

NEW BUSINESS CHECKLIST



There are a number of things that new businesses need to be aware of before they open. While staff can help prospective businesses with the process, the time to find out what needs to be done is before opening the doors. **Do your homework before you purchase or lease a space.** Below is a quick check list, but every business is different and each should check ahead before spending money only to find out they are not ready to open.

- Have a good business plan. A good business plan is essential and will include the items in this checklist as some of these may involve unforeseen costs which should be accounted for up front.
- Check for applicable State and Federal regulations on your intended business. If special licenses or approvals are required, the City will need to verify this has been done before you can get a business license. You will also need to provide copies of all required licenses and permits to the City as part of the approval process. You can find a list of occupations and requirements for State licensing at the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulations website at www.state.fl.us/dbpr .
- Get your fictitious name from the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulations. You can contact them at (850) 488-9000 or on line at www.sunbiz.org . ***A fictitious name is any name under which a person transacts business in Florida other than their legal name. Business is any enterprise or venture, in which a person sells, buys, exchanges, barter, deals, or represents the dealing in anything or article of value, or renders services for compensation.***
- Check your location. Make sure the location will work with what you want to do. What kind of modifications will need to be made? Will you need a permit? Will you need to hire an engineer and/or contractor? Is there enough parking? Is your business allowed in the zoning district or are there special approvals that require public hearings that need to be added to your time schedule? What kind and size of signs are allowed? Make your own checklist of questions to ask the landlord or realtor.
- Check with the Zoning Division to see if your location permits your business and to see if you might need a site plan review or variances. These take time and will require alteration of your schedule for opening.
- Check with the Building Division to see if you need any building permits. Any changes to the interior or exterior may require permitting. Changes may also require site plan review and variances. Make your intentions clear when checking with zoning and they will let you know if you may need a building permit.
- Check with the Fire Department for any life/safety regulations. There may be regulations that are unique to your business. They will inspect your business as part of the business licensing process, but knowing what they may be looking for up front will be helpful in scheduling your business opening.

- Check with Business Licensing. This will be the last thing you will actually receive, but it is often the starting point for many businesses. You should not wait until this point to find out that you may not be able to do what you want, or that it may take longer than you thought to open. Do your homework up front and avoid surprises.

CONTACT LIST

For information on opening a new business, here is a contact list that may be helpful. These people can help businesses sift through the rules and regulations that must be met prior to opening day.

Business Tax Receipts (Occupational Licensing)	Lisa Giddens	(727) 893-1063	lgiddens@mygulfpport.us
Planning and Zoning	Mike Taylor	(727) 893-1087	mtaylor@mygulfpport.us
Building & Permits	Jerry Engel	(727) 893-1020	gengel@mygulfpport.us
Fire Inspections	Frank Vento	(727) 893-1064	fvento@mygulfpport.us

NOTE: New business tax receipts may be issued anytime during the year. After April 1st, fees are halved and good for the remainder of the year. Business tax receipts are valid for October 1st through September 30th. They can be renewed after August 1st. A yearly notice is sent to current tax receipt holders. If not paid by the due date they will be delinquent and subject to a 25 percent penalty.