

City of Lakeland
Community & Economic Development

BUSINESS **RESOURCE** **GUIDE**

A Guide to:

Starting a Business in Lakeland
Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency
Lakeland Entrepreneurship Support
Comprehensive List of Resources



City of Lakeland Community & Economic Development

The Community and Economic Development Department understands the importance of building and maintaining relationships with the business community. This is accomplished by offering assistance with the development process, helping business owners access available resources and providing opportunities for businesses to achieve success. Whether you are a startup or a long-established business, this Department is ready to meet with you to extend our welcome and to discuss any issues or questions you may have about Lakeland.

The Community and Economic Development Department consists of:

- Building Inspection**
- Business Resource Office**
- Business Tax Office**
- Code Enforcement**
- Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)**
- Economic Development**
- Historic Preservation and Neighborhoods**
- Housing**
- Planning and Zoning**
- Real Estate and Property Information**



City of Lakeland Community & Economic Development

To support the goal of building and maintain strong relationships with Lakeland’s business and entrepreneurial community. Lakeland’s Business Resource Office was developed to continue to increase local support for new and expanding businesses. Formed with existing Community & Economic Development Department staff experienced in economic development, real estate, development review and business tax administration. The new team will serve as advocate, ambassador and facilitator for entrepreneurs and businesses of all size and experience. Business Resource Team members will also act as a dedicated point of contact for businesses through the entire development process, from site evaluation and selection to development and site plan review, building permitting to certificate of occupancy and business tax receipt issuance.

To learn more or to get started, please visit the Business Resource Office on the web at [Economic Development | City of Lakeland \(lakelandgov.net\)](#) or contact the team at 863.834.LBRO (5276) or LBRO@lakelandgov.net.

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City of Lakeland Community & Economic Development

Starting a Business in Lakeland

Step 1: Identify a location for your business, along with a potential alternate location.

Community and Economic Development (CED) personnel will assist you in evaluating your location(s), including any restrictions based on zoning, previous use, scope of work, and improvements you are proposing for the property. This step will determine if your location requires a Change of Use Permit, which can have an impact on your project and may include approvals from Building Inspection, the Business Tax Office, Planning and Zoning, and Fire Inspection. It is important to do this prior to signing a lease or purchasing property. Contact the Lakeland Business Resource Office at 863-834-5276 or LBRO@lakelandgov.net.

Step 2: Submit an application via iMS for a Concept Plan Review with the Development Review Team (DRT). The DRT consists of reviewers from various departments within the City of Lakeland, such as Building, Planning Accessibility (ADA), Public Works, Fire, Lakeland Electric and Water Utilities. The DRT will review the documents you submitted and will make recommendations to the plan based on the Lakeland Land Development Code. Applicants are charged \$230 for Concept Review, that fee is credited toward a Sit Plan submittal if the project is to proceed.

Step 2-A: Document Upload

After applying in iMS, you will receive an invitation email from ProjectDox. Follow instructions on uploading the documents you gathered for the Site Plan Review Checklist. Once your documents have been uploaded, your project will be placed on the next available DRT agenda.

Step 2-B: Reviewers Comment

You will receive comments from the DRT reviewers regarding your project and an agenda for your scheduled meeting (via Microsoft Teams). DRT meetings are held virtually on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Next, read the comments and formulate a plan addressing comments and creating questions for the reviewers. CED personnel will review documents for completeness.

City of Lakeland

Community & Economic Development

Step 3: Complete the Site Plan Review Checklist

The Site Plan Review Checklist is a comprehensive list of documents that will be necessary for the Design Review Team (Permitting) process. Please review the Checklist thoroughly. Several professional service providers will have to be engaged, such as civil engineers, architects, surveyors, etc.

Site Plan Review Checklist

Step 3-A: Site Plan Review Application

Apply for Site Plan Review (if required) online in iMS. Follow the same procedure as Concept Review. There is a fee for this step: Minor (up to 1 acre) \$270.00; Major (up to 5 acres) \$500.00 +\$25/acre over 5 acres. If your project has gone through Concept Review, that \$230 fee will be that credited towards the applicable Site-Plan Review Fee.

Step 4: Reviewers Comment

You will receive comments from the reviewers regarding your site plan and an agenda for your scheduled DRT-Site Plan meeting (via Microsoft Teams). At this stage, you and your professional design team will address comments and create questions for reviewers.

A Building Permit can be applied for any time during the DRT process. However, the Building Permit will only be approved once the Site Plan has been approved.

A site alteration permit can be applied for to begin site work if the Site Plan is approved, and the Building Permit is still under review.

Step 5: Fictitious Name Registration

If you do not use your full name (first and last) in your business name, the State of Florida requires that you register the name of your business. To register, contact the Department of State's Division of Corporations at www.sunbiz.org or call [850-245-6058](tel:850-245-6058).

City of Lakeland Community & Economic Development

Step 6: Apply for your Federal Employer Identification Number

An Employer Identification Number (EIN) is also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number and is used to identify a business entity. You may apply for an EIN in various ways, you can call 863-904-3399 and now you may apply online <https://www.irs.gov/>.

This is a free service offered by the Internal Revenue Service and you can get your EIN immediately.

Step 7: Apply for a State Sales Tax Number

If your business will have taxable transactions, then you must register for a Resale Tax ID, you will use this identification number to report your sales to the Department of Revenue. You may apply by calling 863-499-2260 or online at <https://floridarevenue.com/>.

Step 8: Obtain Business Tax Receipt from City of Lakeland and Polk County

City of Lakeland Business Tax Office-

call: [863-834-6025](tel:863-834-6025) or email businesstaxoffice@lakelandgov.net

Polk County Tax Collector-

call: [863-534-4700](tel:863-534-4700) or visit <https://www.polktaxes.com/>

The City of Lakeland requires all businesses located and/or operating inside the city limits to pay an annual Business Tax. A receipt for payment of the Business Tax is commonly referred to as a Business Tax "Receipt." Payment of such tax, however, does not constitute approval or certification or licensure by any governing authority responsible for overseeing or regulating a trade, practice, activity or service, etc.

Most Business Tax fees are based on square footage, number of workers and/or category of profession. Actual Business Tax fees are determined after contact with the Business Tax Office. In addition, if a business location is inside the city limits, Business Tax Receipts from both the City of Lakeland and Polk County are required.

City of Lakeland

Community & Economic Development

State Licensure: Required for professional businesses such as attorneys, automobile repair and sales, banking and finance, contractors, cosmetology, engineering, food and lodging, health occupations, pest control, real estate, and tattoo shops. Contact the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation to find information on the State's requirements for your business.

Economic Development Incentives

Incentives are an investment in our economic future and are designed to target the needs of companies and local development plans. Successful businesses require growth, and the City of Lakeland offers an array of incentives to help businesses make a smart investment.

Impact Fee Mitigation

In support of development that encourages quality job growth, pre-approved applicants creating 100+ new jobs, high wage jobs, or adding industrial building inventory may receive a reduction of non-utility impact fees.

Utility Impact Fee Financing

The financing of impact fees is available to commercial and industrial projects with water and wastewater fees over \$400,000 for a period of no more than 4 years at a low interest rate.

Manufacturing/Research & Development

Manufacturing and certain Research and Development projects that meet one of the established criteria may be eligible to receive a grant of up to \$400,000 for infrastructure-related expenses.

Encouraging Development Growth and Expansion (EDGE)

EDGE is an infrastructure matching grant for new or expanding food-related service or manufacturing businesses. Eligible improvements include backflow preventers, venting systems, grease traps, and fire sprinkler systems. The grant is limited to \$10,000 per project and is only available outside the Lakeland Community Redevelopment District.

City of Lakeland

Community & Economic Development

Polk County Bonus Incentive (PCBI)

PCBI is a job grant that was established to compete for projects statewide and nationally. The incentive is based on a calculation of the average job wage and capital investment to determine eligibility. For projects locating within the city limits of Lakeland, PCBI allows for \$500 per job for those full-time jobs paying 115% of the average private sector wage and the number of qualifying jobs is limited to each incremental \$50,000 of total capital investment; \$1,500 per job for those full-time jobs paying 150% of the average private sector wage and the number of qualifying jobs is limited to each incremental \$100,000 of total capital investment; \$2,500 per job for those full-time jobs paying 200% of the average private sector wage and the number of qualifying jobs is limited to each incremental \$125,000 of total capital investment.

Electric Economic Development Rider

Lakeland Electric designed this incentive to help attract new investment and jobs. Eligible companies may receive discounts on new electric demand for up to five years. To qualify for the Rider, a minimum of 25 full-time jobs must be created and the new load must be a minimum of 350kW at a single delivery point.

Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency

Under the guidance of the City Commission, the Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency (LCRA) works with businesses, developers, and property owners in the Dixieland, Downtown, and Midtown redevelopment districts to improve the quality of life for our residents. Depending on the redevelopment district, certain incentives may be offered, such as design assistance, façade and site improvement, infill adaptive reuse, among others.

Please visit the Lakeland CRA's website at www.lakelandcra.net for additional information regarding each of the three redevelopment districts, including redevelopment plans, maps and available incentive opportunities. You may schedule an appointment online or contact a CRA team member at [863.834.6200](tel:863.834.6200) or LCRA@lakelandgov.net.

City of Lakeland Community & Economic Development

Entrepreneurship Support

There are many resources available to support Lakeland's vibrant entrepreneur ecosystem.



[The Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation, Inc. \(BBIC\)](#) is a U.S. Treasury certified Community Development Entity dedicated to providing business and funding opportunities for the long-term growth and success of small business. Tampa Bay BBIC has been brought to Lakeland by the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce to assist small business owners and entrepreneurs.



[BRIDGE](#) Local, originally Lakeland Business Leaders, was established in 2010. BRIDGE Local's mission is centered around more tightly connecting all of the resources available to local businesses, local consumers and Lakeland's community as a whole. BRIDGE Local believes in celebrating and encouraging genuine connection and collaboration.



[Catapult Lakeland](#) is a privately funded, non-profit that aims to increase viability of startups in Lakeland, provide value-added educational opportunities, launch companies into brick and mortar spaces, connect corporations and the innovative startup community and so much more. Catapult is also a co-working space that hosts small businesses and entrepreneurs.

City of Lakeland Community & Economic Development



[The Lakeland Chamber of Commerce](#) is an organization dedicated to creating a climate where business can prosper in Lakeland. The Chamber is leading the way for businesses to stay informed about the policy decisions that stand to impact job creation and economic growth in Lakeland and the State of Florida to ensure success for businesses of all sizes.



[Prospera](#) is an economic development nonprofit organization that specializes in providing bilingual assistance to Hispanic entrepreneurs trying to establish or expand their business. Prospera offers a variety of services designed for Hispanic small business owners, to empower them through training, consulting, grants and access to capital.



[SBDC](#) professional consultants provide expertise in areas that are vital to owning and operating a successful business, including: strategic market research; market expansion and revenue growth; business, strategic, and marketing plan development; access to capital and loan packaging assistance; financial analysis and assessment; accounting systems and financial literacy; and feasibility analysis and start-up assistance.



SCORE's mission is to foster vibrant small business communities through mentoring and education. SCORE Central Florida offers free business advice, no-cost business training through webinars and workshops and numerous templates and tools to assist you in your journey to open your new business or grow your existing one.



The National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) propels women entrepreneurs into economic, social and political spheres of power worldwide by strengthening the wealth creating capacity of our members and promoting economic development within the entrepreneurial community, creating innovative and effective change in the business culture, building strategic alliances, coalitions and affiliations, and transforming public policy and influencing opinion makers

Comprehensive List of Resources:

[Greater Lakeland/Polk County SourceFinder](#)