



The Business of Aiken is Business

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Introduction

Aiken strives to offer quality services to residents and businesses throughout an extensive area around our city. While many cities find it difficult reaching a proper balance between the needs of residents and businesses, we are committed to improving that balance through innovative programs and discussions. We try to support business by helping business owners and employees meet their dreams for business success. This booklet summarizes our services, programs, and incentives that we offer to new and continuing businesses. There are several different components intended to:

- ❖ Address regulatory requirements by the City of Aiken
- ❖ Help you control your expenses associated with conducting business in Aiken
- ❖ Open opportunities to conduct business with the City and with other customers in Aiken

We have included a resource list of our City departments and other resources available to a prospective business owner or resident, and conclude with informational checklists to help you keep track of the many tasks that you may find necessary to start or conduct your business.

We are a phone call or click away if you need our assistance. We are constantly working to assist businesses and residents in Aiken. Our staff members are available to answer your questions and to guide you through our City's business processes. Our numbers are listed on page 15 of this booklet or please visit our web site at www.cityofaikensc.gov.

City Regulations & Resources

We review our regulations and policies to make sure that we meet the goals of the residents of this community without unnecessary or burdensome requirements. There are requirements, however, that every business in Aiken must meet. In our efforts to assist you, we have summarized these requirements for your assistance and convenience.



Business License Requirements

Any business that is located within the City of Aiken or that performs work within the city limits is required to purchase a business license each year. Licenses are valid from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. Temporary and one-time licenses are issued when appropriate and are valid only for the event or job for which they are issued. No business license is needed for businesses with an address outside the city limits unless work is performed inside the city limits. Any business located outside the city, which performs work in the city, does pay a license fee based on the value of the actual work or sales within the city. This license fee is double the rate of similar businesses within the city.

How to Obtain a Business License:

We recognize that business owners have time, effort, money, and dreams invested in their business. That's why we try to make the application process for a City license as simple and as quick as possible. The main issues under review by the City include whether or not the location selected is appropriate under the Zoning Ordinance, and whether the building and signs are safe and appropriate within these zones. Residential zones tend to include few businesses, so the business and industrial zones were developed to target certain types of businesses that are compatible within those zones.

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Business license applications may be obtained at the Finance Department located on the first floor of the Administration and Finance Building at 135 Laurens Street, SW. Business license renewals for existing businesses are generally processed in our Finance Department. All *NEW* business license applications requiring a new business location, construction, or major renovation of a business must first be approved by the Planning Department located at 214 Park Avenue, SW, Room 202 on the second floor. All business locations must meet all applicable:

- A. Building Codes
- B. Fire & Life Safety Codes
- C. Zoning Ordinance requirements
- D. Sign Ordinance requirements

Please call 803-642-7642 for any assistance you need with our business license process.

Licenses and Decals for Contractors and Subcontractors:

Contractors working in the Aiken City limits may be asked to provide our Finance Department with a copy of their SC State Contractor, Home Builder, or Specialty Contractor license number prior to approving their City business license. You may contact the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, South Carolina Contractors' Licensing Board, which is located at 110 Centerview Drive, Kingtree Building, Columbia, South Carolina, 29210. Their mailing address is Post Office Box 11329, Columbia, South Carolina, 29211-1329. Call 803-896-4686 or Fax 803-896-4814 for more information on the State licensing requirements.

At the request of area contractors, we also require that all contractors and subcontractors working in Aiken obtain a vehicle decal. This City of Aiken decal must be displayed on the windshields of all vehicles owned by the contractor doing work within Aiken.

If you would like more information, please contact our Business License Division in the Finance Department at 803-642-7642.

Rental Property Registration:

City Council has implemented a Rental Property Registration program establishing procedures for locating and communicating with rental property owners.

The registration program began in May 2008 and carries no registration fee.

Owners of two or more rental properties must provide their current business license number and contact information to us. Property owners who reside more than 50 miles from the city limits must provide a business license number and contact information, including 24-hour phone numbers for a local agent who lives within the city. The rental agent will receive all appropriate notices from the city.

For more information about rental registration, call our City Manager's Office at 803-642-7654.

Development Process

Permits

- Our permitting process starts with an informal meeting, or pre-application review. This first meeting can often save you time and money by eliminating or reducing problems and conflicts. Our Building Inspectors can often answer many of your questions by telephone at 803-642-7675. They may suggest that you need further input from our City Engineer (803-642-7610) or our Planning Department 803-642-7608. If you have specific questions, please call directly to that department for assistance.
- Building site and landscape approvals are different from building permit approval. During site approval, the zoning and landscaping issues of a site are reviewed.
- The building permit process includes the technical aspects of a building's construction and, with different stages and types of development some projects may require more extensive review.
- Under the City's permitting process, all construction plans, building permit applications, and building fees are submitted to the Building Inspections Division located at 214 Park Avenue, SW, Room 201 on the second floor. If you are new to the plan review process, or have questions, please call 803-642-7675.
- Any person who does any type of construction in the City of Aiken for profit is required to obtain a business license prior to starting work and also a building permit, if necessary.
- Generally, review for a building permit takes approximately 7-10 business days.
- The majority of time, our Building Inspections Division is unable to schedule specific times for an inspection. The number, type, and location of inspections, plus City staff workload dictate daily how the inspection schedule is arranged. However, there are occasions when it is necessary for arrangements to be made for a specific time to conduct an inspection. These scheduled inspections are done on a case-by-case basis and arranged by the Building Official (803-642-7675).

Site/Landscape Plan Approval

For a commercial, institutional, or multifamily residential project, site/landscape plan approval is required in order to obtain a grading and/or building permit. Site Plan review addresses different issues than those in a building permit application, and the site/landscape plans may be submitted before the building permit is requested.

Approval of the site/landscape plan is necessary before a building permit is issued. Site/landscape plans, including all supporting information, are submitted to our Planning Department.



Site/landscape plans may be submitted at the same time as or separately from building permits. Approval must be received before a grading or building permit can be obtained to begin work on a commercial project (including office, institutional, or industrial), or a multifamily residential project. A site/landscape plan may be approved by staff without a public hearing unless a variance from the Zoning Ordinance is needed which requires approval by our Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Process at a Glance:

- Before a grading or building permit can be obtained to begin work, site/landscape plan approval must be received.
- Site/landscape plan approval is handled by City staff unless a variance is required from the Zoning Ordinance which must be considered by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).
- Plans, application, and any fees are submitted to our Planning Department located in the Municipal Building at 214 Park Avenue, SW, Room 202. An application packet for a site/landscape plan is available at the Planning Department or at www.cityofaikensc.gov.
- The Planning Department distributes the plans to other City Departments for review.
- A letter, with review comments from City staff, is normally sent to applicants within one week.
- If necessary, applicants submit revised plans and/or additional information to our Planning Department.
- Once all City staff comments are addressed, the plans are approved and applicants are eligible to receive a building permit once applicable requirements for those permits are met. All trees to remain on the site must be staked with protective tree fencing before the grading permit will be issued.

Zoning Approval

The Zoning Ordinance is administered by the Planning Department. Staff members interpret and enforce the Ordinance, including whether or not a site or lot will allow a particular, proposed business use. If you need an immediate answer to zoning issues, including permitted uses, setbacks, parking requirements, whether your property is in an overlay district subject to other regulations, or signs, call the Planning Department at 803-642-7608.

Parking Requirements

Parking capacity, spacing, and location requirements vary within the different zoning categories. To learn more about approval of parking spaces, off-street parking and loading, see Chapter 4, Article 5 of the City of Aiken's Zoning Ordinance at www.cityofaikensc.gov.

Sign Permits

We regulate the size, number, and location of signs within our limits. A permit is required for the erection, alteration, or reconstruction of any sign, except for:

1. Any legal notice or public traffic directional/safety sign issued and required to be posted by any federal, state, county, or municipal government or an official sign as so designated by resolution of City Council.
2. Any private street name sign or an on-site traffic directional/safety sign where the sign face does not exceed four square feet per sign face, has no more than 25 percent of the sign face devoted to commercial copy or graphics, and is no greater than three feet in height.
3. Seasonal decorations which do not cause hazardous glare or create a nuisance for pedestrians, vehicle drivers, or adjacent properties.
4. Permanent signs in residential areas advertising security companies provided they neither exceed one square foot in size nor are placed more than five feet from the primary structure entrance.
5. Banners conforming to Section 4.4.8.B of the City of Aiken Zoning Ordinance. (The Zoning Ordinance is on line at www.cityofaikensc.gov).
6. Signs required for insurance purposes, provided they are no larger than five square feet.
7. Signs that, in the Planning Director's opinion, are to be viewed from the inside of a building only.

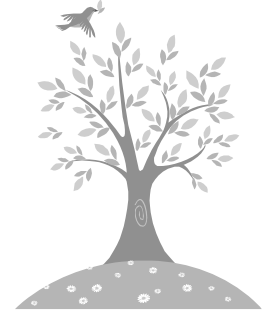


Our sign regulations are part of the Zoning Ordinance, and variances to any part of the Zoning Ordinance require approval through the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). Variances, Special Exceptions, and Administrative Appeal applications are processed through our Planning Department 803-642-7608. Please note that properties within an overlay district may need to seek Design Review Board approval for any signage.

Tree Protection and Landscaping Requirements

Aiken has emphasized that new growth and development should enhance our area, and we promote protecting existing trees and installing new landscaping. Our natural landscape is required to be preserved whenever possible. On property zoned for uses other than single-family residential no Significant or Grand tree may be removed unless one or more of the following can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of our Horticulturist.

- ⊗ Good forestry management requires removing certain trees.
- ⊗ A tree is diseased, dying, or dead.
- ⊗ A tree causes a safety hazard to nearby buildings, pedestrians, or vehicular traffic.
- ⊗ A pine, pecan, or magnolia is dropping debris or sap that significantly affects vehicles in a parking lot. Any of these trees that are removed will have to be replaced with an equal number of caliper inches. If there is not room an amount should be placed into the Tree Fund in accordance with Zoning Ordinance Article 6, Section 4.6.4.B.2.d.
- ⊗ A tree is causing significant structural damage to a building or other structure that reasonable maintenance will not prevent.
- ⊗ A tree is interfering with an existing underground utility line.
- ⊗ It is necessary to allow essential road construction for a site. We require the Grand and Significant tree inches removed to be replaced when the site is developed.



(Note: Land zoned Planned Residential requires a single-family use concept plan.)

Tree Protection and Landscaping Ordinances Variances or Exceptions

Unless a property is a detached single-family residence any tree removal must first be approved by the Planning Department.

Plan approvals may be granted by our staff. A particular variance from the Tree Protection and Landscaping Provisions in the Zoning Ordinance may be required. Zoning Ordinance variances may be requested from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) through the Planning Department. Zoning Ordinance variance request and tree removal questions are answered by our Planning Department staff at 803-642-7608.

Grading Permits

Grading permit applications are submitted to our Planning Department. Applicants also submit grading plans to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) located at 218 Beaufort Street, NE, Aiken, South Carolina. SCDHEC must approve grading permit issuances. Once approvals are received from SCDHEC, our Department of Engineering and Public Works, and our Planning Department, approves site plans. Our Zoning Official verifies that protective barriers have been installed around remaining trees. Our Planning Department typically then issues grading permits. Please note that our Zoning Official requires at least 48 hours advance notice before inspecting tree protective barriers.

Grading permits are not issued for nonresidential or multifamily residential developments until a site plan, including landscaping, has been approved by the Planning Department. City land and surfaces shall not be disturbed, or changed for any purpose, unless both prerequisites are met:

1. The Engineering and Utility Department has approved erosion, sedimentation, and surface drainage control plans and, when required, these plans have been approved by the local Conservation District Office.

2. Our Planning Department has issued a grading permit.

In addition, these grading permits also may not be issued until our Zoning Official confirms that protective barriers required around existing trees to remain are in place.

SCDHEC contact information:

SC Department of Health and Environmental Control 2600 Bull Street Columbia, SC 29201	Stormwater and Erosion Control Permit (Grading Permit) Local Assistance	803-898-4300 803-642-1604
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Building Permits:

Hours of Operation and Location

Building permits are issued through our Building Inspection Division. Office hours are typically Monday through Friday from 8:10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Staff is available to answer questions and to receive applications and plans submitted for review during these regular business hours. All construction plans, building permit applications, and permit fees are submitted through the Building Inspections Division located in the Municipal Building at 214 Park Avenue, SW, Second Floor, Room 201. For assistance, please call this office at 803-642-7675.

Building Permit Process

We provide a “one-stop” building permitting process. It allows licensed builders to submit a building permit application and two copies of construction plans and to pay all project fees at one location. On the permit application, the applicant will be required to provide information such as:

- The construction site address.
- Property 10-digit tax parcel number.
- Construction cost.
- Contractor name(s)
- Property setback lines.
- A description of the work to be done.



In addition, a plot plan (8.5 x 11 inch site schematic) showing the lot size, existing and proposed structures, any additions and setbacks (distances from the structure, or, addition to the property lines) should also be submitted. This plan also must be submitted for all new construction, additions, swimming pools, wells, storage buildings, detached garages or carports, and any other accessory structures.

NOTE: Contractors must present proof of appropriate State and City licensures when submitting permit applications.

Building Inspections staff reviews submitted building permit applications to ensure the construction address is inside our city limits. We also check to make sure each contractor, or subcontractor involved in the project has a City business license and appropriate State of South Carolina contractors' licenses. Building Inspections staff ensures compliance with all applicable building codes, structural requirements, fire safety, and emergency egress issues. Building permit fees are based on project construction costs and are assessed when the permit application is made.

Our Planning Department staff verifies lot, block, and parcel numbers, determines the need for compliance with historic preservation requirements, conducts site/landscape plan or other review and determines if any other approvals are pre-required before building or grading permits are issued. They also complete a building permit application work sheet, indicating their comments on the project and approval, which is sent to the Building Inspections Division. Our Engineering and Utility Department staff determines utility availability, including water, sanitary sewer, and storm drainage lines. They then assign fees based on any costs to extend our services. Engineering staff assigns a street address for the location, notes any easements or special conditions, and calculates storm drainage fees. They then fax their building permit application work sheet, with address verification, comments, fees and approval to our Building Inspections Division.

Building Inspections collects all fees associated with building permits. They verify the building permit has been reviewed and approved by the Planning Department and Engineering and Utility Department. The Building Official approves the building permit application. Notice of payment is then sent to our Finance Department. They issue a work order for any new water meters or for any required water and sewer taps.

Re-Inspection Fees

Re-inspections are defined as any trip to a job site by our Building Inspections officials that are in addition to those inspections specifically listed on the building permit card. Re-inspections are also any trips made as a result of condemned or disapproved work, calls for inspections prior to work being ready for inspection, and any additional trips made because access to the work site or structure is not provided.

Re-inspection fees for residential and commercial construction projects are \$50.00 for each re-inspection. These fees must be paid to the Building Inspections Division prior to any re-inspections being done.

Certificate of Occupancy

A new building or addition cannot be occupied until a Certificate of Occupancy is issued by our Building Official, after a final inspection. A Certificate of Occupancy for a commercial structure will only be issued after the installation of required landscaping materials has been approved by the Planning Department or a performance guarantee covering the cost of the uncompleted landscaping has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Department.



Downtown Building Facades Improvement Incentives

We have a grant program to encourage the downtown building façade renovations. We recognize that the front facades of older buildings occasionally need restoration to preserve and promote an attractive downtown area. These improvements stabilize, or even increase, property values and can help to attract new business and development into an area. Building façades represent the public face of private structures, and as such, they have much to do with the physical image of a community and how it is perceived by residents, developers, and visitors.

We are interested in promoting attractive downtown building designs that are in character with Aiken's architectural history. In order to further that goal, grant applicants must meet certain design standards for façade renovation that meet our Design Guidelines for our downtown area.

This financial incentive has the following elements:

- a. We will pay one-half the cost of an improvement project, up to a maximum \$10,000 contribution. The façade improvement costs shall be determined from its building permit. For improvement projects that do not require a building permit, appropriate project cost documentation is required.
- b. Owners must initially pay all façade restoration costs. Once façade improvements are completed to City code standards and our Downtown Design Guidelines, we can authorize reimbursement for the appropriate grant amount.
- c. These incentives are paid under a grant program; they do not have to be repaid.
- d. We may terminate this incentive at any time, especially if there are not sufficient funds available to fund it.
- e. Owners can find out whether their property qualifies for a grant at the time they apply for a building permit. Contact our Planning Department for details.

Eligible structures are buildings that are in the area zoned “Downtown Business” under our Zoning Ordinance. The façade to be improved must be contiguous to, and visible from, a public right-of-way or alleyway.

The façade grant may be used for demolition, only if it is associated with, and followed by, a façade renovation project. The grant can also be used for exterior improvements including, but not limited to, correction of exterior code violations, painting and siding, exterior repairs, door and window replacement, trim work, enhanced entryways, display windows, or any other work as approved by our Planning Director.

Approval Process:

- a. “Façade” is any building exterior face or wall from the grade level to the top of the parapet or eaves, the entire building width, or any associated structural elements including porches. It specifically excludes roofs, dormers, awnings, entrance floors, domes, cupolas, steeples, chimneys [unless part of the façade], and turrets.
- b. Where necessary, Design Review Board Certificates of Appropriateness must first be obtained, and prior to any work being commenced.
- c. A letter requesting grant money and documenting the costs and nature of any proposed work must be submitted to our Planning Department within 90 days of issuance of final approval by our Building Official, or, where no such inspection is required, within 90 days of final payment for the completed work.
- d. Our Planning Director will determine whether the request should be approved and may exclude any ineligible work. Written notice of our Planning Director’s decision shall be mailed to applicants within 60 days after submission. Any Planning Director decision may be appealed to our City Manager, in writing, within five days after it is mailed. City Manager review of any decision shall be final.

Other Development Applications

Requests for other types of approvals--including annexation, rezoning, subdivision, or conditional use-- are handled by our Planning Department. Application packages and assistance with the process are available from that Department or on line at www.cityofaikensc.gov.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

Our Federal Government has adopted guidelines for access to business and public facilities in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Although it is a federal and state requirement, our Building Inspections Division can assist you with the specifics necessary for ADA compliance. For assistance with other ADA questions, as well as any other building construction and renovation guidelines, please call our Building Inspections Division at 803-642-7675.

Development Guidelines

Extension of Utility Services:

For service outside our City limits, new customers need to:

- ❖ Sign annexation agreements. They run with the land, and commit property owners to annex when their property touches our city limits. Annexations are approved by City Council.
- ❖ Comply with our Tree Protection, Landscaping, and Sign Ordinances.
- ❖ Possibly provide a Traffic Study.
- ❖ Meet property access management and inter-connectivity requirements.

City Services

Fire Services:

Aiken has an Insurance Services Organization (ISO) Class 2 Fire Department rating. This rating means that your fire insurance premiums on your residential or business property, if served by the City, are lower than for cities with higher ratings. Fire service costs are paid from real property taxes for in-city residents. Properties outside the city, but within our service area, pay fire service fees based on the property value if it also has city water service. If the property does not receive City water service, then a flat fee is charged.

Fire Safety Regulations:

Fire sprinkler systems are required:

- if your building exceeds 15,000 square feet, with
- more than two floors, or
- is a multi-family residential unit (apartments) with four or more units.

For assistance regarding sprinkler requirements, call our Fire Suppression Division at 803-642-7620.

Fire and Crime Prevention Programs:

Our Department of Public Safety offers many programs to assist local businesses. These programs address both crime and fire prevention. We can offer training sessions for shoplifting prevention, fire prevention safety, fire safety plans, crime reporting, or other areas of concern related to law enforcement, fire suppression, or first response services.

We advise businesses to supply Public Safety with emergency contact numbers. To provide Public Safety with emergency contact information, please call our dispatch supervisor at 803-642-7682.

Special Event or Festival Permits:

Streets, sidewalks, and parkways in the City of Aiken are considered public rights-of-way. Their use for events is controlled and must be pre-approved by our Director of Public Safety. Applications for a special event permit will allow Public Safety to better serve your request should you need traffic barricades, security, or traffic control. Permits include, but are not limited to street closings, parades, demonstrations, and festivals. These permits can be obtained from Public Safety Headquarters at 251 Laurens Street NW. Additional permit information is available online at www.cityofaikensc.gov.

Property Taxes:

This booklet doesn't attempt to cover all of the services provided or service fees charged by the City. Property taxes are a continuing concern of residents and businesses. We strive for the lowest possible property taxes. City Council has not raised property tax rates since 1988. We have lowered our property tax rate six times in this same period.

Our 2014 millage rate is 62 mills. We levy one of the lowest rates in our state. How does this compare with taxes in other states, and how do you compute your taxes?

In South Carolina, cities do not prepare property value appraisals. The Aiken County Tax Appraiser determines real and personal property values. This appraisal serves as the tax rate market value for all property in our state. The State also sets assessment ratios for real and personal property:

- 4% for residential property
- 6% for commercial and rental property
- 10.5% on commercial furniture and fixtures
- 10.5% on industrial property.

Note: Our State has discounted the inventory tax, and has offered other incentives and variations for industrial rates, depending on the business investment amount.

The Aiken County appraisal of your property, the applicable assessment ratio, and our city millage rate (62 mills), determines your property taxes:

$$(\text{Appraised Value}) \times (\text{Assessment Ratio}) \times (\text{Millage Rate}) \times .001 = \text{City Taxes Payable}$$

If a business property is valued at \$250,000, you would pay at a 6% assessment rate. City taxes would be calculated as follows:

$$\$250,000 \times 6\% \times 62 \times .001 = \$930.$$

If you take time to compare, you will find that Aiken has relatively low property tax rates. Also, our businesses and residents receive outstanding service value for the tax dollars they pay.

Storm Water Fees and Services:

Storm Water fees are collected by a separate utility system within our city. These fees are based on the amount of impermeable surface area occupied by your building, paved parking lots, or other improvements. These fees help us correct most stormwater runoff problems, prevent unnecessary erosion, and accept ownership of retention and detention ponds, or storm sewers serving single family residential developments. For more information, call our Engineering staff at the Engineering and Public Works Department at 803-642-7610.

Water and Sewer Service:

We offer extensive water and sewer services in our immediate area. Customers located within Aiken enjoy a 50 percent discount for water and sewer services. Water rates for business are based on a declining scale – the more water a business uses, the lower its rate. Businesses often consume a great deal more water than residences, so our business rates are focused toward business success. Residential rates are designed to encourage conservation through an inverse rate structure for higher water usage, the higher the cost. New customers outside the city are required to sign annexation agreements as a pre-condition of city water service use. When a property touches a city boundary it then can be annexed. Connection to our water system requires pre-payment of a tap fee for all customers. This fee covers our actual cost of providing water service. The tap fee starts at \$580 for customers with 5/8” lines, increases to \$725 for 1” lines. For all meters over 1”, the fee will be determined by the Engineering and Utility Department depending on market cost at the time of purchase.



Sewer service is also available in Aiken. We currently charge sewer tap fees of \$800 for in-city commercial customers and an impact fee of \$400 per 1,200 cubic feet of water per month for connection to the sewer system within the city. In-city residential sewer tap fees are currently \$500.

Selling Items and Services to the City of Aiken

City Purchasing

We use a decentralized purchasing process – each department prepares bids for goods and services under guidelines adopted by our City Council. The City Manager’s Office assists each department with these guidelines and with advertising or distribution on large purchases. The Assistant City Manager supervises purchasing. If a company is interested in selling equipment or services to the city, that vendor should make sure it is included on the bid list. To be put on the vendor list, please call 803-642-7654.

Our decentralized process seeks to avoid expensive, and potentially cumbersome, purchasing processes. Our purchasing guidelines assure the residents that expenses are being responsibly controlled. We understand that at times this decentralized system could be confusing for businesses interested in providing services and equipment to the City. We have developed methods for these businesses to more easily do business with the City of Aiken.

Bid Lists

Bid lists are compiled based on vendor codes provided to us by vendors. We develop particular bid lists from our vendor list and other sources, including business license listings. If your company is interested in receiving requests for bids or proposals, call us at 803-642-7654.

Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

Aiken County Farmer’s Market

Located on Williamsburg Street near downtown Aiken there is a shelter that holds 45 produce tables where farmers sell fresh locally grown produce daily, depending on the weather. During the summer months we sponsor Thursday Nights at the Market from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. For more information, call 803-642-7761.

Newberry Street Festival Center

Newberry Street between Park and Richland Avenues is specifically designed to accommodate street fairs. Many events are held throughout the year in this picturesque area. Hours of operation are by reservation. For more information, call 803-642-7630 to schedule and register your event. This space is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

URS Center for the Performing Arts

Located in the heart of Aiken’s historic downtown, this state-of-the-art performing arts theatre hosts a variety of events throughout the year. The Aiken Community Playhouse has a regular calendar of performances. Top international artists have also been commissioned to perform in

Aiken. The Center may also be rented out for seminars, receptions, or other events. For more information, call 803-648-1438.

Business Highlights

We highlight a random selection of new businesses in Aiken through Channel 4, the City's cable channel featured on Atlantic Broadband cablevision. This partnership between businesses, residents, and the city government is critical to the success of any community. This feature allows us to emphasize this partnership and the continued emphasis on civic growth and business success in Aiken.

Industrial Development

The State of South Carolina offers one of the most progressive industrial incentive packages in the United States, and the City assists with industrial sites and utilities. For further information on the services available to prospective industries call the Economic Development Partnership of Aiken and Edgefield Counties (EDP) at 803-641-3300 or call the City Manager's Office at 803-642-7654.

Questions?

While we try to do so, we can never include all of the information that you may need or answer every question that you may have; therefore, we are happy to talk with you to answer any questions or address any concerns. Call us or fax, or contact us via our city website, www.cityofaikensc.gov, if you have questions, or need more information.

City of Aiken:

- ❖ City Manager's Office
135 Laurens Street, SW; 803-642-7654; FAX 803-642-7646
- ❖ Building Inspection Division
Room 201, Municipal Building, 214 Park Ave, SW; 803-642-7675; FAX 803-642-7672
- ❖ Planning Department
Room 202, Municipal Building, 214 Park Ave, SW; 803-642-7608; FAX 803-642-7727
- ❖ Engineering and Utilities Department – Building and Grounds/Administration
245 Dupont Drive, NE; 803-642-7610; FAX 803-642-7717
- ❖ Finance Department – Business Licenses, Water/Sewer Connections, Taxes, Yard Sale Permits
Room 102, Administration and Finance Building, 135 Laurens Street, SW; 803-642-7603; FAX 803-642-7735

List of City Resources

The list of contacts with the City of Aiken changes as our needs and programs change. For your copy of the latest listing and other information on the services provided, contact the City Manager's Office at 803-642-7654, or visit www.cityofaikensc.gov.

APPENDIX

*CHECKLISTS AND RESOURCES TO HELP YOU START AND CONTINUE
YOUR BUSINESS IN AIKEN*

APPENDIX

Business Assistance is Available in Aiken

In addition to the services of the City, the Aiken community includes several business partners available to help you with your business and training needs.

The Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce -

The Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce is often the first step in establishing or developing your business. The Chamber offers a variety of services and programs for its members.

To learn more, visit the website, aikenchamber.net, or call the Chamber at 803-641-1111.

SCORE –

SCORE offers free counseling and mentoring services for new business startups and existing businesses. SCORE also offers various business related seminars and workshops during the year to the community at little or no cost.

SCORE is a national organization with a chapter located at the Chamber of Commerce in Aiken. The purpose of this chapter is to assist new startup businesses as well as existing businesses to be successful and profitable. The chapter has individuals with expertise ranging from marketing and sales, finance, operations, construction, quality assurance, and human resources. Individuals or profit/non-profit organizations desiring assistance should make contact with SCORE members either through the Chamber of Commerce or the SCORE web site.

For assistance, call the Chamber of Commerce at 803-641-1111 or request services via the SCORE website www.aikenscore.org.

Aiken Technical College

Aiken Technical College is a public, open-door two year institution that provides opportunities for educational, economic, professional, social, and personal development.

ATC educates and trains students to provide an effective workforce to support economic growth and community development, and offers degrees, diplomas, and certificates in a variety of high-demand fields. Areas of study include business, education, engineering, finance, health sciences, information technology, manufacturing, marketing, nuclear, public safety, technology, university transfer and more. ATC also offers the Aiken Early College dual enrollment program to allow high school students to begin their college education while still in high school. Additionally, ATC offers an Associate of Arts degree and an Associate in Network Systems Management degree available completely online.

Construction is currently underway on campus for the future Center for Energy & Advanced Manufacturing, a state-of-the-art facility that will house the College's welding, mechatronics, radiation protection technology, and nuclear quality systems programs, providing citizens with the highest quality training to fill the high-demand jobs available in the region.

For more information, call Aiken Technical College at (803) 508-7263 or visit website www.atc.edu.

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at USC Aiken

SBDC has been hosted for 20 years by USC Aiken and now operates out of offices at both the main campus (105 Business and Education Building) and The Mill, a collaborative business community located at 237 Park Avenue, SW, Office 201. The SBDC provides free services to emerging and existing small business owners in the areas of business planning, marketing, budgeting/financial planning, social media, preparing clients to seek business financing, buying and selling a business, procurement opportunities and franchising. The Center also offers a variety of workshops and training seminars on IRS Taxation and Rules, QuickBooks, Market Research, SBA Programs and financing, to name a few. Centers work closely with their host institutions/universities, Chambers of Commerce, economic development partners and local government. The SBDC works with every prospective business owner (men, women, minorities, veterans, disabled and young entrepreneurs). The SBDC at University of South Carolina-Aiken has been awarded distinction as the SC Small Business Administration's Center of Excellence and Innovation.

Individuals may set up an appointment with their business consultants by contacting their office at 803-641-3646 or website SBDC@usca.edu

Checklist – Things to Consider to Make the Business Successful

New Businesses

Although every business will have different needs and expectations, issues and matters to be considered and pursued for a business startup include but are not limited to:

Issues

- Summarize your idea
- Test your ideas via market research
- Choose an organizational structure
- Pin down a company name and logo
- Create a business plan
- Protect your ideas
- Designate a registered agent
- Lock in a location
- Prepare plans for building construction, renovation, or lease
- Determine viable funding and credit
- Develop pay structure – employees / contractors
- Develop billing procedures
- Project cash flow
- Obtain licenses, permits, and insurance
- Track progress and reassess periodically
- _____

Existing Businesses

To continue to be successful and profitable, existing businesses periodically return to basics and review the following key aspects of business structure:

- Conduct a business needs assessment and goal setting evaluation
- Review management of time, people, and resources
- Determine marketing successes and failures
- Evaluate sales past and future
- Assess business finances
- Understand strengths and weaknesses of operations

Checklist – Possible Set-Up Costs

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawyer business agreements/lease reviews	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Filing fees – Business License, State or Federal Licenses	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architectural & design costs	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Printing for brochure, flyers, and letterhead	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Market research costs	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Property rental	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> City of Aiken		
<input type="checkbox"/> Water and Sewer	<u>Finance Department</u>	<u>803-642-7603</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Solid Waste and Storm Water	<u>Finance Department</u>	<u>803-642-7603</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Electricity	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet & Telephone	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Costsconstruction and renovation	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance..... Property, Liability, Workers	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Advertising	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Laundry and cleaning	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Directories for customer contacts	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Signage	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fixtures / equipment / vehicles / furniture	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Office supplies	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Books and publications	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Chamber of Commerce membership	<u>Aiken Chamber</u>	<u>803-641-1111</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Rental costs	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> TaxesState	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> TaxesFederal	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Accountant	_____	_____

Local, State, and Federal Governmental Requirements

The following guide will help you in keeping track of the various steps and actions that may be required of you to start a business in Aiken. (Please note: We have included information from other agencies and levels of government to assist you, but you may not be required to complete each activity or task, and there may be other requirements that have not been listed in this booklet).

Federal Requirements

- IRS Employees Identification Number (Form SS-4)

Contact

www.irs.gov

State Requirements

- Reserving / Registering Name of Business
- Obtaining Food & Alcohol beverage permit
- Filing for Corporation / LLC / LLP
- Filing Business Personal Property
- Registration for Employer Withholding
- Registration for non-profit corporation
- Sales and Use Tax registration
- Registration for Sole Proprietorship
- Retail License
- Child Care Business registration

Contact

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.scbos.sc.gov

www.des.sc.gov

Local Requirements

- Business License Obtained – City Finance Department**
- Zoning Approval – Planning Department**
- Building Permit – Building Permit & Inspections Division**
- Sign Permit – Planning Department**
- Certificate of Occupancy – Planning Department**
- Food Service Permit – Aiken County
- _____

Contact

City – 803-642-7642

City – 803-642-7608

City – 803-642-7675

City – 803-642-7608

City – 803-642-7675

County – 803-642-1637

Additional Resources

Federal Resource List

Agency

Telephone

Internal Revenue Service

Internal Revenue Service – General Business Information
www.irs.gov/business/index.html

800-829-4933

Toll-Free Forms
www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html

800-829-FORM (3676)

Social Security Administration

General Information
www.socialsecurity.gov/bsowelcome.htm

800-772-1213

State Resource List

Agency

Telephone

SC Department of Revenue www.sctax.org

803-898-5000

SC Department of Health and Environmental Control

803-642-1737

SC Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation
and Regulation

803-896-4300

Local Resource List

Agency

WEB Site Contact

City of Aiken

www.cityofaikensc.gov

SCORE

www.aikenscore.org

Aiken Technical College

www.atc.edu

Small Business Development Center

www.sbdc@usca.edu