

# OPENING A BUSINESS IN FORT LAUDERDALE

## Quick FAQ Sheet

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### Step 1: Register your Business with the State of Florida

To open a business in the state of Florida you must register your company online with the Florida Department of State – [Division of Corporations](#) (Sunbiz). It is important to note that corporations registering with the Florida Division of Corporations and specific professional businesses must register with the [Florida Department of Professional Regulation](#).

You must have a Federal [Employer ID Number](#) (EIN). You may apply for your EIN online and receive it immediately from the IRS for free. Obtaining an EIN protects your identity – otherwise, you are required to use your Social Security number to set up accounts.

#### Business Structure

Deciding how to structure your business determines the income tax forms to file and your protection under the law. Common forms of business are: sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation (C and S), and various Limited Liability Company (LLC) structures. Each form of business has legal, risk, and tax impacts - consider consulting an attorney.

Download the State of Florida’s [“OpenMyFloridaBusiness Guide to Starting a Business in Florida”](#). This guide provides basic business start-up information and supplementary resources to the portal’s business-specific checklists.

### Step 2: Find the right Location. . . Zoning in Fort Lauderdale

Fort Lauderdale is dedicated to ensuring you live, work, play, and invest all in one place. Now that you’ve chosen your business structure, you need to find a location if you have not done so. More specifically, the Economic Development website has tools to assist you in finding properties, industry trends, opportunities, and much more to assist you in growing your business.

#### Zoning 101

Before you commit to purchasing or leasing a property, contact the [City’s Urban Design & Planning Division](#) to confirm that your business is an allowed use at that location. You can do a preliminary check by using the [Interactive Zoning Map](#), or by calling (954) 828-6520.

#### Residential Zones

You are permitted to have a limited home business if you live in the residence in which you run the business. City laws are established to assure that a business does not detract from the ambiance of a residential neighborhood.

#### Signage for Businesses

Permits are required for all outdoor signs. Signage in the City is highly regulated, and the number of signs is determined by the number of roadways the site abuts. Before you add signage, be sure to review the sign code regulations and contact the [Urban Design and Planning Division](#) at (954) 828-6520.

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Public Affairs Division

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#### Step 3: Obtaining Your Business License

##### **Broward County Business License**

If your business has any effect on the air, water quality, contact [Broward County's Environmental Engineering and Permitting](#). There you can find a list of all permits and/or licenses that must be obtained prior to operating your businesses. For more information call (954) 519-1483. Additionally, contractors can apply or renew their license(s) [online](#). For more information call (954) 765-4400.

##### **City of Fort Lauderdale Business License**

All entities engaged in any business, profession, or occupation within the City limits (at a commercial or residential location) must obtain a [Business Tax License](#) from the City.

##### **Liquor and Tobacco Licensing**

If you intend to sell beer, wine, liquor, and/or tobacco you will need to obtain a [DPBR License](#) from the Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation Office. For more information call (850) 487-1395.

##### **Business Tax Receipt Collection**

All businesses, whether or not they sell tangible property, must complete the [Business Tax form](#) provided by the [Business Tax Division](#). For more information call (954) 828-5195.

Obtaining a [Broward County Business Tax](#) is also required to operate your business within the County. For more information call Broward County Tax Collector at (954) 831-4000.

#### Step 4: Permitting 101

##### **The Permitting Process**

If you plan to make any changes to the inside or outside of a building and need information regarding the permitting process, you may visit the [Building Services page](#) of the Development Services Department (DSD) website. Applying for a permit has never been easier with the new online application submittal platform [LauderBuild](#). DSD has also created an [Interactive Building Permit Image](#) to see the permitting requirements you need!