

“No Wrong Door”

To Business Success

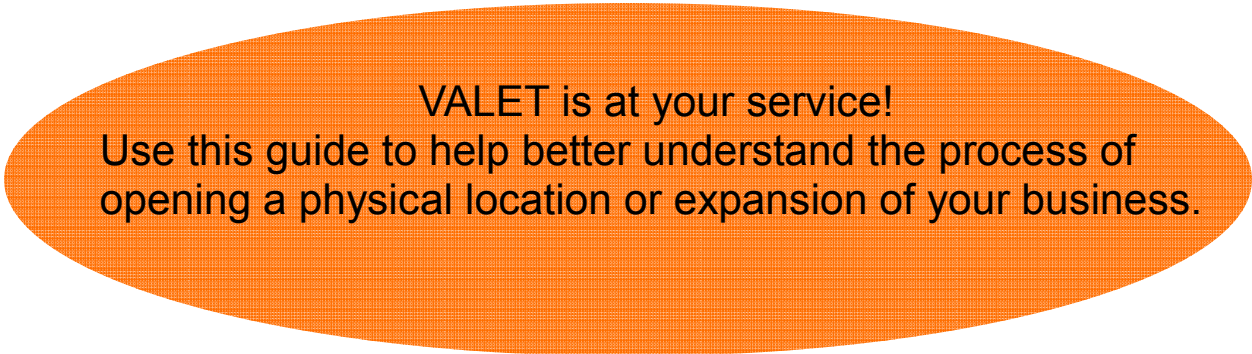
Planning and Zoning Guide

Prepared



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VALET is at your service!
Use this guide to help better understand the process of
opening a physical location or expansion of your business.

Congratulations!

You are making a huge investment in yourself and your community. Starting or expanding a business is exciting but can also be very frustrating. We want you to know that it does not have to be. This guide coupled with numerous other resources can make your transition or start-up less confusing.

VALET has a “No Wrong Door” philosophy when assisting the local business community. The mission of The Valdosta and Lowndes Expansion Team (VALET) is to foster and assist business development in Lowndes County, by bringing together all of the professionals and organizations in the community who provide direct service to businesses, industries, and entrepreneurs. We do this in order to provide resources that will create successful businesses. Additionally, we strive to continuously enhance the pro-business environment of Valdosta-Lowndes County through a "rapid response team" ready to respond to your business or industry needs.

The “No Wrong Door” guide was designed to assist you, the business owner, to better understand the process of opening a physical location or expansion of your business. In the guide you will find is a list of “must have’s” for each department, pointers regarding possible “road blocks,” contact information for specific services, and a “things to think about” questionnaire.

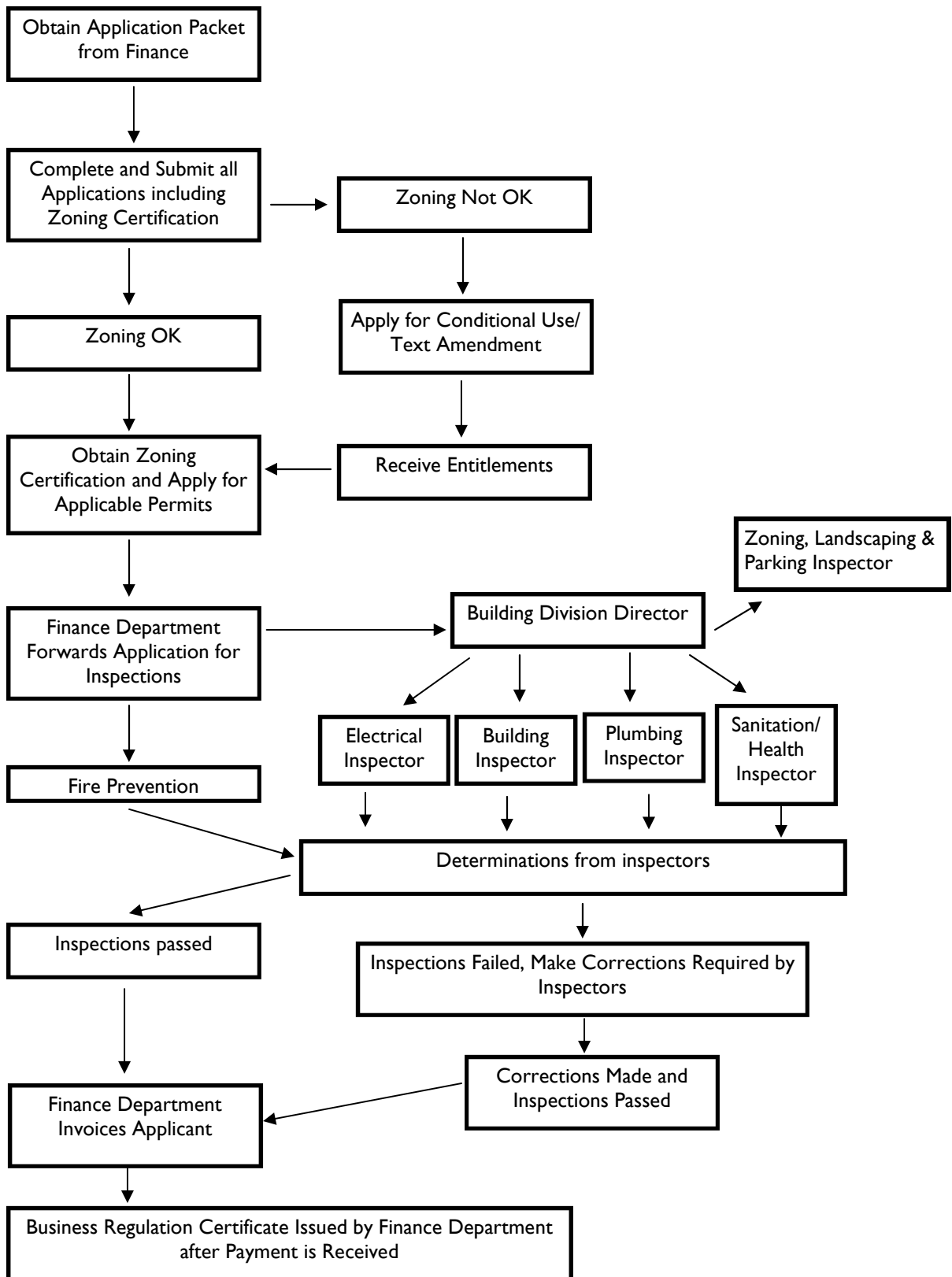
VALET is here to help you! You will enter “No Wrong Door” if you contact any of the members of VALET with questions or feedback regarding starting a business or this “No Wrong Door” guide. We look forward to assisting you.

Sincerely,

Jodi Doss
2009 VALET Chairman

Monica Page – Small Business Development Center
Michelle Shaw - GA Department of Economic Development
Rich McDonnell - Georgia Power Company
Tara Nichols – Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber Vice President
Rebecca Shirley -Valdosta Main Street Director
Emily Newkirk - Hahira Downtown Development Director
Ruby Riesinger – City of Valdosta Economic Development Director
Jason Davenport – Planning and Zoning, Lowndes County
Matt Martin – Planning and Zoning, City of Valdosta
Gary Lebranch – South Ga. Regional Library
Vickie Hughes - Valdosta-Lowndes Industrial Authority
Jessica Freeman – City of Remerton
Rhonda Barnes - Lowndes County
Richard Welch – Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Angela Crance – Valdosta Technical College
Richard Ramsey - Georgia Department of Labor
Scott Purvis - Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Art Ford - Georgia Tech
Dixie Lightfoot - Georgia/Colquitt EMC
Michelle Mullins – Lake Park Chamber of Commerce
Anne Peterson – City of Lake Park
Mark Wisenbaker – REMAX realty
Tim Mabe – Conference Center & Tourism Authority
Mary Gooding - Valdosta State University
Sue Cox - Covington’s Dinning & Catering

Planning to Occupation Process



DOOR 1 Are You Ready to Start a Business?



If you have **NOT** visited the S.E.E.D.S. Center of South Georgia to receive your FREE copy of the "How To Starting a Business Guide in Valdosta-Lowndes County" go to www.seedcenterofsga.com or stop in at 416 N. Ashley St.



So, you are starting a business?

The S.E.E.D.S. Center of South Georgia can help you establish a strong successful business. Visit us for FREE business planning tools that will enable you to properly plan or expand for a successful future! The S.E.E.D.S. Center will provide answers to questions such as:



- What is an entrepreneur?
- Do you have what it takes to start a business?
- Do I need a business plan?
- Where do I get business plan assistance?
- How do I get customized market research?
- How do I determine my cash needs to start my business?
- How to I establish a legal structure for my business?

Answer all of these questions and more at The S.E.E.D.S. Center of South Georgia!

Location: 416 North Ashley Street, Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

Open: Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Visit www.seedcenterofsga.com or call 229-247-8100 to schedule an appointment.



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC)

The SBDC offers free, confidential consulting to existing business owners as well as individuals in the latter stages of planning their business. If you are not currently in business, we recommend that you attend one of our "How to Start A Small Business Classes" or use any of the business development tools listed below:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Business Development Questionnaire | Lowndes County Tax & License Guide |
| Sample Business Plan | Business Startup Basics |
| Business Plan Workbook | Business Entity Information |
| Small Business Loans | Payroll Tax Information |
| SBA Loan Basics | |



Find these business resources and more at the VSU SBDC

Location: North Campus, Langdale College of Business Administration

100 Thaxton Hall Valdosta, GA 31698

Visit www.valdosta.edu/sbdc or call 229-245-3738 to schedule an appointment.



DOOR 2 Setting up a Physical Business Location



Do **NOT** move forward if you have not visited the S.E.E.D.S. Center or the SBDC

Location means **EVERYTHING** for a Business!

It is important to select a space that suits your businesses needs. Every business owner must figure out how location will (or won't) contribute to the success of the business and then choose a spot accordingly. Though there are many issues to consider when you're looking for space to house your business, make sure you ask yourself these four important questions:

Ask this...

- Is location important for the success of my business?
- What type of location is best for my business?
- How much rent can I afford?
- Is the proposed location appropriate for what I plan to do there?

REMEMBER:
Just because the "price is right" doesn't mean it's the best location for your business.

When building or leasing a property for a business location

Consider this...

- Location elevation (visibility)
- Zoning
- Price per acre for building or price per sq ft. for lease
- Highway/Rail service (if necessary)
- Size/ Space
- Demographics - population characteristics surrounding the location in relation to the businesses target market
- Traffic count- the amount of vehicles and pedestrians passing the business location
- Utilities- needs and average cost per month (water, sewer, electricity, gas, fiber optics, etc.)
- Community restrictions, covenants (e.g. signage)
- Neighboring property owners and crime rate

NOTE: Particularly when locating in the County -
ASK: Can the buildings septic and water system accommodate the business needs.
The requirements or maintenance to enlarge or connect to the City water system can get extremely costly!

When soliciting Realtors or property owners for a business location

Know this...

Type of business

Size/space requirements (sq ft)

Number of employees + number of patrons

Parking requirements

Best areas of community for your type of business

Operational needs of the business

To immediately help someone locate property for lease or purchase, the Realtor will do an initial interview.

They will ask you this...

Zoning requirements for the type of business

* For zoning and site information on specific properties you can:

Contact the City of Valdosta Planning and Zoning Office

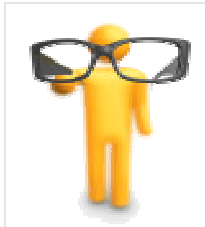
Schedule a First Step meeting

Contact the Lowndes County Commissioners Office

Schedule a Technical Review Committee (TRC) meeting

Operational needs of the business

* Provide them with your visualization worksheet -appendix A



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!

Answer the questions in Appendix A of this booklet to learn more about what you should consider when choosing a property for your business.

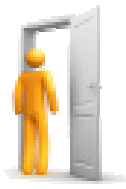
For assistance with choosing a commercial Realtor or to receive additional assistance with business start-up or finding a location you have several options:

Contact the Chamber of Commerce at 229-247-8100 for a list of local commercial Realtors. For Downtown locations contact the Valdosta Main Street program at 229-259-3577 or visit www.valdostamainstreet.com. You may also contact the City of Valdosta, Economic Development at 229-671-3658 or visit www.valdostacity.com

Existing buildings and property for lease or sale can be found on the Industrial Authority Web site. Demographics, mapping, consumer expenditures as well as other related business intelligence is also available for each site listed.

Visit www.industrialauthority.com

Click on Search Sites & Buildings



DOOR 3 Pre-Application

Below is a basic list of services for each of the City/County departments that provide assistance to businesses in the physical set-up. Under each department is the information needed by the business owner or contractor to streamline the application process.

Planning and Zoning Office: Informs the business owner if the proposed business location is zoned properly, located within a *Corridor Overlay District*, **EZ**, **OZ** or located in the *Historic District*. Also, we arrange ***Pre-App** and ***First-Step**, ***Technical Review Committee (Lowndes County businesses)** meetings if further steps need to be taken prior to obtaining a business license.

Information needed:

- * Location-Address and jurisdiction (ex. Lowndes, Hahira, etc.)
- * Detailed explanation of business and its various aspects
- * Mobile vendors need permission from property owners
- * Any work/construction to occur on building
- * Number of employees
- * **COD** -Corridor Overlay District
- * **EZ** - Enterprise Opportunity Zone
- * **OZ** - Opportunity Zone

NOTE: COD/EZ/OZ– Various business incentives available for locations within these areas of the community. To find areas within these corridors visit www.valorgis.com.

City of Valdosta First Step

As a service to our customers, the City of Valdosta hosts First Step meetings every Thursday morning. These meetings provide potential businesses and developers the opportunity to meet with all City departments including Fire, Landscape, Utilities, Engineering, Public Works, Planning and Zoning, and Plan Review. If necessary, the Health Department is also in attendance. Individuals are encouraged to bring any site plans, development plans, or general information regarding their request.

To schedule a First Step meeting, please contact the Planning and Zoning Office at **229-259-3563**. First Step meetings must be scheduled by **12:00 Noon on the Tuesday** prior to the Thursday on which the meeting will be held.

City of Valdosta Pre-Application

Individuals submitting an annexation, rezoning, special exception or variance application are required to attend a Pre-Application meeting prior to application submittal. These meetings are held every Thursday afternoon. The purpose of the Pre-Application meeting is to identify any possible hurdles during the application process and to thoroughly explain the application timeline. Applicants are encouraged to bring any additional materials they may have regarding their request.

To schedule a Pre-Application meeting, please contact the Planning and Zoning Office at **229-259-3563**. Pre-Application meetings must be scheduled by **12:00 Noon on the Tuesday** prior to the Thursday on which the meeting will be held.

Lowndes County - Technical Review Committee (TRC)- Pre-Applications

As a service to Lowndes County customers, the county hosts the TRC meetings every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. to provide potential business owners or developers the opportunity to meet with all departments including Fire, Landscape, Utilities, Engineering, Public Works, Planning and Zoning, and Plan Review. If necessary, the Health Department is also in attendance. Individuals are encouraged to bring any site plans, development plans, or general information regarding their request.

To schedule a Pre-Application meeting, please contact the Lowndes County Zoning Office at **229.671.2430**.

Steps for starting and locating in The City of Hahira:

1. Visit City Hall for business license paperwork
Contact: City Clerk
2. Meet with Fire Inspector for building inspection
Contact: Fire Marshall (Who must sign license paperwork)
3. Return paperwork to City Hall with fees, and set-up water and sewer account
Contact: City Clerk
4. Check in with Downtown Development Coordinator
Contact:
Hahira City Hall
102 South Church Street
Hahira, GA 31632
229-794-2330

Steps for starting and locating in The City of Lake Park:

1. Visit City Hall for business license paperwork
Contact:
2. Meet with Fire Inspector for building inspection
Contact: Fire Marshall
3. Return paperwork to City Hall with fees, and set-up water and sewer account
Contact:
Lake Park City Hall
120 W. Essa
Lake Park, GA 31636
229-559-7470

Steps for starting and locating in The City of Remerton:

1. Visit City Hall for business license paperwork
Contact: City Hall
2. Meet with Fire Inspector for building inspection
Contact: Lowndes County Fire Marshall (229) 671-2730
3. Return paperwork to City Hall with fees, and set-up water and sewer account
Contact:
Remerton City Hall
1757 Poplar Street
Valdosta, GA 31601
229-253-8477



DOOR 4 Zoning/Permitting/Occupation

When Do I Need a Permit?

Any physical improvement that you plan to make on the inside or outside of a building, a site or a property will require a permit. Painting and floor covering only require a 'Scope of Work', but will still need to be reviewed by permitting and will require a commercial contractor to receive approval.

Permitting: A building permit must be obtained for both new construction, expansion and remodeling.

Certificate of Occupancy: Must be issued before occupying any building.

Information needed:

- * Does the building have an original Certificate of Occupancy (CO)
- * Changes to architectural drawing or plans should have been submitted and approved before a CO is awarded. Especially if changes increase the buildings capacity
- * Actual number of patrons at full capacity

NOTICE * Assembly- The number of patrons allowed in a building is based on the capacity of a building. Often special accommodation and functionality (often renovations) must be made to the property to meet safety requirements (specifically fire safety)

Building Inspection: Ensures that all work is completed by licensed contractors and that

NOTE: If an existing building was never issued a CO at the time it was built or last renovated the purchaser/ owner making improvements will be required to bring property up to a mandatory state and local building code requirements.

construction meets all international building codes, along with applicable city and county codes. You may purchase all building permits at the Building Inspection department.

Information needed:

- * Any work/construction to occur on interior or exterior of building
- * Prior uses of location/building
- * Architectural drawings may need to be submitted, reviewed and approved by city or county prior to any construction
- * Business owner can submit plans to the zoning and permitting offices, however plans must be picked up by a licensed contractor
- * State licenses of individuals completing work
- * Approximate cost should be included in the plans (architect and contractor should already have included)

NOTE: You may be able to find drawings and architectural plans or previous use of property by filling out an Open Records Request at the City Managers office at the City Hall Annex. Additionally, one might check the Clerks office in the Lowndes County Court House.



DOOR 5 Licensing & Laws

Business License Office: is where you would apply for a business license application and other licenses, such as *alcohol pouring or sales*.
(See Resource page for contact information)

Information needed:

- * State licenses (if required)
- * Business licenses in other Georgia cities or counties
- * *Anticipated Gross Sales*
- *EIN or Social Security number

Food Service and Restaurants:

Information needed and requirements:

Hand wash sink	Meat sink	Food storage
Mop sink	Vegetable sink	Chemical Storage
Three-compartment sink	Adequate freezer space	Restrooms
Shelving for drying dishes	Pasteurization equipment	Hot holding equipment
Hot and cold water		

***State Alcohol License (required to serve any alcohol)**

www.secretaryofstates.com

Local Alcohol Licenses:

- Application
- \$500.00 fee - per type
- Regulatory fee application for each type of alcohol
ex. beer, wine, and/or liquor –an application will be **required** for **each**.

Mobile food units must report daily to the base of operation and must be stored at base of operation when not in use.

Health Department:

Contact information: **229-245-2314**

Information needed

- *Application packet filled out
- *Menu and ingredients list
- *Floor plans
- *Equipment and appliances list

Department of Agriculture:

Tifton office contact information: **229-386-3145**

Information needed

- *Needed for sale of agricultural goods
- *Pre-packaged food sales
- *Bakeries

Terms To Know

Administrative appeals - review of administrative decisions regarding land-use or zoning ordinances.

Administrative waivers - regulatory ordinance or requirement has been excused.

Architectural Drawings/Plans-a technical drawing of a building (or building project); the documentation of written and graphic descriptions of the architectural elements of a building project. Plans must include a Georgia Design Professional Seal.

Building Permit-a permit required for new construction, or adding to an existing structure and in some cases for major renovations.

Building Setback lines-lines on a plot drawing that delineate how close to the edges of the property a structure may be built. A structure may not extend past the setback lines, thus may be no closer to the perimeter of the property than the setback lines. Setback lines are defined in building codes, deed restrictions, and zoning regulations.

Buffer yards-limit the view and reduce the noise between abutting incompatible uses, and to ease the transition from one zoning district to another.

Business Occupation Tax Certificate— a business license.

Building plans - proposed architectural drawing of a new or existing building.

Certificate of Occupancy-a document issued by a local government agency or building department certifying a building's compliance with applicable building codes and other laws, and indicating it to be in a condition suitable for occupancy.

Code Enforcement-the act of enforcing a set of rules, principles, or laws and insuring observance of a system of norms or customs; ensuring that construction is in compliance with local codes.

Enterprise Opportunity Zone-zone designated for business growth and expansion that offers incentives for job creation to promote economic development

Food Service Permit - Permit issued by a health official to any establishment offering food or food service.

Historic District-A geographically defined area designated by the City Council as a historic district.

Inspections-the examination for purposes of evaluating a property's condition.

Land Use Conditions- conditions established by local government agencies that establish the use of property must conform to the permitted land use or zone type.

Lot/Parcel-a tract of land.

Land Development Regulations -Any land disturbing activity, including but not limited to clearing, digging, grubbing, stripping, removal of vegetation, dredging, grading, excavating, transporting and filling of land, construction, paving and any other installation of impervious surface.

Map and Parcel number-a number assigned to parcels of real property by the tax assessor of a particular jurisdiction for purposes of identification and record-keeping.

Opportunity Zone-redevelopment zone where businesses can earn economic incentives for job creation

Overlay District -zoning district that encompasses one or more underlying zones and that may vary the requirements, uses, and standards of the underlying zone.

Property Tax Map- a comprehensive map outlining each land plot in Lowndes county by owner. The tax maps help to ensure that no properties are omitted from the tax rolls and that no properties are taxed more than once.

Sign Ordinance- regulates signage based strictly on dimensional and aesthetic codes.

Site Plan- an architectural plan and a detailed engineering drawing of proposed improvements to a given lot.

Request for Variance-a requested deviation from the set of rules a municipality applies to land use known as a zoning ordinance, building code or municipal code.

Tax ID Number-a number assigned solely to your business by the IRS that identifies your business to several federal agencies responsible for the regulation of business.

Unified Land Development Code (ULDC)- set of standards, requirements, criteria, and procedures for potential land development.

Zoning-a device of land use regulation; the practice of designating permitted uses of land based on mapped zones which separate one set of land uses from another.

Resources

S.E.E.D.S. Center of South Georgia

Office: 229-247-8100
www.seedscenterofsga.com

Small Business Development Center

Office: 229-245-3738
www.valdosta.edu/sbdc

City of Valdosta Small and Emerging Business Office

Office: 229-671-3623
www.valdostacity.com

City of Valdosta Business License Office

Office: 229-259-3520
www.valdostacity.com
citybusinesslicense@valdostacity.com

City of Valdosta Planning and Zoning

Office: 229-259-3563
www.valdostacity.com

Building Inspections and Permits Department

Office: 229-259-3506
www.valdostacity.com

City of Valdosta Main Street

Office: 229-259-3577
www.valdostamainstreet.com

City of Valdosta Office of Economic Development

Office: 229-671-3658
www.valdostacity.com

Georgia Department of Labor

Office: 229-249-2733
www.dol.state.ga.us

Lowndes County Business License Office

Office: (229) 671-2534
www.lowndescounty.com

Lowndes County Planning

Office: 229-671-2424
www.lowndescounty.com

Lowndes County Zoning

Office: 229-671-2430
www.lowndescounty.com

Lowndes County Commission

Office: 229-671-2442
www.lowndescounty.com

Lowndes County Clerk Office

Office: 229-671-2440
www.lowndescounty.com

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

Office: 229-333-5277
www.sgrdc.com

South Georgia Regional Library

Office: 229-333-0086
www.sgrl.org

Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority

Office: 229-259-9972
www.industrialauthority.com

Valdosta Technical College

Office: 229-333-2100
www.valdostatech.edu

Appendix A: Imagine Your Business Worksheet

Business/Office Location Selection -Existing property

- 1) How much renovation/remodeling will the building/space require to accommodate your business model?

Use the following to help you determine the answer to this question.

A) Exterior Considerations

- 1) How visible is the space (e.g. store front/signage) from all aspects of the roadway?
- 2) Does your business need to be visible to road/foot traffic?
- 3) Do you need additional signage – front, back, or free standing?
- 4) What type of signage is available/do you need?
- 5) Is the location visible at night? If not, do you need additional lighting?
- 6) Aesthetically do you need additional foliage/greenery?
- 7) Is this the first impression your customer will have of your business?
- 8) If you are leasing the property, how are the conditions of the:

- Roof
- Doors
- Parking asphalt
- Water Heater
- Exterior Walls
- Plumbing
- Windows
- HVAC-When was system last replaced?
- Septic

Are the systems, septic, plumbing, water heater, HVAC, suitable for accommodating your business type? (e.g. large functions/groups)

- 9) If repairs are required, ask who's responsibility it be to repair or maintain the building and/or fixtures.

B) Parking Considerations

- 1) How many customers will you have at peak hours?
- 2) Is there enough parking for your customers?
- 3) Will your employees park in the same area or another area?
- 4) Is the parking lot in good condition?

C) Interior Considerations

- 1) Do you need to have an inspections done?
 - Electrical
 - HVAC
 - Building
- 2) Have you accessed, up-front, the condition of building to accurately budget costs?
- 3) Has the current owner/leaser recently had the property inspected? If so, When?
- 4) Does the owner of the building have drawings you can use in your planning stage?
- 5) Do you have an architect for additions/renovations to the building?
- 6) Have you evaluated the electrical needs (consider needs of displays/fixtures, equipment etc.) such as outlets or lighting.
- 7) Does the HVAC capacity meet the needs of your business model?

D) Interior Consideration cont'd

- 1) Have you researched past utility costs of the property?
- 2) Will HVAC/electrical handle future additions to building?
- 3) Is the building up to code? e.g. Handicap accessible, Emergency Exit Signage, Fire Extinguishers, etc.
- 4) If septic tank, is it large enough to accommodate?
- 5) Is the building wired for the technology/equipment that you will need in your business? e.g. Internet, security, etc.

E) Flow of Space

- 1) How will your business model fit into this space?
- 2) Evaluate how your customers/employees will utilize the space?
- 3) How will your customers use your space?
- 4) How will your customers flow throughout the space?
- 5) If your business is mixed – will both spaces act separately or will they compliment each other?
- 6) How will employees use the space to help customers?
- 7) How will you receive deliveries/shipments?
- 8) Do you have an area to receive your deliveries that is separate from the area where the customers are? Is a separate space necessary?
- 9) If you also ship packages to customers will this affect your flow?
- 10) Where will your employees store their personal affects while at work?
- 11) Where will your employees take their breaks and have their lunch?
- 12) Will your employees enter and exit from another area separate from your customers?
- 13) Is your work space suitable for your needs – Floors, walls, shelving, storage, etc.?
- 14) Are they in adequate condition or do they need to be altered to fit your needs?

F) Miscellaneous

- 1) If you are planning on recycling, where will you store your collection bins?
- 2) If you will have music in the background, how will it be piped?
- 3) Will the space accommodate large groups for events?

E) Cleaning/Changing of fixtures

- 1) Are the display windows/areas easily accessible for cleaning and changing ceiling tiles and lighting? If yes, will it require moving of fixtures?

