University of Georgia and is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). The University of Georgia Small Business Development Center is nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs and SBA.

In addition to educational training programs, we provide confidential, no-cost, one-on-one consulting (by appointment only) to owners of for-profit businesses in Georgia. To schedule an appointment, email dekalb@georgiasbdc.org or complete our Request Assistance page.

[Email](#)

[Website](#)



Decide DeKalb Development Authority

As businesses continue to grow, site selection and expansion support becomes valuable. Decide DeKalb Development Authority serves as DeKalb County's primary economic development organization, supporting businesses that are starting, expanding, or relocating within the County. One of its core functions is free, confidential site selection assistance, helping businesses identify suitable locations based on workforce access, transportation, zoning, utilities, and long-term growth needs. Decide DeKalb works directly with companies to evaluate available commercial and industrial properties and connects them to regional and state property databases, utility partners, and local governments to streamline the location decision process.

In addition to site selection, Decide DeKalb supports business expansion and retention through its Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) efforts. This includes helping existing businesses solve operational challenges, navigate permitting and zoning, access redevelopment tools, and connect to workforce and capital resources. Decide DeKalb and DeKalb County Government co-host large-scale convenings such as Business Resources 101 events and the DeKalb County Small Business Summit, which bring together entrepreneurs, service providers, workforce partners, and funders in one setting.

Decide DeKalb also plays a central role in redevelopment initiatives, including administering the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund, which helps offset environmental cleanup costs for eligible underused or formerly industrial properties, reducing risk for businesses considering redevelopment projects. Together, these services help businesses grow sustainably while remaining rooted in DeKalb County.

[Email](#)

[Website](#)



The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has served as the voice of business in DeKalb County, Georgia since 1938. Their mission is to support businesses of all sizes through connection, education, and advocacy, while helping create a strong, competitive local economy. The Chamber works closely with partners such as Decide DeKalb Development Authority, DeKalb County Government, and regional employers to expand business opportunities, support workforce development, and promote DeKalb County as a great place to live and do business.

The Chamber provides a wide range of services designed to help members grow, gain visibility, and stay informed, including:

Networking events such as Coffee & Connections, business mixers, and after-hours events

A searchable online business directory and promotional listings

Ribbon cuttings and grand opening support for new or expanding businesses

Business education through workshops, seminars, webinars, and speaker series

Advocacy and public-policy updates affecting the local business climate

Business spotlights, awards, and recognition programs

Sponsorship, advertising, and event promotion opportunities

Affinity programs and member discounts (insurance, benefits, software, and services)

Job postings, event listings, and news sharing through Chamber platforms

Involvement with the DeKalb Chamber is critical for business and community networking. Chamber membership connects businesses directly with peers, service providers, community leaders, and decision-makers, helping owners build trusted relationships and uncover new opportunities. Beyond individual business growth, the Chamber plays a vital civic role by convening stakeholders, advocating for a business-friendly environment, and strengthening DeKalb County's overall economic health. Businesses that are active in Chamber programs are better positioned to stay informed, increase credibility, and grow through meaningful connections.

[Email](#)

[Website](#)



Decide DeKalb

Development Authority

This guide was made possible through the collaboration and support of our valued partners, including DeKalb County Government, DeKalb County municipalities, the DeKalb Chamber, the Small Business Development Center, and many others committed to helping businesses grow and succeed in DeKalb County.

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