

Doing Business in Brattleboro, Vermont



PHOTO BY GREG LESCH

Starting a business has many challenges but we hope to help you put the pieces together when it comes to making sure you're following the local zoning, permitting, and licensing process. Depending on the type business you have, there may be several departments involved in helping you get established—in addition to State agencies, such as Vermont Secretary of State and Vermont Department of Health. To try to make the process easier we've created this brochure.

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Business License:

Who should get a business license in Brattleboro?

If you provide goods or services from a location in Brattleboro, including from your home, you must obtain a Business License. Licenses are annual and are good from January 1 to December 31 of the same calendar year.

Who should not get a license?

Landlords and leasing companies which do not occupy an office in Brattleboro are not required to get a license.

If my business is a non-profit business, do I need a Business License?

Yes, if you provide goods or services from a location in Brattleboro, including from your home, you must obtain a Business License. If you are a 501(c)3 you need to obtain a license but will be exempt from business personal property tax, providing you send the necessary paperwork to the Assessor's office.



If I discover that I have made an error in my Business License application, what should I do?

If you have submitted the application and notice an error, contact the Assessor's Office at 802-251-8156. Do not submit duplicate applications. We can update/change your information at any time of the year when requested.

What is the deadline to apply for a Business License?

New businesses should obtain a license as soon as they have established their business.

Existing businesses must renew their license by January 1. Applications received from January 2 to January 15 will be charged a \$12.50 late fee. Applications received after January 15 will be charged a \$25.00 late fee. If you do not take out a business license while operating a business in Brattleboro you can be subject to a \$100 fine.

What is Business Personal Property?

How do I declare my Business Personal Property on the Business License application? Business Personal Property (BPP) is an inventory of the equipment: machinery, store fixtures, computers, office furniture, etc., and all other items needed to operate your business. If your business has more than \$5,000 worth of BPP, you will be required to fill out a Business Property form in March each year. In Section 5 of the Business License application, you will be asked to declare whether you have more or less than \$5,000 worth of BPP; (501(c)3 business corporations are exempted).

What benefits do I receive with my license?

Taking out a business license in Brattleboro exempts you from paying tax on the first \$5,000 of personal property. It also gives you a free listing, if desired, in our online business directory which can link directly to your business website, email, and Facebook page.

What is the cost of a license?

The cost of a license is \$50.00. Late fees may be assessed (see deadline information above).

Do I need to display my license?

Yes, we request you post the license in a conspicuous place on the business premises.

Where do I obtain a license?

If you are paying by credit card you may obtain a license online through the Town website, www.brattleboro.org. To pay by check or cash visit the Assessor's office, suite 109 on the first floor of the Municipal Center at 230 Main Street.



PHOTO BY KAREN HESSE

Home-based Business:

Questions?

Please call the Assessor's Office at 802-251-8156 or stop by between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

There is a distinction between a **home business** and a **home occupation**. A zoning permit is needed for a home business, but not for a home occupation. A business license is required for both. Please see below for definitions.



Home Occupation:

All residents may use a minor portion of their dwelling for an occupation that is considered customary in residential areas, such as: crafts, tailoring, consulting work, or an online businesses that does not include UPS traffic. Home occupations must meet the following standards:

- The use is conducted by residents of the home
- The use does not have any impact on the residential character of the dwelling or surrounding neighborhood
- There is no outside storage of equipment, and no retail sales on the premises
- Signs are limited to a wall sign of one square foot (Note: Sign permits must be obtained.)

Home Business:

To qualify, a home business shall occupy no more than 40% of the floor area of the dwelling and the types of businesses may include: manufacture of goods for sale off-premises, hair styling, massage therapy, equipment repair shop, professional services such as accountants or architects, or an art studio.



The use shall comply with the following performance standards:

- The use is secondary to the residential use and does not significantly change the character of the home or surrounding neighborhood
- The business must be conducted by the owner of the home
- There can be up to two non-resident employees
- Generate no more than 25 additional visits to the home per day
- On-site parking associated with the use must be to the rear or side of the structure
- No unenclosed structures or outside storage may be used in connection with the business
- Create no air or noise pollution
- Have no deliveries by vehicles with more than two axles.
- Retail sales are not permitted except on an incidental basis
- A ground or wall sign of four square feet is allowed. (Note: Permits must be obtained for all signs.)

Please direct questions about either Home Business or Home Occupation to Planning Services at 802-251-8154. A zoning permit is required for a Home Business; a Business License is required for both Home Occupation and Home Business.

Vendors:

Permit process: Brattleboro has a newly enacted zoning ordinance regulating food vendors operating on private land. Effective August 6, 2013 mobile food units or food carts may operate in certain zoning districts with a permit. The zoning permit provides specific information regarding the location of the mobile food unit or food cart to ensure compliance with setback requirements, minimum lot size, and safety related to traffic circulation, pedestrians, and parking. In addition to the zoning permit a business license is required. Any food business is also required to have permits from the state.



Food vendors operating on public land, including sidewalks and parking lots, and all other (non-food) vendors must get a vendor's license from the Town Manager's office. Forms are available online.

Signage:

Any new sign, including a change to an existing sign, or a temporary banner requires a permit from the Planning Services Department. Forms are available online at www.brattleboro.org or can be obtained from Planning Services, Suite 202 on the second floor of the Municipal Center.



Regulations regarding the signs can be found in the Zoning Ordinance, Article 4, which is also located on the Brattleboro.org website. General regulations are covered in Section, 4500, page 4-19. The specific type and size allowed by each zoning district begins in Section 4550, page 4-26.

If you do not know your zoning district, refer to the online district zoning map, or call Planning Services at 802-251-8154.

The fee for sign applications is \$40.00, made payable to Town of Brattleboro.

Other Permits:

Change of Use:

If you are changing the way the property will be used (for example from residential to commercial, or even from one type of commercial use to another) you will need to obtain a Change of Use permit. There may be some exceptions to this, but you should check with the Planning Services Department at 802-251-8154.

Note: For commercial projects and any questions on building inspection, you will also need to contact Brian Johnson at Fire and Safety for Windham County at 802-885-8883.

You may also need permits from the State; see the directory of listings on the back cover for helpful websites and phone numbers.

Advertising:

Opportunities for advertising:

We will add you to our online business directory (**free of charge**) when you obtain a business license, if so desired. We are able to provide direct online links to your website, email, and Facebook page, as well as provide a link to your business location on our online maps.

The department of Recreation and Parks publishes a Senior Newsletter and has additional advertising options. They can be reached at 802-257-7570.

Alcohol & Tobacco:

You may obtain an application for a liquor license at the Town Clerk's office. Businesses **selling alcohol or tobacco** should contact the Brattleboro Town Clerk as the Department of Liquor Control licensing process has several steps. You may contact the town clerk at 802-251-8157.

Library Resources:

Brooks Memorial Library:

The Library, at 224 Main Street (next to the Municipal Building), offers free reference service for local businesses at 802-254-5290 x109 or visit our website at asklibrarian@brooklibraryvt.org.

In addition to its print and e-book collection, the library subscribes to online databases that can be useful to your business, including Consumer Reports, the Brattleboro Reformer archive (2003-current), and two that are designed specifically for small businesses:

Reference USA is a directory database with many uses, including marketing and job searching. Use custom searches to find, for example, all the businesses in your field of interest and geographic range with a specific sales volume or number of employees.



Small Business Resource Center: Find model business plans for small businesses in many categories. Also includes articles and directories of trade associations and interest groups for businesses of many kinds.

Databases are accessible to visitors on library computers and to cardholders from home or mobile at www.brookslibraryvt.org. Some are also accessible through the AccessMyLibrary app, available for Apple and Android.

Library cards are free for all Brattleboro business owners and their families. Employees of the business must reside in town to be eligible for a free card, but nonresident employees may purchase a card for an annual fee. While visitors are welcome to use the library for research and browsing, a card allows access to the full range of borrowing, searching, and downloading services. Please see the website for details on cards and fees.

The Brooks Memorial Library Children's Room welcomes family child care groups. Come visit for craft tables, books, and a cozy kid-friendly reading area. Special group story times are also available by arrangement.

Please contact the Children's Room for more information on services and resources: 802-254-5290 x110.

Assistance Program:

Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP):

SBAP loans are available for expansion or start-up of a viable current or prospective business located in Brattleboro for \$10,000 – \$40,000, with terms of 5 years and an interest rate of ½ prime or 3%, whichever is greater. Money may be used for starting or expanding a business, creating jobs, renovation, or relocation.

The program is available to:

- Assist industrial and commercial ventures which have a demonstrable gap in a loan financing package;
- Assist an economic development project that will provide new or renovated, reasonably-priced space for the start-up, expansion, or relocation of the type of business described above, and which also demonstrates a financing gap;
- Create quality full-time jobs;
- Diversify and strengthen Brattleboro's economic base through the financial assistance offered; and
- Provide jobs to low and moderate income individuals.

To obtain a loan the applicant must submit a completed application package to the loan manager and the loan manager will coordinate the application process through the loan review committee, Selectboard, and the closing. For more information contact the grants and loans manager at 802-251-8122.

Helpful links & phone numbers:

Town of Brattleboro – www.brattleboro.org

Vermont Secretary of State – www.sec.state.vt.us

Vermont Health Department – www.HealthVermont.gov

Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce – www.brattleborochamber.org

Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. – www.brattleborodevelopment.com

Vermont Economic Development Authority – www.veda.org

SEVCA Micro Business Development Loan – www.sevca.org/micro-business-development

Windham Regional Commission Brownfields Program – www.windhamregional.org/brownfields

Helpful checklist – www.startabusinessinvermont.net

Brattleboro Assessor's Office	802-251-8156
Brattleboro Town Clerk	802-251-8157
Brattleboro Planning Services	802-251-8154
Brattleboro Dept. of Public Works	802-254-4255
Small Business Administration	802-828-4422
VT Small Business Development Center	800-464-7232
Vermont Secretary of State's Office	800-439-8683
Vermont Department of Health	800-464-4343
Fire and Safety for Windham County	802-885-8883
State Permit Specialists	802-257-7731

Town of Brattleboro
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