



Business success starts here
A guide to beginning a business in DeKalb

We're here to help

DeKalb is a business-friendly community

We are excited you have chosen DeKalb as the home for your business. We are a business-friendly City and promote the economic health of the community by encouraging industrial, commercial and residential development. The City recognizes that new businesses provide quality job opportunities, diversify and broaden the tax base, and enhance the quality of life in the community.

With a population of just over 40,000 and the western anchor to the booming I-88 Corridor, DeKalb is only a little more than an hour from both downtown Chicago and O'Hare International Airport. Despite its proximity to the Chicago region, DeKalb remains apart and maintains its own unique character as a thriving community with both urban and rural roots.

Originally known as the Barb City, where barbed wire was invented, the City of DeKalb has evolved to become a community which is recognized for its high impact, knowledge-based, manufacturing and logistical companies as well as environmental sustainability, a variety of cultural and entertainment opportunities, and regional leadership in educational and medical resources.

As the home to Northern Illinois University, the DeKalb area offers a unique environment that complements and enhances the lifestyle of DeKalb residents and visitors. Excellent educational partnership offerings between Kishwaukee College, NIU, and DeKalb High School provide a full range of career paths. In addition, a full-service Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and County Economic Development Corporation are working together to grow our community.

Whether you are a long time business owner or starting your first business, the City is here to assist you.





Step by step

5 steps to establish your business

1

Find a Location

The best way to find a location for your business is to contact a local commercial realtor or use one of the on-line marketplace sites for real estate such as Loopnet.com.

2

Zoning Review

Make sure your business is allowed in the zoning district where you plan to open.

- The simplest way is to contact [Planning Director Dan Olson](#).
- You can also check the online [zoning map](#) and [Unified Development Ordinance](#).

Even if the zoning does not match up at first, we can work with you to see if the location is possible through a rezoning, special use permit or text amendment.

3

Pre-Application

Meeting/Walk-Through

Before moving into your business location, we offer a walk-through with the business owner to make sure the building is safe and up to code. At the same time, we will discuss the permit process and any zoning approval that may be needed. This meeting can also be held at City Hall. To schedule your walk-through or meeting, contact Building Services Director, John Petragallo.

Licenses & Taxes

The City does not require licenses for all businesses. Licenses, permits and City taxes are only needed in certain categories.

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- Check the online list of businesses that need a City license. The applications are also available there. For questions on City licenses, contact Executive Assistant Ruth Scott.
- Restaurants and bars, hotels and motels and gas stations remit taxes to the City. These applications can also be found online. If you have any questions, contact the Finance Department.
- Food establishments will need a permit from the DeKalb County Health Department, and the state requires business registration for all businesses and licenses for some business types.

Building Permits

The Building Division is available in the City Hall lobby to help you with the permits needed for new construction, additions, remodeling, demolitions, signs or any changes to major building systems, the structure or exit routes. The permits can also be completed online. This department also takes care of inspections and Certificates of Occupancy. Also, keep in mind:

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- General, electrical and HVAC contractors must be registered with the City, and list of registered contractors is available online.
- A state license is required for plumbing, roofing, fire alarm and fire sprinkler contractors.

If you have question, please contact the Building Division.



Business resources

Programs and partners to help you succeed

Architectural Improvement Program

The Architectural Improvement Program offers business and building owners financial assistance to make building renovations, helping to eliminate an obstacle to starting a new business while preserving commercial properties in our community.

Properties in the City's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District are eligible for the program. Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with approved projects able to receive matching funds of up to \$25,000. The City Council may consider a higher amount for properties of notable historical significance or projects with a total cost of more than \$50,000.

Fund 400 Program

The City also has funds available for rehabilitation projects outside the TIF boundaries. The Fund 400 program is similar to the AIP Program and is targeted for commercial areas on DeKalb's east side and along S. 4th St.



Fargo Skateboarding in the former Fargo Theatre

Local business partners

Additional resources can found through these partners:



DeKalb County Convention & Visitors Bureau



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity



Business Law Innovation Clinic

Public Utilities

DeKalb businesses and residents are serviced by the following providers:

Water



Sanitary Services



Electric



Gas



TV, Phone & Internet



Xfinity



Metronet

Phone & Internet



AT&T



Frontier

Refuse, Recycling & Yard Waste

