

The ABC's

A Guide to Starting a Business in the City of Richmond Hill





City of Richmond Hill Main Line

(912) 756-3345

Department of Planning & Zoning

(912) 756-3641

Zoning Administration

(912) 756-3735

Building Inspections

(912) 756-4521

Signage

(912) 756-3735

Business License Tax Clerk

(912) 756-2846

Police Department

(912) 756-3712

Fire Department

(912) 756-3749

Bryan County Health Department

(912) 756-2611

RHBC Chamber of Commerce

(912) 756-3444



Welcome to Richmond Hill

Thank you for considering Richmond Hill as a place to operate your business. The City of Richmond Hill wants to maintain a business-friendly atmosphere and strives to make the experience of starting your business as simple as possible, while upholding our commitment to protect public health, safety, and welfare, along with the aesthetic and economic well-being of Richmond Hill. We are excited that you are considering investing in our community.

This guide is a resource for prospective business owners and entrepreneurs in the City of Richmond Hill. While it certainly does not answer all of the questions you may have, it does provide general information related to Occupational Tax Certificates, Zoning, Building Permits & Inspections, and Signage.

In addition, you will find a phone number directory for various departments within the City, County, and community for your use and assistance in any other matters regarding locating and operating your business in Richmond Hill.

Occupational Tax Certificate

An Occupational Tax Certificate – commonly referred to as a business license – is required to conduct business in Richmond Hill, including home occupations. Applications can be obtained and renewed at City Hall. A business operating without an occupational tax certificate is subject to a legal penalty.

The charge for an Occupational Tax Certificate varies depending on information such as gross receipts. All occupational tax certificates expire on December 31st of each year regardless of when the license was originally obtained and must be paid and renewed by March 31st each year.

If you have more than one business location or operate your business under multiple names, you will need a separate Occupational Tax Certificate for each business location and for each name issued. If you change the location of your existing business you will need to complete a new Occupational Tax Certificate application and note the change of address. If you conduct business within the city, but do not have a physical location in the city, an Occupational Tax Certificate is not required if you can provide evidence of possession of a similar certificate from another County or Municipality in the State of Georgia.

We strongly encourage businesses to obtain an Occupational Tax Certificate before opening. However, a business may obtain an Occupational Tax Certificate within its first 30 days of operation.

If you have questions regarding the business licensing process, please contact City Hall at (912) 756-3345

Zoning

Once you identify a tentative location for your business, please contact the Department of Planning & Zoning to determine whether or not your intended use of the property is permitted by the City of Richmond Hill Unified Development Ordinance. We encourage business owners to complete this zoning and permitted use verification process early because certain zoning restrictions may apply that prohibit certain activities and uses.

The Zoning Administrator can be reached at (912) 756-3735 to help you determine if your location and type of business are in compliance with our Unified Development Ordinance. Be sure to provide the site's address and/or parcel number when calling.

If it is determined your business is not a permitted use for the site you have specified, the Zoning Administrator can help determine what zoning district(s) your proposed use would be allowed in.

The City of Richmond Hill Unified Development Ordinance and the Official Zoning Map of the City of Richmond Hill can be found online at www.richmondhill-ga.gov on the Planning and Zoning page.

Should you have any questions regarding zoning, please contact the Zoning Administrator at (912) 756-3735.

Building Permits & Inspections

All businesses moving into a space (whether it has been previously occupied or not) are required to have an existing building/change of occupancy inspection, which begins with applying for a limited use permit. Upon approval of the inspection, you will be given a Certificate of Occupancy, which contains the occupant load for the building/tenant space.

A business cannot occupy a space until a new Certificate of Occupancy is issued by the City of Richmond Hill.

Permits are required for the modification or repair of structural components of an existing building, electrical systems, plumbing systems, and HVAC systems. Permit fees are based on the extent of the work and how many inspections are required. Permits are required before any work begins. Please note, there may be additional water and sewer connection fees associated with the space you would like to locate your business.

The State of Georgia has special licensing requirements for contractors that require the City to obtain a copy of the state license for general contractors, electric, plumbing, and HVAC contractors. The City requires a copy of both the state license and Georgia business license for these contractors. For all other subcontractors, only a copy of the company's Georgia business license is required to be submitted to the City.

Building permit applications and forms can be found online at www.richmondhill-ga.gov on the Department of Planning and Zoning page.

If you have any questions regarding building permits, inspections, and/or potential fees, please contact the Department of Planning and Zoning at (912) 756-3641.

Signage

The City of Richmond Hill understands how important signage is for any business. We are committed to helping you promote your business through signage, as well as keeping the City of Richmond Hill beautiful.

Signs should not be installed prior to the issuance of a sign permit and associated building permit when applicable. New permanent signs, within the Ford and Gateway Overlay Districts, will need to go through a sign design review process which includes a meeting with the Architectural Review Board (ARB). The sign review process begins with submitting a sign permit application to the Department of Planning and Zoning, along with necessary sign information. Once required information is submitted, the sign review is placed on an upcoming ARB meeting agenda. The City allows pre-permanent signage during the sign review process so that your business is not without a sign. This requires a pre-permanent sign permit, which can only be applied for once a permanent sign permit application has been submitted. Signs outside the Ford and Gateway Overlay Districts only require staff approval.

The necessary information to be submitted along with a permanent sign permit application includes: a color rendering detailing sign dimensions, sign material & sign location. Typically, the sign company you choose will provide you with a sign proof that will detail most of this information. Once your sign design is approved by the ARB and/or staff, and all sign permit fees have been paid, a sign permit (and building permit when applicable) may be issued allowing you to construct or install the approved sign.

If you are only placing a new sign face on an existing sign structure at your business location, you may apply for a sign face replacement permit. Additionally, grand opening and temporary signs are permitted by obtaining a temporary sign permit, which can be reviewed and approved by Planning and Zoning staff.

The City of Richmond Hill Signage Regulations are located within the Unified Development Ordinance and can be viewed online at richmondhill-ga.gov on the Planning and Zoning page.

If you have questions regarding signage, please contact the Department of Planning and Zoning at (912) 756-3641.