



Business Resource Guide

WELCOME TO A CITY MOVING FORWARD

Thank you for your consideration of the City of Canton as a place to operate your business. We want to maintain a user-friendly approach to the business start-up process. We strive to make your experience as simple and direct as possible while upholding our commitment to protect the aesthetic and economic well-being of Canton. Please note that not all businesses are the same and as such, based on location, type of business, or development of your space, there may be different steps to your process for opening. This guide is a resource for business owners and entrepreneurs and includes contact information and a basic outline of the steps in opening your investment. While it will not answer every question you may have, it does provide you with information to move you forward in a City moving forward.

STEPS FOR OPENING A BUSINESS IN CANTON

If you are moving forward with a new business venture in Canton, please reach out to the City before you invest any funds, sign any leases, or purchase property.

The basic steps for opening a business in Canton are as easy as **A, B, C.**

Appropriate Zoning

Building Permits & Inspections

Certificate of Occupational Tax

The following pages will help guide you through this process as well as provide you additional information on items such signage, economic development incentives, or professional business support groups.

For more information about Canton, visit CantonGa.gov or call 770-704-1500.

Appropriate Zoning

Every property parcel in the City of Canton is identified by a zoning category which includes a list of potential uses appropriate based on location. Once you identify a tentative location for your business, contact the Zoning Division to determine the permitted uses of that location. The Zoning Administrator can also answer any questions you may have regarding **signage** on the parcel.

If you have questions regarding the permitted use of a specific site or building, please contact **Steve Green**, Zoning Administrator, at 770-704-1530 or email at steve.green@cantonga.gov. Be sure to provide your location's tax map and parcel number or the site's address.

New Construction

If you are constructing a site from the ground up, you will need to submit Land Disturbance Site/Civil Plans in a pdf format. All application fees are paid at the time of submittal. To review your concept with the various departments that will handle your plans for approval, consider scheduling a meeting with the **Development Review Team** by contacting **Jason Taylor**, License & Permit Manager, at 770-704-1517 or email at jason.taylor@cantonga.gov. These meetings are scheduled in 30-minute blocks on Wednesday mornings and include representatives from Community Development, Building & Safety Services, Utilities and City Management.

When you are ready to submit your plans, submissions **must** include the following:

- Plan index
- Site plan
- Grading and drainage
- Erosion and sedimentation plan

- Landscape plan
- Tree protection plan
- Storm drain plan and profiles
- Sanitary sewer plan and profiles
- Water distribution plan and profiles
- Hydrology study
- Wall application and water flow test (depending on work)

Once a set of plans are fully approved, you should obtain a **land disturbance permit** from Community Development Services. Questions on site plans should be directed to **Bethany Watson**, City Engineer, at 770-704-1521 or email at bethany.watson@cantonga.gov.

All new commercial structures are reviewed for exterior design and appropriateness. Structures that are within the Historic District of Canton (downtown) are required to receive a **certificate of appropriateness** by the Historic Preservation Commission. Those not in that district are reviewed by the **Oversight Committee**. For information about either process, please reach out to **Brittany Anderson**, Community Development Planner, at 770-704-1557 or email brittany.anderson@cantonga.gov. These approvals are required prior to the start of construction.

Building Permits & Inspections

If you are opening a business in an existing structure, any changes to the exterior or interior of the building may require a **building permit, which is required before the work may begin**. Fees are based on the type and extent of the work to be performed.

Permits are required for:

- Interior finishes
- Modifications
- Additions

- Remodeling
- Structural repairs
- Roofs
- Siding
- Windows
- Water heaters
- Gas, sewer, and water lines
- Irrigation systems
- Heating appliances
- Central air conditioning
- Vent dampers and flue pipes
- Solar heating systems
- Electrical distribution panels
- Upgraded electrical service (including low-voltage systems)

Electrical, plumbing or HVAC permits may be required for modifications to those existing systems.

Newly constructed facilities will also go through the building permit process.

The State of Georgia **requires all** contractors be licensed in order to perform contracted work. If you need help verifying that your contractor is properly licensed in Georgia, the **Building & Safety Services Department** will gladly assist you. Questions about licensed contractors, building permits and inspections should be directed to **Building & Safety Services** by phone at 770-704-1518.

Modifications to the exterior of commercial structures are reviewed for design and appropriateness. Those in the Historic District of Canton (downtown) are required to receive a **certificate of appropriateness** by the Historic Preservation Commission. Those not in that district are reviewed by the **Oversight Committee**. For information about either process, please reach

out to **Brittany Anderson**, City Planner, at 770-704-1557 or email brittany.anderson@cantonga.gov.

Certificate of Occupational Tax

To conduct business within the City of Canton, you are required to possess an **Occupational Tax Certificate**—commonly referred to as a business license. Operating a business without this certificate can result in a fine.

The minimum charge for an occupational tax is \$135.00 annually and varies depending on the type of business and gross receipts. The first \$35.00 of each occupational tax is the **application fee**. All occupational tax certificates must be paid and renewed by **March 31** annually. Occupational Tax Certificates can be obtained in person at City Hall (110 Academy Street) or online at www.cantonga.gov.

If you have **more than one location**, you may need a separate Occupational Tax Certificate for each business location. If you are operating under various firm or trade names, you will need a separate occupational tax certificate for each trade name issued.

We strongly encourage businesses to obtain an OTC before opening. However, a business may obtain the certificate within its first 30 days of operation. It is required that **not-for-profits** obtain a certificate, however, there is no tax associated.

If you have a City of Canton Occupational Tax Certificate, you do not need to obtain a Cherokee County Occupational Tax Certificate to do business within the City. OTCs are **transferable** only if the certificate holder moves to a new location within Canton city limits. Please make the City Tax Clerk aware of your location change.

[If you have](http://www.cantonga.gov) questions about business licensing, please contact **Jason Taylor**, License & Permit Manager, at 770-704-1517 or email jason.taylor@cantonga.gov. The application is available online at

Sign Permits

All signage related to the business **must be approved** through a **sign permit** process. This includes temporary signage, such as “grand opening” announcements, wall signs, monument signs, window signage, and informational signs on the property. A copy of the City of Canton Sign Ordinance is available [online](#). Signs in the **historic district** will require a certificate of appropriateness that is determined at the staff level and not required to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission. If you have questions about signage, applications, or permits, please reach contact **Steve Green**, Zoning Administrator, at 770-704-1530 or email steve.green@cantonga.gov.

Other Matters to Consider Prior to Opening

If you are opening a business that involves the sale of **prepared foods, packaged foods, alcohol, plants, or other specialized goods**, you may be required to obtain a special license or inspection from the State of Georgia.

Commercial **garbage** pick-up in Canton is regulated under a franchise paid by the hauler to the City. You will need to establish commercial waste disposal through a franchised vendor.

To establish **water, sewer, and stormwater service** through the City of Canton, contact Utility Billing at 770-704-1502.

Business **incentives** vary based upon location and size of projects. For more information, contact info@cantonga.gov or call 770-704-1500.

We encourage businesses to reach out to **the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce** as a go-to for business networking and programming by visiting www.cherokeechamber.com.

As always, consider working with other local businesses to buy supplies, materials and services.



Canton City Hall

110 Academy Street
Canton, Georgia 30114

Phone: 770-704-1500

Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

www.cantonga.gov

Important Phone Numbers

City of Canton (main line)	770-704-1500
Building & Safety Services	770-704-1518
Community Development	770-704-1522
Zoning Division	770-704-1530
Planning Division	770-704-1557
Community Development/Engineering	770-704-1521
Licensing & Permits	770-704-1517
Historic Preservation	770-704-1557
Main Street/Downtown Development	770-704-1548
Utility Billing (Water, Wastewater)	770-704-1502
Police Department	770-720-4883
Development Review Team	770-704-1517
Cherokee County Government	678-493-6000
Cherokee Chamber of Commerce	770-345-0400
Cherokee Office of Economic Development	770-345-0600

