

Business Development in Niagara Falls, NY

A Guide for New and Expanding Businesses



Department of Economic Development
745 Main Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14302

Introduction

We appreciate your interest in Niagara Falls, NY. You are not alone; the last few years have seen a renewed interest in our city that has resulted in new development from the public and private sectors. Manufacturing, tourism, and retail business opportunities are awaiting you.

This booklet was developed by the Niagara Falls Economic Development department to serve as a guide to the process of opening or expanding a business in our city. The Office of Economic Development's aim is to foster business and industrial development in the City of Niagara Falls. To accomplish this, we:

- Provide technical support and assistance to firms seeking to expand into or relocate to the City
- Provide economic information and technical assistance required by investors from the inquiry phase to the successful completion of a new project;
- Market the City to targeted companies in the U.S. and abroad
- Seek to assist established companies to retain local jobs, create new jobs and encourage new investment
- Maintain an inventory of available buildings and sites
- Develop efficient funding sources for potential economic development projects
- Promote the growth of light industry and tourism, working with other public team members such as the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (www.nccedev.com) and the Empire State Development Corporation (www.esd.ny.gov).

Before Opening Your Business

One of the first Steps in starting or expanding a business is adequate research and planning.

1. Get Basic Information

❑ The U. S. Small Business Administration has a Business Resource Center which provides free access to a variety of information, education and training designed to assist entrepreneurs start, operate and grow their businesses. Go to www.sba.gov for more information.

❑ The New York State Small Business Development Center is a local resource that provides management and technical assistance and training/educational opportunities to future and existing business owners and entrepreneurs. The Center offers a variety of low cost training programs taught by qualified experts and consultants. Additionally, NYSBDC offers on-line courses available at no cost. The local office at Niagara County Community College office is located at 3111 Saunders Settlement Rd., Sanborn, NY 14132. The office can be reached by phone at (716) 210-2515. www.niagarasbdc.org or www.nyssbdc.org

2. Develop a detailed Business Plan

❑ Developing a sound business plan is critical to the success of any business. Like a roadmap, your business plan will show you where you are in relation to where you want to be. It will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses of your business prior to your opening. In addition, this plan will be a key part of any financial package that you will submit to a bank or other entity for consideration for a loan. Your business plan will cover such details as business description, market analysis, financial management, pro-forma, marketing and operations. Contact the local Niagara County Community College office of the Small Business Development Center for additional information at (716) 210-2515 or SBDC@niagaracc.suny.edu

3. **Choose a Legal Business Structure**

- Typically, the first decision to make when starting a business is choosing the most appropriate business structure. Basically, there are four primary options for you to choose: sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation and limited liability. It is good business judgment to seek both business and legal advice from an accountant and an attorney before finalizing these decisions and beginning your business. The particular structure you choose may save you money. Additional information can be found at the following: www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/choosestructure/index.html or <http://nys.gov/business>

4. **Determine and File your Business Name**

- You may request a preliminary name availability check by contacting the Secretary of State's office by going to <http://dos.state.ny.us/corps.faq>
- Once you decide on a name, it will need to be registered. To register your company name or to incorporate a business, contact the Niagara County Clerk's Office at (716) 439-7022. The office is located in the Courthouse, Lockport, NY 14094

Now That You Are Ready to Begin

5. Select a Site and Determine Zoning and Site Permit requirements

****Determine zoning requirements prior to purchasing or leasing any land or building. Questions regarding zoning and land use restrictions may be answered by the Planning Office at (716) 286-4467. ****

The City of Niagara Falls maintains a data base of available properties for sale. To view information on these properties visit www.niagarafallsusa.org

The Niagara Falls Economic Development department will be happy to assist you working with these other City Departments.

- For any new construction or substantial modification of a property's use, Planning Board approval will most likely be required. It is recommended that you contact the Planning Department before proceeding. They will guide you through the process. Contact: Department of Planning, 745 Main St., City Hall, Niagara Falls, NY 14302 or call (716) 286-4467 or (716) 286-4477

- A permit from the Department of Code Enforcement is required before a structure may be built, added to, altered, moved or when a change of use is proposed. Permits are also needed for grading, fencing, canopies, signs, outdoor cafes, HVAC and electrical systems. Stamped drawings prepared by a qualified design person i.e. Architect or Engineer are required.
Contact: Department of Code Enforcement, 745 Main Street, City Hall, Niagara Falls, NY 14302 or call (716) 286-4450

- Code Enforcement will issue a Certificate of Occupancy only after all inspections (including the Fire Department) are complete and have been signed off on.

Other Licenses

- ❑ If you are opening an establishment that will serve food or drink, you will need a food service permit from the Niagara County Health Department. It is advisable to contact their office prior to any construction or remodeling to insure all requirements are covered. Contact: Niagara County Health Department, 5467 Upper Mountain road, Lockport, NY 14094
- ❑ If you are planning to sell alcohol at your place of business, you will need to have a liquor license issued by the State of New York. Contact: New York State Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control. www.abc.state.ny.us

Additional Resources

The City of Niagara Falls offers various programs and incentives to encourage new and existing business development and expansion. The City's Department of Economic Development Department can assist in resolving issues effecting businesses, and help structure financial and incentive packages.

- ❑ The NFC Development Corporation provides various programs to assist new and existing businesses. They include:
 - NFC Direct Loan program
 - NFC Micro Enterprise Assistance program
 - Market Rate Rental Rehab program
 - Downtown Tourism program
 - **Green** Initiative Energy program

For more information on the available programs, please contact our ED Staff: (716) 286-4481, (716) 286-4482, (716) 286-4313 or www.niagarafallsusa.org

- ❑ Commercial Facade program (716) 286-8802
- ❑ 485(b) Tax Abatement program (716)286-4380