



DOING BUSINESS IN SARASOTA COUNTY



Sarasota County

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DOING BUSINESS
IN SARASOTA COUNTY



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D E V E L O P M E N T

OFFICE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“Doing Business in Sarasota County” provides a directory of services and contact information for county and state offices. The information provides answers to questions about permits for building; occupancy; health and fire; environmental regulations; tax requirements; land use and development; and State of Florida regulatory and licensing information.

CONCIERGE-STYLE SERVICE

Sarasota County’s Office of Business and Economic Development offers concierge-style assistance to small business owners. Our staff is ready to assist with regulatory or permitting concerns, including but not limited to the following areas:

- **Business tax**
- **Business Usage Permit**
- **Permitting**
- **Signage**
- **Temporary use permits**
- **Zoning**

We’re helping small business owners get the information and answers they need.

We want to make it easy for small businesses to open, relocate or expand.

We are working for business in Sarasota County.

941-861-5247
bizhelp@scgov.net
scgov.net/EconomicDevelopment

HOW TO START A NON-RESIDENTIAL BUSINESS IN SARASOTA COUNTY STEP BY STEP

Step 1: Verify that the proposed business site and intended business use meets the following:

A. Proper zoning conditions	
Sarasota County Government Zoning Department	
PHONE: 941-861-5000 EMAIL: zoning@scgov.net LOCATION: 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota	
Information you may need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parcel address/parcel ID# • Building square footage • Parking lot layout 	
B. Proper water and sewer connections	
i. Verify central utilities on-site	ii. Non-central utilities
Sarasota County Government Utilities Department	Sarasota Department of Health - Environmental Health
PHONE: 941-861-6790 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota	PHONE: 941-861-6133 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota PHONE: 941-861-3310 4000 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice
Information you may need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parcel address • Parcel ID# 	Information you may need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parcel address • Parcel ID#
C. Proper building safety conditions	
Sarasota County Government Permitting Department	
Sarasota: 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd. PHONE: 941-861-6678 Venice: 4000 S. Tamiami Trail PHONE: 941-861-3029	
Information you may need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parcel address • Parcel ID# 	

Step 2: Register to pay the county business tax

Obtain a business tax receipt

Sarasota County Tax Collector

PHONE: **941-861-8300, option 3**

EMAIL: Info@SarasotaTaxCollector.com

WEBSITE: SarasotaTaxCollector.com

Information you may need:

- If the state requires the business or profession to be licensed, you must provide a copy of the license with your registration.
- Businesses located in a city may also have to pay a city business tax.

Step 3: Register your non-real estate property used in your business operations

(RECEIVE APPLICABLE PROPERTY EXEMPTIONS AND AVOID LATE PENALTY FEES.)

File a tangible personal property tax return (DR-405)

Sarasota County Property Appraiser

PHONE: **941-861-8200**

EMAIL: TPP@sc-pa.com

LOCATION: 2001 Adams Lane, Sarasota

Information you may need:

- Business asset details
- Original cost and date of acquisition

Step 4: Contact the city in which your business is located

Verify any municipal requirements

City of North Port: **941-429-7000**

City of Sarasota: **941-365-2200**

City of Venice: **941-486-2626**

Town of Longboat Key: **941-316-1999**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO DO BUSINESS IN SARASOTA COUNTY

If you're opening a business, or making changes to your business, Sarasota County government can help you get started.

BUSINESS USAGE PERMIT

The Sarasota County Building Code requires anyone who opens a business in a commercial location in unincorporated Sarasota County to obtain a Business Use Permit. This document certifies that a building is suitable for use. It is also required for any business moving into an existing commercial space, or when there is a change of use or occupancy to an existing business.

How do I get it?

Application packets and instructions are available online at scgov.net, keyword search Business Use Permit. Applications should be submitted in person at a Permit Center location:

1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota
PHONE: **941-861-6678**

4000 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice
PHONE: **941-861-3029**

After the application has been approved by all departments and a satisfactory fire inspection is completed, the certificate will be mailed to the applicant.

What does it cover?

The application is reviewed by the Building, Zoning and Health departments, which verify that the type of business is allowed in the zoning district, that restroom facilities comply and that occupancy requirements are met. Additionally, the application is reviewed with regard to further requirements around utilities, land development, environmental protection and impact fees.

When is the fire inspection done?

Once the business usage permit application has received the necessary approval from all other departments, and before opening for business, contact the Fire Marshal at **941-861-2290** to schedule a fire inspection to ensure fire codes are met.

What does a business usage permit cost?

If the application is signed and notarized and the property is on central water/sewer service the cost is \$224.38, which includes a \$15 records fee. If it is signed and notarized and the property is on a well or septic system, the charge is \$274.38. If the application needs to be notarized, there is an additional \$5 fee.

Do I need to post the business usage permit in my business?

Yes, the business usage permit must be posted in a conspicuous location.

FIRE INSPECTIONS

Who needs one?

Anyone who opens a new business in unincorporated Sarasota County must get a fire inspection as part of the requirements for a business usage permit.

How do I get one?

Once the business usage permit application has received the necessary approval from all other departments, contact the Fire Marshal's office at **941-861-2290** to schedule an appointment.

FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM PERMITS

Who needs one?

Permits are required for work or building modifications that affect a fire protection system — fire sprinkler, fire alarm or fire suppression system.

How do I get one?

Contact the Fire Marshal's office at **941-861-2290** to schedule any fire inspection that must be permitted.

BUILDING PERMIT

Who needs a permit?

A permit is required for construction or work on a building or on any of its systems. This includes work to construct, enlarge, repair, move, demolish or change the occupancy of a building. It also includes work to erect, install, enlarge, alter, repair, remove, convert or replace impact-resistant coverings, electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing systems.

Where can I get more information?

Go online to floridabuilding.org to find Florida Building Code 105.1. Sarasota County also provides a publication called "When do I Need a Building Permit?" It's available online through the Sarasota County website at scgov.net (keyword search building permit).

NEW CONSTRUCTION

All new commercial construction is required to have an enclosure for garbage and recycling containers, unless there is a permanent storage area for the containers inside a walled and roofed building. This requirement applies to all commercial buildings constructed after Dec. 7, 1993.

How can I get more information?

Call the Sarasota County Contact Center at **941-861-5000** to speak with the Solid Waste Collections manager, or visit the county's website at scgov.net (keyword search enclosure guidance).

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS WHO ACT AS THEIR OWN CONTRACTOR

Who is eligible?

- Building or improvement costs can't exceed \$75,000.
- Only the owners can use or occupy the space.
- The building or space can't be sold or leased within a year after completion.
- The owner must sign a disclosure statement agreeing to the provisions for a contractor exemption.

Where can I get more information?

Go online to flsenate.gov/laws/statutes and refer to FL Statute Chapter 489.103(7).

EXPEDITED TENANT BUILD-OUT PROGRAM

How does the program help me?

It provides same-day review and permit issuance for interior renovations. There's no additional cost for this service.

Are there any restrictions?

It's limited to business/office and mercantile occupancies with a maximum square footage.

Where can I get more information?

Contact the Sarasota County Permitting Center at **941-861-6678**.

ZONING

Change in use

Call Zoning through the Sarasota County Contact Center at **941-861-5000** before signing a lease to determine if the zoning is appropriate.

Parking

Call Zoning at **941-861-5000** to determine parking requirements, which typically won't change unless the new use is of a more intensive nature than the previous use.

Restaurant and/or liquor license

Contact Zoning at **941-861-5000** for information regarding license sign-off.

SIGNAGE AND BANNERS

Do I need a temporary use permit for a banner?

Yes. Contact Zoning at **941-861-5000** for additional requirements.

When can banners be used?

A banner may be issued under a temporary use permit, with approval of the zoning administrator, to announce special events at local businesses, in addition to grand openings. These banners may be approved for up to a two-week period. A single banner can be up to 32 square feet, or a maximum of two banners can be 16 square feet each.

What do I need to do for a sign?

Permits are required for all signs. A permit is not required for performing general maintenance/repair to window signs. A licensed contractor is required for any sign-related work. Contact Zoning at **941-861-5000** for clarification on requirements.

STREET VENDORS

Street-vendor permits are issued annually for conducting business on public rights-of-way and/or publicly owned property with approval of the County Commission. Street-vendor permits are also allowed on privately owned property within these zoning designations: Commercial General (CG), Industrial Light Warehousing (ILW) and Planned Industrial Development (PID). Contact Zoning for clarification on permitting/licensing requirements.

Also required

- Business tax (page 14)
- Annual temporary-use permits (page 8)
- Licenses to sell food (page 10)

TEMPORARY-USE PERMITS

When do I need a temporary-use permit?

Temporary-use permits are required for events with activities that will extend beyond the confines of the business. Properties are allowed four temporary-use permits per calendar year.

IMPACT FEES

Will I have to pay impact fees on a tenant space?

- Contact the Impact Fee Administrator at **941-861-5000** when you're considering a tenant space. Staff will calculate any impact fees that may be required for the proposed project.
- Fees for re-occupying a tenant space will be applicable if there is an increase in the intensity of a use or gross floor area.
- Most construction resulting in a net increase in the amount of enclosed floor area will require fees for the additional area.
- Most new shell buildings have fully paid impact fees for all tenants, but older buildings may not. Contact staff for any first-time occupancy.

LAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

When is site and development approval needed?

Site and development approval may be required for construction or work on a site, such as enlarging or adding a structure, or changing parking, stormwater drainage or access.

Where can I get more information?

Contact Land and Development Services at **941-861-5000**, or email **LandDev@scgov.net** for applications and forms.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Environmental Protection Division reviews proposals for consistency with Sarasota County's natural resource standards for native habitats, trees and wildlife. It also includes construction along the Gulf of Mexico and bays, creeks and canals, activities along the Myakka River, and general earthmoving, stockpiling, filling and excavating. Additional permits or other approvals may be required. Environmental Protection Division staff also work to eliminate pollution in the environment. Contact staff for information about potentially contaminated sites, concerns about pollution (water, soil, air, asbestos, etc.), and related issues.

How do I determine if I need a permit or variance?

Contact Environmental Protection Division staff early in the planning stage to determine if natural resource standards apply to your business or project. For more information, contact an environmental specialist through the Sarasota County Contact Center at **941-861-5000**.

FLOOD RISK PREVENTION REQUIREMENTS

Any construction, improvements or developments in designated high-risk flood zones are subject to flood risk prevention requirements.

Where do I get more information?

Contact the county certified floodplain manager at **941-380-5029** before applying for building permits or for additional information.

LICENSES TO SELL FOOD

(See street vendors page 8)

What kind of license do I need to sell food?

Three Florida agencies issue licenses, depending on the type of food and service:

- Department of Business and Professional Regulations
 - restaurants, mobile food vehicles, caterers and public food service events. Contact: **850-487-1395**
- The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 - wholesalers and food retailers, including grocery and convenience stores, gas stations, food manufacturing or processing plants, food warehouses, bakeries and fish and meat markets. Contact: **800-435-7352**
- The Department of Health
 - food service operations located in institutional settings (such as schools, assisted living facilities, detention facilities, day care centers, etc.); civic and fraternal organizations, and bars and lounges that do not prepare foods. Contact: **941-861-6133**

This list is not all inclusive. Please contact each state agency directly to review the regulations pertinent to your business. These items are offered only as examples of services for which you need a public food service license.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT PERMITS

The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) provides a variety of public health services. Here are a few of the frequently asked questions.

Biomedical waste operating permit

Who needs a biomedical waste permit?

A healthcare facility must apply for a permit. Service providers/facilities include: dentists, medical doctors, osteopaths, surgery centers, walk-in-clinics, hospitals, veterinarians, podiatrists, clinics, labs, home health agencies, abortion clinics, blood banks, nursing homes, tattoo and body-piercing artists, dialysis clinics and acupuncturists.

Sarasota: **941-861-6133**

Venice: **941-861-3310**

Body-piercing/tattoo license

A license is required to operate a body-piercing or tattoo business.

Sarasota: **941-861-6133**

Venice: **941-861-3310**

Group care facilities

What do I need to do to open a group care facility?

A license is required to operate group care facilities such as adult family care homes, assisted living facilities and child care facilities—including group care offered in your home.

Contact DOH-Sarasota for more information:

Sarasota: **941-861-6133**

Venice: **941-861-3310**

Septic systems

Who regulates septic systems?

The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota), Environmental Health division, issues permits for new systems, replacement systems and additions to septic systems. The department also evaluates existing systems for compliance with local and state laws and ordinances.

Environmental Health conducts plan reviews, permitting and field inspections for new, repaired or modified septic systems. The department also regulates septic-tank contractors, septic-disposal-service companies, portable-toilet-service companies and septic systems serving industrial/commercial properties.

For additional information, contact the DOH-Sarasota Environmental Health division:

Sarasota: **941-861-6133**

Venice: **941-861-3310**

When do I need a system evaluation?

An evaluation usually is conducted when a business plans to move into a building served by a septic system. The evaluation will determine if the system can handle the flow that will be generated by the establishment. A new business that's served by a septic system can get information on sizing requirements by calling the Environmental Health division of DOH-Sarasota:

Sarasota: **941-861-6133**

Venice: **941-861-3310**

The Sarasota County Building Department normally sends septic system applications to DOH-Sarasota for review.

Water wells

Who regulates water wells?

The Environmental Health division of DOH-Sarasota reviews, issues permits and inspects the construction of all new public supply, domestic, irrigation and monitor wells, along with well repairs and abandonments. The department also evaluates existing wells for compliance with local and state laws and ordinances.

Contact the Sarasota office at **941-861-6133** or the Venice office at **941-861-3310**.

Public Swimming Pools

An annual operating permit is required from the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County. Contact **941-861-6133** or **941-861-3310** for more information.

Utility connections

How do I arrange for utility connections and billing?

- If a business plans to connect to a central utility or if it is re-occupying an existing site on central water, contact Sarasota County Public Utilities for more information:

Phone: **941-861-6790**

Email: **utilitybill@scgov.net**

- If a business will use an on-site well or is reoccupying an existing site with an on-site well, it should contact DOH-Sarasota at **941-861-6133**.

GARBAGE/RECYCLING SERVICE

County staff can help you select the optimum service level that is right for you by calling **941-861-5000** and asking for Solid Waste.

How do I schedule garbage service?

Garbage service is provided under a county franchise agreement with Waste Management. To schedule trash collections, contact Waste Management at **941-493-4100**. Rates are established by the county. **bizhelp@scgov.net**.

How do I schedule recycling service?

Commercial recycling is not franchised. For a list of companies serving the county call **941-861-5000** and ask to speak to the Recycling Coordinator. You can also visit the county's website at **scgov.net**, keyword search Commercial Recycling.

How can I get more information?

County staff can help you select the optimum service level that is right for you. Call **941-861-5000** and ask for Solid Waste.

HAZARDOUS AND SPECIAL WASTE SERVICES

Sarasota County Solid Waste provides businesses with environmental regulatory and compliance assistance. These services include evaluations of hazardous or special wastes that require specific regulatory attention. Sarasota County Solid Waste also provides options for disposal and/or recycling of these wastes to meet proper disposal requirements. Certain businesses that generate hazardous and special wastes may qualify for Project Green Sweep. Project Green Sweep provides Sarasota County businesses with a responsible, cost-effective method to properly dispose of small quantities of hazardous and regulated wastes that are banned from landfill disposal in Sarasota County.

How can I get more information?

Contact the County Hazardous Waste Management Office at **941-861-1531** or visit **scgov.net**, keyword search Project Green Sweep.

BUSINESS TAX

Where can I get information?

Contact the Tax Collector's office

PHONE: **941-861-8300, option 3**

WEBSITE: **SarasotaTaxCollector.com**

HOURS: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday;
8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday

The business tax is required if you are engaging in or managing a business, profession or occupation. It is in addition to any other fees paid to operate a business.

Businesses located in a city may be required to pay a city business tax in addition to the county tax. Check with the cities for their requirements:

North Port: **941-429-7000**

Sarasota: **941-954-4186**

Venice: **941-486-2626**

Longboat Key: **941-316-1999**

SALES TAX

How can I register my business?

Department of Revenue (Sales Tax Number)

1991 Main St., Suite 240, Sarasota

PHONE: **941-361-6001, 800-352-3671**

WEBSITE: **myflorida.com/dor**

BUSINESS TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY

When and where do I need to file?

Tangible personal property tax returns (DR-405) must be filed annually for each business location by April 1 with the Property Appraiser's office. Filed returns qualify taxpayers for exemptions up to \$25,000 for the tangible property of the business. After the initial filing, businesses that have filed and have a just value of \$25,000 or less are waived from future filing unless their just value increases to more than \$25,000.

Where can I get more information?

Contact the Property Appraiser's office

HOURS: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-861-8200**

WEBSITE: **SC-PA.com**

SARASOTA COUNTY CONTACTS

For additional information about Doing Business in Sarasota County, contact the Sarasota County Contact Center at **941-861-5000** from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Building/Permitting Centers

LOCATION: Sarasota - 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd.
Venice - 4000 S. Tamiami Trail

HOURS: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Wednesday and Friday
7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Thursday

PHONE: Sarasota - **941-861-6678**
Venice - **941-861-3029**

Certified Floodplain Manager

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-380-5029**

Code Enforcement

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-861-5000**

Department of Health (Florida DOH in Sarasota County)

LOCATION: Sarasota - 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd.
Venice - 4000 S. Tamiami Trail

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: Sarasota - **941-861-6133**
Venice - **941-861-3310**

EMAIL: **DOHSarasotaInfo@FLHealth.gov**

Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota Site Selection Assistance

LOCATION: 1680 Fruitville Road, Suite 402, Sarasota

PHONE: **941-309-1200**

WEBSITE: **edcsarasotacounty.com**

Environmental Protection Division

LOCATION: Sarasota - 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd.
 Venice - 4000 S. Tamiami Trail

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-861-5000**

Fire Marshal

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-861-2290**

Land Development Services

LOCATION: 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-861-5000**

Planning Services

LOCATION: 1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

PHONE: **941-861-5000**

Procurement Office

LOCATION: 1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota

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

PHONE: **941-861-5000**

WEBSITE: **scgov.net**, keyword search Procurement

EMAIL: **business@scgov.net**

Property Appraiser

LOCATION: Sarasota - 2001 Adams Lane
 Venice - 4000 S. Tamiami Trail
 North Port - 4970 City Hall Blvd.

HOURS: Sarasota and Venice - 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
 Monday through Friday
 North Port - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday

PHONE: **941-861-8200**

WEBSITE: **SC-PA.com**

Public Utilities

LOCATION: 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., Sarasota
HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Wednesday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
PHONE: **941-861-6790**
EMAIL: **utilitybill@scgov.net**

Tax Collector

LOCATION: Downtown Sarasota - 101 S. Washington Blvd.
South Sarasota - 8484 S. Tamiami Trail
Venice - 4000 S. Tamiami Trail
North Port - 4970 City Hall Blvd.
HOURS: Downtown Sarasota, South Sarasota and Venice -
8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday;
8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday
North Port - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday
PHONE: **941-861-8300, option 3**
WEBSITE: **SarasotaTaxCollector.com**

Waste Management of Sarasota County (contracted vendor)

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
PHONE: **941-493-4100**
WEBSITE: **WM.com**

STATE OF FLORIDA CONTACTS

Department of Business and Professional Regulations

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday
PHONE: **850-487-1395**
WEBSITE: **myfloridalicense.com**

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

HOURS: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
PHONE: **800-435-7352**
WEBSITE: **FreshFromFlorida.com**

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INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC
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DOING BUSINESS
IN SARASOTA COUNTY


Sarasota County

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Sarasota County

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District 3 Commissioner
Vice Chair

Michael A. Moran

District 1 Commissioner

Alan Maio

District 4 Commissioner

Charles D. Hines

District 5 Commissioner

**OFFICE OF
BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**For more information
Visit: scgov.net
Call: 941-861-5247
Email: bizhelp@scgov.net**