

Doing Business in Allentown, PA



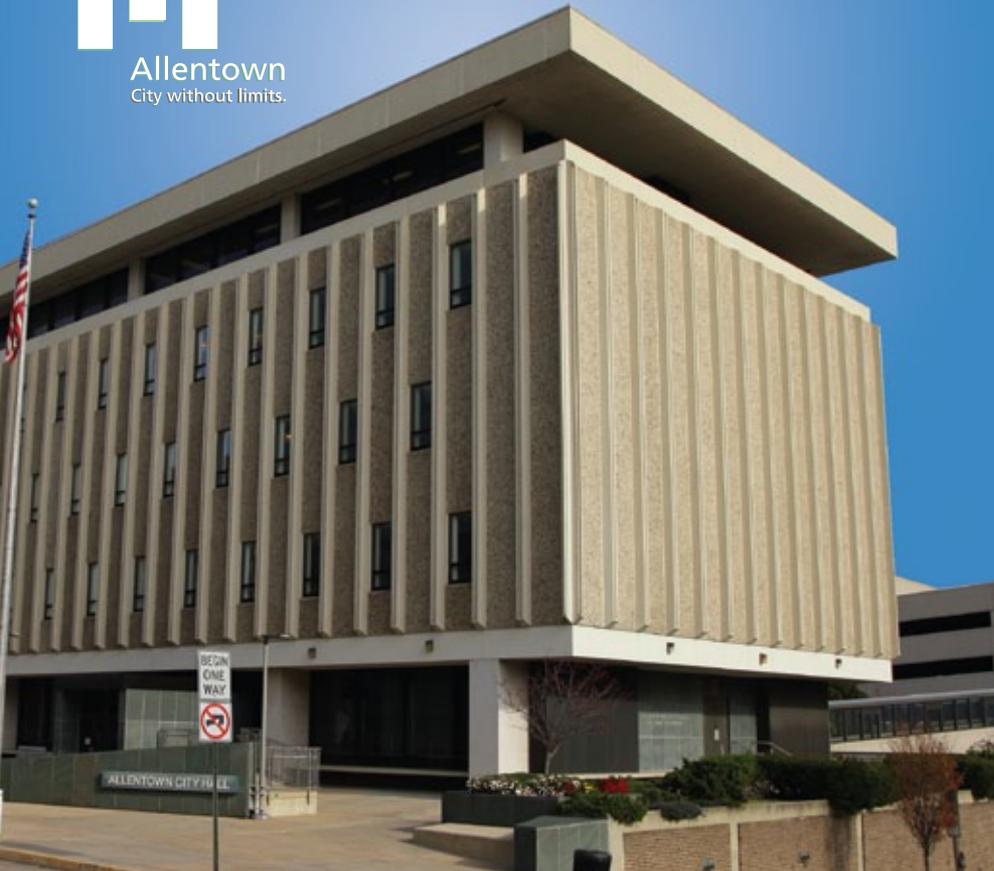
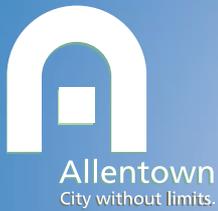
A Guide to

- Planning your business
- Understanding the requirements
- Preparing to open

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Allentown
City without limits.



This document constitutes a summary of Allentown City Codes and is not intended to be a full recitation of the requirements necessary to open a business or complete building alterations. Persons using this guide will be expected to comply with all City of Allentown Codes specific to their intentions whether expressly stated in this document or not. This document shall not be construed as a warranty or guarantee by the City of Allentown or by any of its established departments.

allentownpa.gov

Contact Us for Answers & Support

For General Assistance, contact:
Business Development Office

3rd Floor, City Hall
435 W. Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18101

(610) 437-7610

BusinessDevelopment@allentowncity.org

For Zoning, Licensing and Permitting Requirements and General Pre-Opening Process Concerns, contact:

(610) 437-7630 or (610) 437-7591

PermitsAndInspections@allentowncity.org

For Space/Location Search, Development Assistance and Funding Sources, contact:

(610) 439-5964

BusinessDevelopment@allentowncity.org

For Networking, Marketing and Sponsorships, contact:

(610) 437-7530

Events@allentowncity.org

Additional City Contacts

Bureau of Zoning

(610) 437-7630

4th Floor, City Hall

Bureau of Building Standards & Safety

(610) 437-7591

4th Floor, City Hall

Bureau of Health

(610) 437-7759

4th Floor, City Hall

Fire Department (Code & Inspections)

(610) 437-7758

4th Floor, City Hall

Bureau of Engineering

(610) 437-7584

3rd Floor, 641 S. 10th St.

Bureau of Planning (Historic Districts, Subdivisions & Land Development)

(610) 437-7613

4th Floor, City Hall



Dear Business Owner,

As mayor of Allentown, I want to congratulate you on deciding to open or expand your business here in Pennsylvania's third largest city. We're honored that you've chosen Allentown as the home for your business.

Launching a business, no matter the size or your previous experience, is no small undertaking. From opportunity to opening, attention to detail will translate your vision into reality with greater efficiency. We're here to help.

Allentown's Department of Community & Economic Development exists to partner with, educate and empower business owners like you as you pursue your endeavors. We seek to supply you with the necessary tools, such as this guide, to open, operate and maintain a thriving business.

This booklet is designed to help you:

- ▶ **Follow the most basic steps to planning your business**
- ▶ **Understand the general licensing and permitting requirements for your business**
- ▶ **Manage the pre-opening process so you can open your business in a timely manner**
- ▶ **Know which City staff members to contact for assistance**



Please don't hesitate to contact any of our team members listed on the previous page of this booklet. We are eager to assist you to ensure a successful business in Allentown!

Mayor Ed Pawlowski

Planning your business

As you develop your business plan, be sure to address the following concerns, which will form the foundation for every decision you make as you move forward.

What you do – Clearly define the services your business will offer. What you do will impact where you can locate, what your requirements will be and, most importantly, how soon you can open.

Legal Structure – How you organize your business (e.g. corporation, partnership, sole proprietor, etc.) has important tax, liability and accounting implications. Hiring an attorney is strongly suggested.

Assets – What kind of resources do you have at your disposal to get your business started? You may not know now how much each step will cost, but you need to know what you can afford and how to pay for each step as it arrives. Hiring an accountant is strongly suggested.

Financial Plan – You will need to set realistic goals for profit based on your projected operational costs and needed funding sources.

Requirements – Research the legal requirements for your type of business and what licenses and/or certifications may be required for you to operate. This will help you make the best decisions possible. With this knowledge, you will be more likely to save time and money and avoid potentially frustrating situations.

Location – Investigate and select several sites within the City's limits where you are interested in operating your business. If you are not sure where to start, contact our **Business Development Office, (610) 437-7610**, for assistance in locating available space. With a clear explanation of what your business will do and your list of preferred business sites, contact the **Zoning Office, (610) 437-7630**, to receive pre-approval for your business. Be certain you have Zoning pre-approval before leasing or purchasing your business location. If you would like help in addressing any of the above issues and/or to develop an overall plan for your business, please contact the City's **Business Development Office, (610) 437-7610**, or the **Community Action Development Corp., (610) 433-5703**.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development,
Center for Entrepreneurial Assistance: newpa.com
Pennsylvania Open for Business: paopen4business.state.pa.us
U.S. Small Business Administration: sba.gov

Understanding the requirements

Once you have established a basic business plan, you will need to go through the licensing, permitting and general approval process with the City of Allentown. While the process may seem complicated, City staff are eager to make sure you succeed in starting your business as quickly as possible and are ready to assist you at every stage of the process. As you review the following information, keep in mind that it is a basic outline of steps to follow. Specific instructions for each kind of business are not described in this guide, but we will work to make sure you get the right information for your specific needs. **Please, never hesitate to ask a question!**

Zoning & Business License –

On the 2nd Floor of City Hall, fill out a Business Request Questionnaire (BRQ).

You must be able to designate a location for your business in order to be approved for a license. Take the completed BRQ to Zoning on the 4th Floor of City Hall for zoning approval. **Here's what you can generally expect:** A zoning officer will review your business location with you to determine if you will need a zoning permit, for which **a fee will apply**. The issuance of a permit will be determined by the previous use of your location, your intended use and any type of signs you plan to install to identify your business. **In all evaluations for approval**, Zoning will determine if your site meets the required parking ratio based on the nature of your operation. If your desired use, intended signage or available parking does not comply with zoning requirements, the zoning officer will direct you on how you may appeal your case to the Zoning Hearing Board, should you desire. **A fee will apply**. After receiving zoning approval, return with your signed BRQ to Finance on the 2nd Floor to pay your **Business License Fee**.





Trash & Recycling – All businesses must recycle specific items and provide trash and recycling services at their own expense. Businesses that meet certain criteria **may apply for City curbside trash and recycling collection and pay an annual fee.** Services include trash collection twice a week (five-bag limit per collection night) and recycling once a week (unlimited). **Your other option is to contract with a private licensed trash and recycling hauler and submit a copy of the contract to the Bureau office.** Failure to notify the Bureau with your trash and recycling arrangements is a violation of City ordinance. Should you have any questions, contact the Bureau of Recycling and Solid Waste at (610) 437-8729 or allentownrecycles.org.



Permits – The following upgrades do not require a permit: paint, wallpaper, tile, carpet, replacing windows in existing window wells (a Certificate of Appropriateness may be necessary in a Historic District: see “Additional Requirements” on the next page), installing cabinets or countertops and similar finishing work. If you have any uncertainty, we will help you make the right determination.

If you plan to do any interior or exterior alterations, additions, upgrades (other than those listed above) or new construction, you must submit plans detailing the alterations to the City’s building code office for review. BE AWARE – a change of use may still require a building code review even if you do not plan on making any changes! Your plans must first undergo a third-party review in order to be in compliance with the State Uniform Construction Code (UCC). A list of state-approved third-party agencies is available at the Permitting Counter or online at dli.state.pa.us. All businesses must submit two (2) copies of their building plans (also refer to “Additional Requirements” on the next page).



After your building plans have been reviewed and approved, you will be contacted to return to the 4th floor of City Hall to pick up your plans. At that time, you will be able to secure/acquire the necessary permits to complete the work approved. All building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical permits must be pulled by and issued to properly licensed and insured contractors for each area of work required. **A copy of your approved building plans and all permits must be on the jobsite at all times.**



Inspections – Make certain that you communicate with the proper inspectors for each stage of work. Keep them informed and properly alerted so they can inspect your progress. This will help you avoid performing work that will not pass inspection and need to be redone.

Call the Building Standards & Safety office, (610) 437-7591, to schedule your final Certificate of Occupancy (CO) inspection after any/all rough inspections have been completed and you are nearing the end of your alterations work. **You must call a minimum of five (5) days in advance.** Make sure your work is complete. Multiple inspections may result in penalties and fines charged.



Minimum Required Building/ Alteration Inspections

New Construction:

Footer – Prior to placement of concrete. Reinforcement must be in place if indicated on plans.
Foundation – Before backfill and after dampproofing or waterproofing is applied. Reinforced walls also require an inspection prior to placement of concrete.

New Construction & Alterations:

Rough Framing, Electrical, Plumbing and/or Mechanical – Before covering
Firestop – Before covering
Insulation – Before covering
Wallboard – Prior to tape and spackle
Final (Certificate of Occupancy)

ATTENTION: Any work performed without permits, regulated under the UCC, will be assessed a fine of \$100 / permit required in addition to the actual fee for the necessary permit.

Additional Requirements

Please review the following additional requirements that may also apply.

Americans With Disabilities Act

Compliance: Whether you are building a new structure, making upgrades to an existing one, or changing the use of a structural space, strict accessibility requirements of the federal and state governments may affect the property in which your business will be located and must be addressed accordingly.

Engineering: Any aspect of your business that will affect the public right-of-way (e.g. a protruding sign or awning, planters or outdoor furniture) will require review and approval from the **Bureau of Engineering, (610) 437-7584. Fees will apply.**

Fire: Your design professional is responsible for determining if your business location will require any fire protection systems above and beyond standard Fire Code compliance. For every protection system required there will be a corresponding review fee assessed by the **Allentown Fire Department, (610) 437-7758.**

Health: If your business involves food service or preparation, child care, nursing home operation or massage, you will need approval from the **Bureau of Health, (610) 437-7759.** This will require a separate Health License. Any renovation or construction will require the submission of an extra set of building plans - three (3) total. **Fees will apply.**

Historic District: If your business is located in one of the three Historic Districts of the City, any proposed exterior alterations, including but not limited to windows, signage and doors, visible from a public right-of-way (street, alley, walkway, etc.) may require a Certificate of Appropriateness. A Certificate of Appropriateness can take at least one month to secure and is required prior to securing building and zoning permits. Please call the Allentown Historical and Architectural Review Board Secretary at the **Bureau of Planning, (610) 437-7613,** to discuss your project early on in your design process to avoid delays.

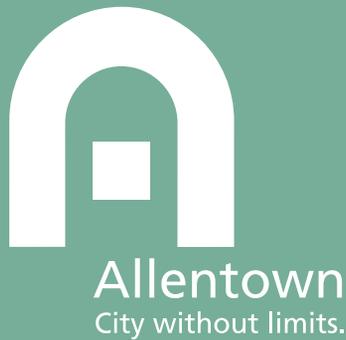
Taxes: As a business owner, you are responsible for filing your taxes in a timely manner. For further information, contact the **Bureau of Tax & Utility, (610) 437-7501.**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Pennsylvania Uniform Commercial Code:
pacode.com

International Code Council:
iccsafe.org





As you prepare to open your business, we suggest that you complete the **City of Allentown's Business Pre-Opening Checklist** (provided above) and/or set up an appointment with a representative from our Business Development Office, **(610) 437-7610**.

Partner Contacts:

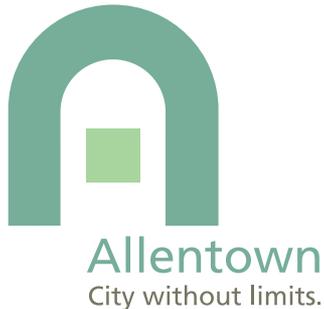
Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC)
(610) 435-8890
allentownedc.com

Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC)
(610) 266-6775
lehighvalley.org

Community Action Development Committee of Allentown
(CADC-A)
(610) 433-5703
portal.caclv.org/pages/programs/community-action-
development-corporation-of-allentown.php

Allentown Chamber of Commerce
(610) 841-5800
lehighvalleychamber.org/
chambers-councils/allentown.aspx

Lehigh County
(610) 782-3000
lehighcounty.org



Other Contacts:

PPL (Electric)
(800) DIAL-PPL (800-342-5775)
pplweb.com

UGI (Gas)
(800) 276-2722
ugi.com

Verizon (Phone, Internet)
(888) 481-0387
verizon.com

Allentown Parking Authority
(610) 841-9090
allentownparking.com

Police (Non-Emergency)
(610) 437-7751
allentownpa.gov/Government/
DepartmentsBureaus/Police/tabid/114/Default.aspx

Financing:

Unless otherwise noted, please use the following phone number and web address for further details on financing opportunities.

(610) 437-7610
allentownpa.gov/Businesses/BusinessFinancingIncentives/
tabid/341/Default.aspx

City of Allentown Economic Development Loan
Citywide loan for all types of activity available at terms of
0% APR for five years

Allentown Development Corporation (ADCO) Loan
For new or existing small businesses pursuing physical and/or
equipment upgrades

Enterprise Zone Loan
Low-interest loans for business improvements within the Enterprise Zone
(610) 770-1015
allentownedc.org/enterprisezone.html

Pennsylvania Minority Business Development Authority (PMBDA)
Revolving loan fund designed to stimulate the creation, retention and
expansion of minority-owned businesses
(610) 770-1015
allentownedc.org

Rising Tide
Microloans set at terms to assist businesses having difficulty obtaining
traditional bank financing
(484) 893-1039
sites.google.com/site/risingtideclf

Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) Financing
Tax-incentive financing for large capital or development projects
located within Allentown's NIZ
(610) 435-8890
allentownpa.gov/NIZ



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City of Allentown Business Pre-Opening Checklist

- I have clearly defined my business in a business plan or other formal document.
- I have determined and established the type of legal entity for my business (e.g. corporation, partnership, sole proprietor, etc.).
- I have investigated, visited and selected potential sites in Allentown to locate my business.

My top four choices:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

- I have contacted and received pre-approval from the Zoning Office, (610) 437-7630, to do business at the locations listed above. (Place a * next to the locations pre-approved by Zoning.)
- I have contacted the Building Code Official (BCO), 610-437-7602, for approval and a basic understanding of the code requirements based on my intended use.
- I have acquired/started a lease for my business location.
Address: _____
Lease Start/Purchase Date: _____ Monthly Cost: \$ _____
- I have obtained my business license. Date: _____
- I have been approved by the Bureau of Recycling & Solid Waste regarding my trash and recycling arrangements.
 City Collection Private Collection

Hauler's Name _____

- I have submitted a copy of the agreement to the Bureau of Recycling & Solid Waste.
- I have complete drawings for construction/alterations, including signage, of the property where my business will be located.
Date: _____
Architect: _____ Phone: _____
Engineer: _____ Phone: _____
Third-Party Reviewer: _____ Phone: _____

- I have submitted drawings for construction/alterations of the property to the City for review:
Date Submitted to City: _____ Date Approved by City: _____

**Your approved FIELD COPY must be on the jobsite at all times.
No inspections will occur without an approved field copy.**

___ I have pulled all the necessary permits* to complete my work, using licensed and insured contractors.
(Check all that apply)

___ Building/Alterations (BP/AP) Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Electrical (EP) Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Plumbing (PP/SC) Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Mechanical (HE/PA) Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Health Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Engineering Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Fire (SS/TP) Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ Other(s) Inspector: _____ Phone: _____

___ I have determined when and for what work I need to have inspectors approve my progress.
Call 72 hours in advance for all inspections.

Inspection Type: _____ Date: _____

NOTES: _____

___ I have scheduled my final CO Inspection. Call a minimum of five (5) days in advance.

Date: _____

___ I'M READY TO OPEN! Date: _____

*Any work performed without permits, regulated under the UCC, will be assessed a fine of \$100 / permit required in addition to the actual fee(s) for the necessary permit(s).