

Starting a Business in Williamston and Martin County

Starting a new business can be an exciting experience, but before you can open the doors and get started, there are several approvals and permits that are required. This guide will provide you with a checklist of the offices within the town and county that need to be consulted before you can open your business. Information has been provided regarding zoning, fire, refuse, and other public utilities that you may need to address. The name and phone number of a person within each department has also been provided, allowing for a point of contact at every level of approval.

Well before you are ready to open the doors to your new business, there are steps that you can take to make sure your plans will be successful. The Small Business Center that is located at Martin Community College is a resource that can help with writing a business plan, how to market your business and the financial aspects of starting a business. They are also available to help established business owners as they continue to grow. While these aren't required steps, they are strongly encouraged as they will aid in providing a thorough understanding of what to expect when starting a business, identifying strengths and weaknesses in your business strategy, and help to ensure a successful outcome when you do get to the point that you can open your business. The Small Business Center provides free 1-on-1 counseling to new and existing business owners and free seminars designed to better educate the small-business owner to meet the ever-increasing challenges facing small businesses.

Provided below is a list of organizations to help promote a new business as well as websites that can provide additional information beyond what is offered here.

Starting a Business Checklist

General:

- **Create a Business Plan**
 - For any business, the first step is to turn your basic idea into a written, viable plan of action. A well-thought out business plan is necessary for obtaining loans and is a model for your success. Refer the Business Planning checklist at <https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business> for additional details. Other resources are also available to help you prepare your business plan. See the "Additional Resources" section below for contact information for the MCC Small Business Center and SCORE.
- **Identify Sources of Financing**
 - Check with the Martin Community Small Business Center for information about financing institutions in North Carolina.
- **Decide on Your Business Structure and Register Your Business Name**
 - Careful consideration must be given to the management, structural, and tax implications of your decision. While not a replacement for sound legal advice, refer to the Business Structure section at <https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business>.
 - To register a business name for a sole proprietorship or general partnership, contact the Martin County Register of Deeds office at (252) 789-4320.
 - To file a Corporation, LLC, LLP, or Limited Partnership, Contact the NC Secretary of State – Corporation Division at (919) 807-2225.



- **Get State, Federal, and County License Requirements**
 - The State of North Carolina does not issue a single business license. Your business may be subject to state, town, county, and/or federal requirements. Call Business Link at (800) 228-8443 or (919) 807-4280 to determine your state license needs. Business licenses and Permits listed by State Agency and/or License/Occupational Board are available at <https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business> or you may contact the NC Business Service Center at (919) 715-2864.
- **Obtain the Necessary Tax Information**
 - Taxation for small businesses may be simple or complex depending on the size and business structure. The tax liability for each business will be different and you should consult your attorney and accountant regarding comprehensive tax planning. See the Business Tax Information section at <https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business> for help with identifying tax requirements.
- **Learn About Employer Reporting Requirements and Responsibilities**
 - Visit the Employer Requirements Section at <https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business> for instructions on how to register as an employer, unemployment insurance, and worker's compensation insurance. This includes applying for federal and state withholding numbers.
 - For Federal Identification Numbers (EINs) contact the Internal Revenue Service or call (800) 829-4922.
 - For State Sales Tax and State Withholding Tax Numbers, contact the North Carolina Department of Revenue or call (877) 252-3052.

Town of Williamston and Martin County Checklist

Williamston Planning Department – Contact: Cameron Braddy (252) 792-5142

- **If you are purchasing or own land to build your business on:**
 - How is the property zoned?
 - Depending on the zoning of the property, the type of business you are planning to open may or may not be allowed to operate.
 - A rezoning request may be filed with the Planning Department for \$450.00. This will be reviewed by the Planning Board of Adjustments and a recommendation will be made to the Town Council. The Town Council will vote to either approve or deny the rezoning request.
 - Is the building in a flood plain?
 - Williamston does not have many properties in flood plains but, check with the Planning Department to make sure. This could have an effect on building insurance.
 - Submit site plans for building construction.
 - 3 copies will need to be submitted and will be reviewed by the Planning Department and other departments as needed. They will look at landscaping, parking, water runoff, fire codes, etc.



- **If you are renting/own an existing building:**
 - How is the property zoned?
 - The above criteria applies to all land within the Williamston town limits and ETJ. Before signing a lease for a building, contact the Planning Department to make sure that your business can be located in that zone.
 - A site plan is not required for the location of a business in an existing building
- **Before the business may open, a zoning permit is required.**
 - For new structures, the zoning permit cost is based on the square footage of the building.
 - For existing buildings, a zoning permit is \$25.00. Visit the Williamston Town Hall at 102 East Main Street to get a zoning permit. The zoning permit acts as a business license within the Town of Williamston.
 - Certain businesses may require a minimum distance from other businesses of the same kind within the town limits. Check with the Planning Department to make sure that your business can be located in a certain area before signing a lease or purchasing property.

Restaurant/Bar

- Before a restaurant or bar may open, the Martin County Health Department must be contacted at (252) 792-7811. If located within Williamston town limits or ETJ, Jay Whitley at Williamston Public Works Department must also be contacted at (252) 792-1024 before a zoning and fire permit can be issued.
- If you plan to serve alcohol, you should also contact the NC ABC Commission for an alcohol permit at (919) 779-0700 or visit <https://abc.nc.gov/>

County Building Inspector's Office – Contact: Jody Griffin (252) 789-4310

- **Change of Use Application**
 - Depending on the use of the building, you may need to apply for a change of use. i.e. a clothing store to a restaurant. You will also need to contact the Town of Williamston Planning Department and Fire Department.
- **Building Inspection**
 - Prior to opening, the building must be inspected to ensure that all building codes are met.
- **Building Permit**
 - Any changes that are made to the interior or exterior of the building require a permit. Any additions to an existing also require a zoning permit.

Public Utilities

- **Water Service within the Williamston Town Limits and ETJ** – water services may be requested at Williamston Town Hall at 102 East Main Street.
 - If you are renting
 - You will need to bring a copy of the lease, your ID, your Social Security Card and \$175.00 for a deposit.
 - If you own
 - You will need to bring a copy of the deed, your ID, and your Social Security Card.



- **Water Service outside of Williamston Town Limits** – Water services throughout the county are through MCRWASA. To request water service outside of the Town of Williamston water districts, contact the Martin County Water Department at (252) 789-4345.
 - If you are renting
 - You will need your ID, Social Security Card, and \$125.00 for a deposit.
 - If you own
 - You will need your ID, Social Security Card, and \$50.00 for a deposit.
- **Electricity – Electric Service is through Dominion Energy**
 - If you are constructing a new building, contact Dominion at (888) 569-5700 to create a work request. They will set up a date to visit the site and determine the electric needs for the building and business.
- **Garbage Collection**
 - Martin County provides trash service county-wide (including within municipalities) through a contract with Waste Industries. The charge for this service is collected through a “landfill charge” on the annual Martin County property tax bill. To request a trashcan or dumpster at your location or to inquire about billing, call the Martin County Tax Assessors Office at (252) 798-4350.
- **Fire Inspection**
 - A fire permit is available at the Town of Williamston Planning Department and will be issued with the Zoning Permit. The fire permit will be forwarded to the Fire Department and the Fire Inspector will get in contact with you about setting up a date to visit for inspection. The cost of the fire permit is \$25.00. A fire permit is required for all businesses and is required before the business may open.

Helpful Websites and Software

- In addition to the contacts that have been listed, there is a great deal of software and information available on-line that can help guide you as you get started. Below is a list of links regarding starting a business:
 - Software to guide you through preparing a business plan: www.businessplanpro.com
 - Information on Starting and Growing your Business: BLNC.gov

Additional Resources

- Martin Community College Small Business Center: (Callie Northern-Herring) 252-789-0202
- Martin County Chamber of Commerce: (David Whitley) 252-792-4131
- Williamston Downtown Inc.: (Cameron Braddy) 252-792-5142
- NC Business License Information Office: 800-228-8443
- NC Department of Revenue: 877-252-3052
- Internal Revenue Service: 866-816-2065

Further Considerations:

- Consult with an accountant for bookkeeping and tax purposes
- Obtain insurance (liability, fire, health, etc.)
- Review contracts with legal counsel
- Review applicable regulations (OSHA, EPA, Labor, etc.)
- Join trade associations, chamber of commerce organizations



Other Martin County Municipality Contacts:

For starting a business in any other municipality within Martin County, contact their respective offices to ensure that all requirements are met before opening a business.

- Bear Grass
 - 1136 Cherry Lane, Bear Grass, NC 27892
 - 252-792-7323

- Everetts
 - P.O. Box 129, Everetts, NC 27825
 - 252-792-3394

- Hamilton
 - P.O. Box 249, Hamilton, NC 27840
 - 252-798-2001

- Hassell
 - P.O. Box 13, Hassell, NC 27841
 - 252-214-0797

- Jamesville
 - P.O. Box 215, Jamesville, NC 27846
 - 252-792-5006

- Oak City
 - P.O. Box 298, Oak City, NC 27857
 - 252-798-7721

- Parmele
 - P.O. Box 98, Parmele, NC 27861
 - 252-795-4600

- Robersonville
 - 114 South Main Street, Robersonville, NC 27871
 - Town Manager – 252-508-0311
 - Fire/Zoning – 252-508-0331
 - Public Works/Utilities – 252-508-0337

