STARTING A BUSINESS IN DENVER
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

A multi-lingual roadmap to opening a business in the City and County of Denver

denvergov.org/economicdevelopment
Thank you for choosing Denver as a home for your business! This checklist is intended to get you up and running as soon as possible. It includes navigation through the various city agencies and external organizations you will work with throughout this process.

There are many approvals needed before a business can open in Denver, and the information below will help you avoid unnecessary delays.

01

PLAN YOUR BUSINESS

- Develop a marketable business concept
- Identify target market; who is your ideal customer?
- Develop a marketing strategy
- Identify operational needs, such as staffing, production, and equipment needed
- Estimate start-up expenses
- Create financial projections for three years (worst-case, realistic case, best-case scenarios)
- Research the competition
- Select advisors (consultant/lawyer/CPA)

Who to Contact

- The Commons on Champa: https://thecommons.co/
- Denver Small Business Development Center: https://bit.ly/3mYw0FS
- Counselor to America’s Small Business: https://bit.ly/3QqC47o

02

REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS NAME & STRUCTURE

Search for business name availability and register your business name and structure.

Who to Contact

Colorado Secretary of State: https://www.coloradosos.gov/303.894.2200
03

DETERMINE YOUR BUSINESS ACTIVITY TYPE & OBTAIN APPROPRIATE PERMITS OR LICENSES

Who to Contact

City and County of Denver
- Denver Excise and License: https://bit.ly/3lEsIr6 to determine whether your business requires special permits or licenses.

State of Colorado
- Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies: https://dora.colorado.gov/ for any state requirements.

04

SELECT A LOCATION & DETERMINE ZONING & SITE PERMITTING

When selecting a site, it is important to make sure the location is appropriate for your business. Among the factors to consider are the type of building, location, zoning, and available parking. Consider working with a licensed contractor with expertise in these areas.

Who to Contact


05

OBTAIN A ZONING PERMIT

A zoning permit is required prior to receiving a building permit for a renovation. This is applicable if the use in a building or other commercial space is different from the previous use or if zoning approval is required for any other zoning or license (see below). A pre-application meeting is recommended.

Who to Contact

Denver Development Services:
https://bit.ly/3xzze7I
720.865.3000

06

GET OTHER APPROVALS

- A Wastewater Management sewer use and drainage permit (https://bit.ly/3Qn9ofs) may be required, depending on the quantity or type of wastewater involved with your business
- Denver Department of Public Health & Environment approval (https://bit.ly/3QrKZp7) is required when food is involved in the business, if this business is a daycare, or for swimming pools and spas
- Fire Department approval (https://bit.ly/3xYOXye) may also be required
A building or zoning inspection may be required prior to opening your business.

Who to Contact
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CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Good luck with your new business. Please let us know when you’re open so we can help you celebrate!

MORE!

The Denver Enterprise Zone Program is a State of Colorado tax credit program that allows businesses located within a specific geographic area to receive tax credits against their state income tax liability for qualifying activities, such as job creation, employee training and investment in business personal property. Denver’s designated Enterprise Zone (EZ) includes over 30 square miles of commercially zoned real estate. Learn more at https://oedit.colorado.gov/enterprise-zone-program

Denver Economic Development & Opportunity offers a diverse set of programs and services to help new and expanding businesses. From small business financing to employee recruitment, tax credits based on your investment and growth, and a wide range of referrals to a menu of community resources, we are ready to help ensure your success. Learn more: https://qrco.de/bd6lOH

Denver has a public, free, community space that is serving the unique needs of aspiring and existing entrepreneurs. The Commons on Champa: https://thecommons.co/ at 1245 Champa St.

City professionals maintain office hours for free advisory sessions, by appointment: https://bit.ly/3xCrvFz. A wealth of other partners, including state and federal government offices as well as nonprofit organizations, offer free counseling and training as well.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

A business with employees must register as an employer; pay additional taxes; withhold, match, and submit employee withholdings; obtain workers’ compensation insurance; and follow other employee eligibility regulations. The Colorado Business Resource Book listed above includes a helpful section on this topic.

Unemployment insurance requirement: Visit the Colorado Business Navigator website to register your business with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment in order to establish an unemployment insurance account.

Who to Contact

Denver Workforce Services
workforce.development@denvergov.org
720.913.1999

- Once you are ready to begin hiring staff for your business, the Denver Workforce Services team can help you find and prescreen qualified applicants at no cost.

Colorado State Directory of New Hires
- Employers are required to report newly hired employees to the Colorado State Directory of New Hires: http://www.newhire.state.co.us/

OPEN YOUR BUSINESS!

By completing these steps, you have built a strong foundation that, along with hard work and a little luck, will enable your business to thrive in the Mile High City.