



## Opening a Business in the City of Birmingham

*Created by:*

ONB / Main Street Birmingham

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## Purpose of this Guide

**ONB / Main Street Birmingham** is a newly-merged entity that serves as a catalyst for the growth and vibrancy of Birmingham’s City Center and Neighborhoods. Its main focus areas are as follows:

- City Center Revitalization
- Neighborhood Commercial District Revitalization
- Business Growth and Innovation
- Catalytic Development

As a means of impacting these four areas, we work with new and existing business owners to locate in the City of Birmingham. Our services to these business owners include assisting them with navigating the requirements of city hall, whether those requirements relate to licensing or code compliance. This guide was created to help business owners understand what may be required to legally comply with city ordinances. Our staff will use this guide to discuss a business owner’s needs, as well as provide them with reference information.

This section will be revised once a new name, vision and mission are articulated.

## Who is Main Street Birmingham?

Main Street Birmingham, Inc. was founded in 2004 as a partnership with the City of Birmingham “to improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents by the revitalization of their commercial cores.” We have done our best in those years to use available resources to foster development in neighborhood commercial centers like Avondale, East Lake, Ensley, West End, Woodlawn and others Main Street Birmingham’s job description is: *Growing Business, Revitalizing Neighborhoods and Empowering Communities.*

## Who is Operation New Birmingham (ONB)?

Since 1957, Operation New Birmingham (ONB) has been a non-profit, public-private partnership between the City of Birmingham and the private business community. Its primary mission is economic development in the Birmingham City Center. ONB also promotes racial harmony throughout the Birmingham metro area through its Community Affairs Committee. ONB’s overriding goal is to make the City Center the #1 choice for business, living, healthcare, education and the arts & entertainment.

**This Guide was compiled from information published by the City of Birmingham to assist business owners in obtaining all of the necessary permits, licenses and regulatory approvals required to properly operate a business in the city. This Guide in no way supersedes advice or requirements provided to a business owner directly by an employee of the City of Birmingham.**

## How to Use This Guide

### *Preface*

This document is intended to give guidance to the processes involved in opening a business in the City of Birmingham. For every business planning to operate in the city, licensing, permitting and code compliance vary depending on the nature of the business. For certain businesses, there are specific permits required. Early in the process of organizing your business, we suggest that you meet with our staff to review this guide, and then use it as a reference when contacting specific city departments and, as necessary, county, state and federal agencies. Early discussions with us and these agencies will allow you to plan appropriately and identify the required application forms, applicable fees and permits necessary to operate your business. In our experience, this early planning will save you time and money, while getting your business open as quickly and efficiently as possible!

### **First Step/VERY IMPORTANT**

*Whether you have an existing business or are beginning a new business, if you are contemplating a renovation or construction project that requires a building permit, we encourage you to meet with our staff to review general requirements and discuss your business plan.*

*Before purchasing a building or signing a lease for a tenant space/building, always check with the City of Birmingham to verify that the intended business is permitted in that specific location per the zoning ordinance.*

*If you are starting a new business, before applying for a City of Birmingham Business License, make sure that you have applied for a State of Alabama Business License and Jefferson County Business License.*

### **Business License Requirements**

The City of Birmingham requires every business within the City limits to be licensed and to pay the business license tax, as set forth in the ordinance. To obtain the license, you should fill out the City's **Application for Tax Certificate (ATC FORM)**. Failure to complete the ATC form fully and/or failure to supply the necessary additional documentation may delay processing of your application which, in turn, may delay receipt of tax forms and/or issuance of your City business license.

The application is available at the Tax & License Administration Division located on the first floor of City Hall between 8:00a.m and 4:45p.m. The Business License Code, Ordinance No. 97-183, **requires that a license be obtained prior to commencement of business in the City.** ONB / MSB can discuss this form with you prior to you submitting it to City Hall. It may be helpful to mail this form into City Hall, so that city staff can advise you of additional forms needed. However, this process takes up to two weeks, whereas applying in person *with all information required* allows you to receive a license the same day. If you have questions about specific requirements for your business, you should contact the Tax and License Division at 205.254.2198.

Supplemental information is also required depending on the type of license you are requesting. If you are applying to register a **NEW, Non-controlled Business** with the City of Birmingham, be prepared to furnish the applicable documents and/or information below when you arrive at City Hall.

- **Completed and signed Application for Tax Certificate** (the ATC form mentioned above)

- **Alabama Corporation:**
  - o Articles of Incorporation filed with the Secretary of State
  - o Copy/copies of valid driver's license(s) of principal officers
- **Foreign Corporation:** (*Incorporated in a state other than Alabama*)
  - o A probate copy of Articles of Incorporation
  - o Certificate of Authority to Do Business in Alabama filed with Alabama Secretary of State (334.242.7200)
  - o Copy/copies of valid driver's license on principal officer(s)
- **Health Department Permit**
- **State Certification/Card** for (to be completed by City Staff)
- **Home Occupation Approval** (Contact Larry Young 205.254.2211)

If you are applying to register a **NEW, Controlled License Business**, please see below:

Alcoholic beverage licenses, dance establishments serving alcohol, dancers and/or performers in Division II dance establishments, pool tables and junk yards are controlled by special permit and must *gain approval from the appropriate authority* prior to licenses being issued in the City of Birmingham. To determine which authority must approve the permit needed, call 205.254.2198 for information and/or an appointment. ***Applications are taken by appointment only.***

Applications for the retail sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages in a public location within the city limits are processed by the tax and license administration division. Alcoholic beverage licenses are not assignable. You can also contact the Alabama ABC Board Field Enforcement Office at 205.942.7955 prior to purchasing a business which holds a valid ABC license.

Once your fully completed ATC form is received by the Finance Department, you will be issued a City of Birmingham ***Taxpayer Identification Number***. This number is to be used to report all City tax and license liabilities to the City of Birmingham Finance Department. If you have more than one business location, it is assumed that you will file applicable consolidated returns for Sales Tax, Occupational Tax, Sellers or Consumers Use Tax, and Lease Tax.

**NOTE:**

- If you apply in person, you will receive a printed certificate the same day.
- If you apply by mail, you will receive a printed certificate in two weeks by mail.

**Other Categories of Business Permits and Licenses**

**Home Occupation Certificate of Agreement – Home Business Permit**

Each applicant for a business license who plans to operate his or her business from a residence with the City of Birmingham must execute a "Home Occupation Certificate of Agreement" through the Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits before a City business license can be issued.

**Non-Controlled Licenses**

1. Sole Proprietorship/Partnership, Alabama Corporation, Foreign Corporation, Food/Eating Establishments, Day Care Centers, Transient Vendors/ Special Event License.

## **Controlled Licenses**

Alcoholic Beverage Licenses, Dance Establishments Serving Alcohol, Performers in Division II Dance Establishments, Pool Table, Junk Yards, Solid Waste Facilities.

## **Zoning Verification**

### **VERY IMPORTANT**

*Before purchasing a building or signing a lease for a tenant space/building, first verify that your business is allowed at the location you have chosen per the applicable zoning code. Make sure you have your City, County and State business license before you start this section.*

Begin this process either by applying for your business license, which is part of the approval process, or contacting the Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits/City Hall at 205.254.2478.

### **Purpose**

The zoning regulations and districts as herein established have been made in accordance with a comprehensive plan and designed to lessen congestion in the streets, to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to promote health and the general welfare; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentrations of population; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public requirements.

The regulations have also been made with reasonable consideration, among other things, to the character of the district and its peculiar suitability for particular uses, and with a view to conserving the value of building and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the city. In any given zone district, a particular use may be permitted, conditionally permitted, or prohibited.

### **Before coming to the City**

1. Write out a narrative of what your business will be doing. (initially, at 5yrs, at 10yrs)
2. Create a list of information and questions for the City Zoning Department about both how your business will function and what you need. (ex. Parking to right of way issues)
3. Schedule a meeting with a staff person in Planning Department to discuss items 1 & 2 above.

### **At City Hall**

1. Fill out the **Zoning Certificate Request Form**.
  - a. Fee \$25.00
  - b. Bring a legal description of the property
  - c. Turnaround time is about 3 days or so.
  - d. **This will verify that your business is allowed at the location you have chosen per the applicable zoning.**
  - e. They will also let you know if you are in a Historical or Commercial District, which has additional guidelines to follow.
2. If you have to get the property rezoned, here are the steps:
  - a. Filing and completing the applications process, which includes:
    - i. Develop the Application & Site Plan

- a. If the site plan reveals that the proposed project will need variances, (setback, parking, etc.), every effort should be made to eliminate the need for any variances. If the need for variances cannot be eliminated or applicant does not desire to do so, a variance may be sought through the Zoning Board of Adjustment.
- b. After the application process has been completed, the applicant will be scheduled to appear before the appropriate neighborhood association to present their request for rezoning. This meeting (described more fully in Step 3) can occur either before or after Step 2, depending on the schedule for both ZAC and the neighborhood in which the property is located.
- ii. Present rezoning request before the Zoning Advisory Committee
  - a. The ZAC decision is usually in the form of a vote either to recommend approval, denial or no recommendation to City Council.
  - b. Once the ZAC makes a decision on a request, the request is then forwarded on to the City Council. It is usually six to eight weeks until City Council hears and makes a decision on a rezoning request. If the request for a ZBA request has been filed, that process will be as described in Step 1.
- iii. Present rezoning request before neighborhood association
  - a. In the span of time between the ZAC meeting and the presentation of the applicant's request before the City Council, the applicant will be required to appear before the appropriate Neighborhood Association. The decision and/or input from the NA will be presented to the City Council as part of the narrative staff will present about the rezoning request.
- iv. Presenting rezoning request before the City Council
  - a. The ZAC staff will inform the applicant, by mail and telephone, of the date the City Council will hear the request.
  - b. During the City Council hearing, the planning staff will present a brief overview of the request, and the applicant normally presents the rezoning request.
  - c. The City Council will usually vote on the request on the date it is presented, but it could decide to continue the request to a later meeting.

### **Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)**

#### *Variance, Special Exception or An Appeal of the Decision of the Director*

When a property is properly zoned, there may be other zoning regulations that are not or cannot be met. The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) is a board whose main function is to hear and decide requests for the lessening of the strict application of the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance or the placement or establishment that certain conditions or circumstances exist or are met. Filing an application with the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) is a **SERIOUS MATTER** because it is usually a request to **construct or place** something on a property that is not normally allowed or permitted by the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Birmingham for that property.

*Filing an application is not a guarantee that the request will be granted. In fact, there are specific requirements that must be met for an action to be granted.*

A **variance** is a **lessening or reduction** in the strict requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. An example would be a variance to allow a business to operate with only 15 parking spaces instead of the required 20 spaces. Since a variance would allow something that is normally **NOT PERMITTED**, it is granted **SPARINGLY** and **ONLY** after every effort has been made to meet the requirements of the Ordinance, including reconfiguring plans, buildings, or relocating items on a lot.

### **Unnecessary Hardship**

In order for a variance to be granted, evidence that an **unnecessary hardship** exists on the property **must** be listed on the application and presented to the ZBA for their consideration. An unnecessary hardship cannot be financial and generally considered to be one of the following:

- Exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific property
- Exceptional topographic conditions, such as a serve slope
- Extraordinary and exceptional situations or conditions that would result in a peculiar and/or practical difficulty occurring on the lot.

### **Conditions for granting a Variance**

Whether or not a variance request is or is not granted is generally based upon the Board's determination that the following conditions exist:

2. That the special circumstances or conditions applying to the building or land in question are peculiar to such premises and do not apply generally to other land or buildings in the vicinity.
3. That the granting of the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a property right and not merely as a convenience to the applicant.
4. That the condition for which relief is sought did not result from an action by the applicant. (In other words, the hardship was self-imposed)
5. That the variance will not impair an inadequate supply of light or air to adjacent properties or unreasonably increase the congestion in public streets, or increase the danger of fire, or imperil the public safety or unreasonably diminish or impair established property values within the surrounding areas, or in any other respect impair the health, safety, comfort, morals, or general welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Birmingham.

### **Special Exception**

Special exception is a request to allow one of the uses listed in the Zoning Ordinance to be places or established on a property provided that certain conditions are met. The primary condition is that the special exception uses **will not impair the health, safety, convenience or comfort** of the area especially the adjoining properties. Other conditions require that some uses be limited only to certain zoning classifications.

### **Appeal of the decision of the Director**

The ZBA can hear an appeal of the decision of the Director of the Department provided that the decision has been given in writing to the owner. In hearing this appeal, the ZBA may reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modify the order, requirement, decision or determination appealed from and may make such order, requirement, decision or determination as ought to be made to that end shall have all the powers of the Director of the Planning, Engineering and Permits Department.

## Two Steps for ZBA Request

There are two main steps involved in the process of filing a request for an action from the ZBA. *Since each step provides information that is vital to the next, each must be fully completed before the request will be advanced.*

- Step 1 – Application Process consists of two parts: the application and a site plan
  - Application - the application is fairly self-explanatory and all pertinent sections must be completed. Key points of this document are
    - Owner **MUST** sign the application
    - A detailed description of the proposed variance, special exception, or appeal must be listed
  - Site Plan – If the request is for a variance or special exception, **a site plane must be included with an application form. This is a drawing or plan (minimum of 8 ½ x 11 inches in size) drawn to scale, that shows what is, or will be, placed or built on the subject property.**
  - The Site Plan must include;
    - Accurate property lines
    - Location, size and height of all existing and/or proposed structures
    - Setback (yard setbacks) dimensions for all existing and/or proposed structures, including main building, accessory structures and if a commercial development, dumpster location. (dumpsters must always be located only in a rear yards)
    - Driveways and walkways
    - Height and location of all signage, fences, walls, and appurtenance
    - Any type of site beautification, including landscaping
  - When the application and site plan have been finished
    - Return them to the staff person for the ZBA for review.
      - Staff will verify that all information is given on application and site plan
      - If additional information is needed, staff will explain what should be provided
      - Application and Site Plan will only be accepted when they are **COMPLETED**
    - Once all required information is given, the application process will be accepted as **COMPLETE** the staff person will make the final determination as to when an application is complete.
    - **The application process will be determined COMPLETE, when ALL FEES ARE PAID.**
- Step 2 – Presenting request to ZBA
  - During the ZBA meeting
    - The planning staff will present a brief overview of the request
    - The applicant and/or his/her agent normally presents the request
    - The public will be allowed to speak for or against the request
  - The ZBA
    - Will usually vote on the request on the date it is presented
    - May approve exactly what was requested or a different action
    - May place certain requirements or conditions on the action which are **BINDING**
    - May vote not to grant the request.



- If the ZBA approves the request
  - A resolution, detailing that action, will be printed and signed by the Chief Planner
  - The resolution takes effect as soon as it is signed
  - A copy of the resolution will be mailed to the applicant
  - An aggrieved party may appeal the decision
- If the ZBA denies the request
  - A resolution stating that denial will be printed, signed and sent to the applicant
  - The applicant or any aggrieved party, may appeal the decision
  - Unless the decision is appealed, the request cannot be resubmitted unless substantial new evidence is presented to the ZBA and, if they accept that evidence, they can reopen the case.

## **Other Zoning Needs**

### **Subdivision/ Vacation of Public Right-of-Way**

When a parcel requires subdividing or vacation of public property, permission must be received from the city for the project to propose as planned. Proposals for vacations, dedications, and/or resurveys are heard by the City's Subdivision Committee. The applicant must first have the Jefferson County Department of Environmental Services' review and approval prior to submission to the Subdivision Committee, in order to alleviate any questions regarding sanitary sewer or other environmental services.

### **Right-of-Way / Encroachment Agreements**

Right of way use agreements are needed when a privately owned object encroaches into the public right-of-way. Encroachments may take many forms including, but not limited to, underground ducts, canopies, awnings, bay windows, porches, exhaust fans, monitoring wells, pedestrian bridges, balconies, stairs, bike racks, etc.

## **Design Review**

### **Commercial Revitalization & Local Historic Districts**

Certain areas of the city have specific design guidelines that have been developed by city officials and local merchants or neighborhood associations. These design guidelines help encourage construction that will preserve historic character in these districts and enhance appearance.

### **VERY IMPORTANT**

*Within any local historic or commercial revitalization districts, if you are constructing a new building or remodeling an existing building in such a way as to alter its exterior appearance, you must go to the Design Review Committee for approval. This process assures the building, parking, signage and landscaping are compatible with the neighborhood in which the proposed project is located.*

*If you are planning to install a sign within a commercial revitalization district, you will need to go before Design Review.*

City Ordinance 84-141 establishes the Design Review Committee (a body of eleven volunteers from the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, construction and residents at large) and outlines the Committee's authority and responsibilities in administering the Commercial Revitalization Program and determining conformance with adopted guidelines.

You will need to familiarize yourself with the design guidelines for your district, so that your proposal for rehabilitation will be consistent with the overall design plan. You may request a copy of the guidelines from our office or by calling Kathy Puckett of the Urban Design Division, of the Planning, Engineering & Permits Department at 254-2558. The next step is for you to have preliminary plans prepared showing how you intend to comply with the guidelines. Your proposal should contain a photograph of the existing premises, plans, color and material samples, dimensions where necessary and any additional information which would clarify your proposed improvements. Presenting to the Design Review committee or city staff without these items will likely result in the committee requesting more information, so it is good to be as detailed as possible.

When your proposal is complete, or if you have any questions about your application, you should contact Kathy Puckett, Urban Design Division, Planning, Engineering & Permits Department (254-2558) in order to make arrangements for the Design Review Committee review and approval process.

The Design Review Committee meets twice a month, so that action on your proposal can be handled in a timely manner and you can avoid any unnecessary delays. Upon approval of plans by the Design Review Committee, you may then proceed to obtain the necessary permits and begin construction.

### **Process**

1. Determine if your project is located in a Design Review district. ONB / Main Street staff or an architect can help you determine this.
2. Develop an elevation to communication what your building will look like. In addition, you should provide a photograph of the existing premises, color and material samples, dimensions / location of all lights, awnings, signage, etc.
3. Submit plans and materials to Urban Planning staff for review and approval prior to submission to Design Review Committee
4. Present proposed elevation to Design Review
5. Design Review Committee action will occur within 15 days of receipt of completed application.

Not complying with the recommendations of the Design Review committee can result in compliance issues with city inspectors.

### **Building Permit**

#### **WHO NEEDS A BUILDING PERMIT?**

All commercial construction work regardless of the project size requires a building permit per the Technical Code of the City of Birmingham. A permit may be obtained from the Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits at 205.254.2211. Depending on the work planned, a general contractor may be required. If a general contractor is involved, they can assist with permitting.

#### **VERY IMPORTANT**

It is highly advisable to make sure you hire a general contractor with experience in commercial construction, especially if work is required to the building's major systems, such as plumbing or electrical. Experience with the renovation of an existing or historic building is also important if your project is not new construction.

## WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

The applicant must fill out a permit application, provide (3) sets of plans for Commercial Renovations unless they include exterior changes in a Design District, which would require (4) sets. New Commercial buildings require (4) sets. Drawings must be submitted on 18 inch by 24 inch size paper minimum. The drawings must include a site plan, a floor plan, a typical wall section, foundation plan and a framing plan. A code review sheet is required for all commercial work. Copies of the code review sheet are available at the counter or may be downloaded from the city's website at [www.informationbirmingham.com](http://www.informationbirmingham.com). All projects that are for an Assembly or Educational Occupancy, or if the work is being performed in a building 2,500 square feet or larger, or is a change of Occupancy, must be sealed by an Alabama licensed architect or engineer.

## STEPS FOR OBTAINING A PERMIT

1. The property's address must be obtained and/or verified by the Engineering staff at the Permits counter on the second floor of City Hall.
2. Zoning and Land Use requirements, such as zoning, flood plain, design review districts, historic districts regulations and land slide areas, must be reviewed by staff at the front counter to determine if applicable and if further review / approvals are required. If plans cannot be approved by the counter staff, the applicant will be counseled on the requirements for approval.
3. Once Zoning and Land Use requirements are approved by the counter staff, the plans are routed to Inspections and Fire Marshall Plans Examiners for compliance with applicable codes.
4. The counter staff routes one set of plans to the **Planning Division**, (two sets if in a Design Review District), one set to **Permits Division**, and one set to the **Fire Department**.

## WHAT IS THE REVIEW PERIOD?

The plans review period is ten (10) working days or less for commercial projects. Express Permit review of three (3) working days or less is available for commercial renovation projects less than 5,000 square feet. The plans will be reviewed, and a permit issued if there are no violations found. If deficiencies are identified and are required to be addressed, a plan review letter sent to the applicant. If there are Zoning or Land Use issues identified that require further hearings for the property's proposed use, please refer to the Zoning section for further instructions.

## ARE THERE ANY FEES?

Construction project permit fees are \$8.50 per \$1,000 of the total construction cost, as described in the Technical Code. Valuation is based upon the latest International Code Congress's most current valuation tables for new structures or the contract value, whichever is higher. You may download a copy of the Technical Code from the City's website which gives further detail and also addresses stand-alone permits.

## ARE THERE ANY OTHER REQUIREMENTS BEFORE OBTAINING A BUILDING PERMIT?

If earth is being disturbed, a soil erosion permit is required and may be obtained from the front counter Engineering Staff. If dirt is being removed, a building permit cannot be issued until a soil erosion permit has been obtained. If plumbing is being added or changed, a copy of the sewer impact permit is required. The sewer impact permit is obtained from the Jefferson County Environmental Services Department. A building permit cannot be issued until the sewer impact permit is received, if applicable. For commercial jobs, if the work is valued at Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) or more and the owner is not doing the work themselves, then a State Licensed General Contractor is required to obtain the permit (per state

regulation). If the work is less than \$50,000, individual subcontractors can get permits for their specific trades.

**Note:** If an owner is doing the building work and intends to obtain the Building Permit themselves, then they must sign an affidavit affirming that no building contractor is involved. This makes the property owner responsible for the compliance of the work completed. Subcontractors involved in the project will still be required to obtain a permit and have an appropriate State License, if applicable.

### **Certificate of Occupancy**

A Certificate of Occupancy is your authorization to conduct business in a specific building or suite within a building. The Certificate of Occupancy affirms the suitability of the proposed business in the building.

The building and fire officials shall inspect or cause to be inspected at various intervals all construction or work for which a permit is required. A final inspection shall be made of every building or structure upon completion, prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy. Where any additional or extra inspection is required on any undertaking due to the failure of the permit holder to comply with the provisions of this Code, a "Special Inspection Permit" shall be obtained for each such inspection, and there shall be an additional charge of \$50.00 for each such permit and inspection. For more information, you can contact the Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits at 205.254.2251.

### **Sign Permit**

For buildings that are not in a Design Review district, the signage for your proposed use will still need to conform to zoning requirements and to specific sign guidelines for the building in which you plan to locate. Please call the Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits 205.254.2524 for information on the signage allowed. If lighting is included, a building owner must receive an electrical permit prior to issuance of sign permit. Fees for sign permits can vary.

## Utility Information

Utilities are obvious services that must be provided when opening a new or expanding an existing business. Cable, electricity, gas, telephone, water and wastewater services are provided by the following agencies. Please contact them directly for information on connecting to their services, to obtain an application form, and for permitting fees if required. It is important to note that some of these services will need to be coordinated with your building contractor, because inspection by the city is involved.

### **AT&T (Internet, Cable, Phone)**

800.499.7928

[www.att.com](http://www.att.com)

### **Bright House Business Solutions (Internet, Cable, Phone)**

877.424.9246

[www.business.brighthouse.com](http://www.business.brighthouse.com)

### **Alabama Power (Electric)**

600 18<sup>th</sup> Street South

800.430.5787

[www.alabamapower.com](http://www.alabamapower.com)

### **Alagasco (Gas)**

20 20<sup>th</sup> Street South

800.292.4008

[www.alagasco.com](http://www.alagasco.com)

### **Birmingham Water Works (Water)**

3600 1<sup>ST</sup> Ave North

205.244.4000

## Local Agency /Information Sources

### **Better Business Bureau/Birmingham Office**

1210 20<sup>th</sup> Street South

205.558.2222

[www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

BBB ensures that high standards for trust are set and maintained. They exist so consumers and businesses alike have an unbiased source to guide them on matters of trust. They provide educational information and expert advice that is free of charge and easily accessible.

## United States, State of Alabama and Jefferson County Agency Contact Information Guide

The following other agency information is provided to assist you in navigating the process for obtaining the necessary information and permits needed to open and operate a business in the City of Birmingham. The involvement of these agencies depends upon the nature of your specific business.

### U.S. Agency Permit Information

#### **U.S. Department of the Treasury/Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**

801 Tom Martin Drive  
Birmingham, Al 35211  
205.912.5333  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

#### **Federal Employers Tax ID Number**

Forms — (800) 829-3676  
Information — (800) 829-1040  
Information regarding employee withholdings, self-employment taxes, sole proprietorship, partnership and corporate taxes.

#### **U.S. Small Business Administration**

Birmingham Office  
801 Tom Martin Drive  
Birmingham, Al 35211  
205.290.7101  
[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

#### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Western Regulatory Branch**

2042 Beltline Road, SW Building C #415  
Decatur, Alabama 35601  
256.350.5620

If any portion of your property might contain wetlands, it is advisable to request an evaluation of your project area by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers very early in your planning process.

## State of Alabama Agency Permit Information

### **Alcoholic Beverage Control /Alcohol License and Regulations**

211 Summit Parkway Suite 106 Crescent Center  
Homewood, Al 35219 (P.O Box 19247)  
205.942.7955  
[www.abcboard.state.al.us](http://www.abcboard.state.al.us)

Any business selling liquor (including beer or wine) either on-sale or off-sale is required to obtain a liquor license from the State of Alabama. Fees vary depending on whether it is on-sale or off-sale, beer only, beer and wine, or a full-liquor license.

### **Jefferson County Board of Equalization**

Resale Number, Seller's Permit, Sales Tax  
716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd North #A500  
Birmingham, Al 35203  
205.325.566

Every person engaged in the business of selling tangible personal property must apply to the County Board of Equalization for a Seller's Permit. If your business is a partnership, all partners should be present to apply for the permit. If your business is a corporation, one of the corporate officers must bring the Articles of Incorporation at the time of filing.

The Seller's Permit allows the Board of Equalization to keep track of taxable sales in order to collect the sales tax owed by the business. A Sales and Use Tax Permit will be issued. There is no fee for the permit; however, depending upon the type of business, it may be required to post a deposit, which would be refundable after three years of non-delinquent payments.

### **Consumer Affairs/Consumer Information Division**

P.O Box 303351  
Montgomery, Al 303351  
334.241.4141

The Department of Consumer Affairs protects the rights of both the buyers and sellers to help ensure a fair marketplace in Alabama.

### **Alabama Licensing Board of General Contractors**

2525 Fairlane Drive  
Montgomery, Al 36116  
334.272.5030  
[www.genconbd.alabama.gov](http://www.genconbd.alabama.gov)

The ALBGC protects consumers by licensing and regulating Alabama's construction industry. It also investigates complaints filed by or against licensed and unlicensed contractors.

**Jefferson County Assessor's Office**

716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. North  
Birmingham, Al 35203  
205.731.2965

<http://jeffconline.jccal.org/taxassessor/>

The Tax Assessor is charged with responsibility to discover, list, assess, apply exemptions, abatements, current use, and process real and personal property tax returns.

**Jefferson County Tax Collector's Office**

716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. North  
Birmingham, Al 35203  
205.731.2965

<http://tc.jeffcointouch.com/taxcollection/HTML/index.asp>

The Tax Collector is charged with business and personal property taxes.

**Jefferson County Revenue Department/ Business License/ Enforcement Division**

716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. North  
Birmingham, Al 35203  
205.731.2965

<http://jeffconline.jccal.org/revenue/>

Jefferson County is currently administering business licenses levied under the provisions of Title 40, Chapter 12 and Title 34, Chapter 35 of the 1975 Code of Alabama, as amended. Jefferson County is also currently administering licenses required under Act No. 1957-314, Act No. 1966-431, and Act No. 1991-170.

**Jefferson County Department of Health/ Food Protection Division**

1400 6<sup>th</sup> Ave South  
Birmingham, Al 35233  
205.933.1260

<http://www.jcdh.org/EH/FnL/FnL02.aspx>

It is unlawful for any person to operate a food establishment unless (s)he possesses a valid permit issued by the Health Officer for the operation of the establishment. Any person desiring to operate a food establishment needs to make written application for a permit on forms provided by the Health Officer. Permits automatically expire on October 1st each year. Permits are not transferable with respect to a person, food establishment, or location.

**Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries****Light Weights & Measures**

1445 Federal Drive  
Montgomery, Al 36107  
334.2407130

<http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/agr/index.html>



In accordance with Chapter 80-13-6, Alabama Administrative Code, establishments using light- weight scales (a weighing device of 30.0 pound capacity or less) to sell, offer or expose for sale by weight or measure any commodity shall register all such weighing or measuring devices.

## City of Birmingham

### Other Important Phone Numbers

#### City of Birmingham:

- Administration: (205)-254-2336
- Building and Inspection: (205)-254-2211
- Fees: (205)-254-2087
- Drafting: (205)-254-2260
- Engineering: (205)-254-2488
- Field Office: (205)-254-2259
- Flood Mitigation: (205)-254-2202
- Permitting & Inspections: (205)-254-2904
- Planning & Urban Design: (205)-254-2524
- Zoning: (205)-254-2933
- Zoning Enforcement: (205)-254-2503
- Tax and License Division: (205)-254-2189 (Office) (205)-254-2963 (Fax)