

BUSINESS LICENSING AND REGULATION

As discussed in the introduction to this report, the Better Together Economic Development Study is focused on examining the impact that St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and county municipalities have on our regional economy. A topic that was of high importance to the small business community is the service and regulatory environment. Many business owners and entrepreneurs provided feedback on the service aspect of their relationship with the City, County, or municipality. This information is noted in the community feedback section of this study and will be further examined in future studies on those particular services, such as public safety and infrastructure.

However, the most prominent aspect of early discussions with business owners, entrepreneurs, and merchant groups was the regulatory environment, specifically licensing regulations and permitting. As this issue was a prevalent topic throughout the community, Better Together compiled the basic information for obtaining a permit and opening a business in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and its 90 municipalities. The compiled data is included in this report and is also available at www.bettertogetherstl.com.

It is important to note that this information was not compiled to compare municipalities to one another. Rather, it was meant to take a look at the number of similarities and differences that are present in the regulation of businesses throughout our region. As you can see, there are differences in permits required, costs, required paperwork, online availability, and the organization responsible for carrying out inspections. Similarly, the experiences of business owners was just as varied. However, two elements emerged as the key factors in determining whether starting a business was a positive or negative experience: clarity and certainty. Business owners, whether operating in the City of St. Louis, unincorporated St. Louis County, or a municipality, expressed either their gratitude for the clear requirements that were provided or their frustration over the lack of the same.

Specific examples of positive experiences included the online availability of requirements and forms, as well as a direct contact for questions. Business owners expressed appreciation for online access to these resources because it allowed them to complete much of the paperwork outside of business hours and reduced the trips required during the work day. Conversely, frustrations were expressed at the lack of available online resources, lack of clear requirements, and multiple trips required in some cases to multiple offices. In the City of St. Louis, one business owner recounted his frustration with the lack of communication between the License Collector's Office and the Collector of Revenue's Office. Upon further examination, because St. Louis is a city-not-within-a-county and its charter is 100 years old, the License Collector and the Collector of Revenue are each independent elected officials and have no obligation to share data, staff or even philosophy. This underlying structure spawns many of the problems the business owners described. This disconnect creates an obstacle and confusion, leaving individuals uncertain and frustrated.

In addition to the individual frustrations that are present in the current structure, the presence of such a wide variety of licensing regulations, governing bodies, and inspectors is in itself an issue. First, it can add difficulty to operating more than one business. Most owners we spoke with

shared that if they had to open a second business, it would be so much simpler having gone through the process and knowing who to contact. The issue with the current structure in the region is that is only true in some cases where the second business is located in the same city as the first. Government should make starting a business as easy as possible; the current structure lends itself to uncertainty and the absence of specific, commonly known requirements for establishing a business in the St. Louis region is problematic.

This issue is magnified when approaching it from the standpoint of making St. Louis more attractive to immigrants. St. Louis continues to see neighborhoods revitalized and business districts thriving as the result of immigration. The Mosaic Project and the International Institute of St. Louis are pivotal to an increase in immigration. In a short time, the Mosaic Project has dramatically increased St. Louis' marketing as a destination for immigrants. Similarly, the International Institute has assisted thousands of immigrants in gaining employment, accessing loans to start businesses, and acclimating to a new country. Simple changes can be made to help support their efforts to attract and retain immigrants including altering the complex scheme of starting a business here.

As part of Better Together's outreach on this topic, interpreters were paired with research fellows as they canvassed Spanish-speaking business owners on Cherokee Street, Chinese entrepreneurs on Olive Street, and African business owners in the region. In addition, the International Institute provided further connections to other immigrant business owners who were interviewed. These conversations served to emphasize the importance of a straightforward and more uniform regulatory environment for businesses in our region. For example, several owners described the difficulty of passing along first-hand knowledge of the process of starting a business to others because many lived in different municipalities and under different rules and requirements. They explained that this was especially frustrating given the added difficulty of navigating such a nuanced process with a limited ability to speak English.

SUGGESTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Over the past months, Better Together's Economic Development Committee has walked through myriad regulations and requirements for starting a business. It is apparent that the procedures and regulations are confusing to many business owners. As one owner shared, "a person shouldn't feel like they need to have an MBA to start a business in our region." The frustration in that statement is a common sentiment shared across the region. Starting a business can be confusing and it is certainly a challenge, but as a region we should work to reduce unnecessary barriers. We have several possible scenarios that we feel would do just that.

First, St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and the 90 county municipalities would be well served to collaborate on ways in which to streamline and make the process for starting a business more universal in our region. Given the fragmentation in the St. Louis region, we also have intermediate steps for regional improvement.

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians has recognized the complexity of starting a business, particularly in a new city. To address this, they have created a "How to Start a Business" resource center on their website. An entrepreneur can go to this site and select a short ten-page guide on requirements for the type of business they would like to start and the location

where they would like to open the business. Each of these resources also provides the key points of contact and identifies common pitfalls to avoid. Finally, there is also a guide available that provides resources and information on how a merchant can protect his business and who to contact for common issues. All of these resources are available at <http://www.welcomingcenter.org/immigrants/start-business> or www.bettertogetherstl.com.

Resources like those available at The Welcoming Center serve two purposes. They provide a blueprint for the St. Louis region, but they also offer a warning. Other cities are competing for entrepreneurs and immigrants. The regions that grow will do so because of their willingness and ability to implement business-friendly practices. We must not simply try to measure up to other regions. We must surpass them.

A simple step would be for every municipality to provide checklists for starting a business. These resources could be modeled after the materials produced by The Welcoming Center. The checklists could be improved further if they were also provided in Bosnian, Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese. We must become the region that other cities want to emulate when looking to create a welcoming, business-friendly community for residents, whether they have lived here their whole lives or have recently arrived from other countries. Providing resources that support business owners and provide clarity is a necessary first step.

Municipality	Municipality Website Business Information	Is a business license required? Where do you apply for a business license?	Is there a business license fee?	Does the business license have to be renewed? If so, how often?	Is a commercial occupancy permit required? If different from location of business license application, where can it be applied for?	Is there a commercial occupancy permit fee?	Is a picture ID required? (Y/N)	Is a copy of signed lease or settlement required? (Y/N)	Is a building inspection required? (Y/N, Agency, and Fee)	Is a fire inspection required? (Y/N including location)	Is a copy of Missouri sales tax I.D. required? (Y/N)	Is a copy of Missouri Certificate of No Tax Due required? (Y/N)	Is verification of registration required? (Y/N)	Is a separate letter to describing the business required? (Y/N)	Is a layout and/or site plan of space to scale required? (Y/N)	Is an emergency contact form required? (Y/N including location)	Is a letter of intent required? (Y/N)	Is a liquor license required?	Notes
Ballwin	http://www.ballwin.mo.us/for-business/	Refer to finance department	Yes, \$1 for every \$1,000 in gross receipts	Annually, with \$100 minimum charge.	Yes	\$15	No											Required if serving liquor	Most forms not available online because they want to help with everything. Sign permits required for external signage. Inspections and occupancy permits are also required.
Bel-Nor		Yes, forms not available online	\$100 unless you are considered a merchant then it is \$1 per \$1,000 in gross receipts	Annually, with \$100 minimum charge or \$1 per \$1,000 merchant fee	Yes	Discussed at meeting													Applicant must contact City Hall to set up a meeting to discuss getting a business license.
Bel-Ridge	http://bel-ridge.us/?page_id=183	Yes, application online	Fee varies depending on business type	Annually	Yes						Yes	Yes	Yes						
Bella Villa																			
Bellefontaine Neighbors					Yes	\$30	Yes												
Bellerive																			
Berkeley	http://www.cityofberkeley.us/index.aspx?nid=146																		
Beverly Hills																			
Black Jack	http://www.cityofblackjack.com/1417EB1ad81shing-a-Business	Yes	Fee varies depending on business type. \$30 Home Businesses, \$60 for offices, \$60 for manufacturing, \$60 for retailers	Annually, renewal fee is the same as licensing fee	Yes	\$50			Yes									Required if serving liquor	Also requires STL County health inspection for food service. Sign permits required for external signage. Forms for all licenses and permits are not kept online.
Breckenridge Hills		Yes, application available at City Hall	Fee based on gross sales receipts (no home offices)	Annually	Yes		Yes	Yes	No	Yes, local fire district performs inspection.									STL County for health inspections.
Brentwood	https://www.brentwoodmo.org/index.aspx?nid=20	Yes, available online	Costs depend on business type. Retail and restaurants are \$1.25 per \$1,000 in gross receipts. Office and manufacturers are \$0.10 per square foot. Banks are \$100-\$3,000	Annually	Yes	\$30 permit fee, \$30 inspection fee				Yes	Yes								Contact Barb Cross for more information if needed
Bridgeton	http://www.bridgetonmo.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=838	Yes		Annually	Yes					Yes	Yes								
Calverton Park																			
Champ																			
Charlack																			
Chesterfield	http://www.chesterfield.mo.us/opening-a-business.html	Yes, available online	Fee Per Square Foot: Retail - \$0.08 Service/Office - \$0.04 Manufacturing/Warehouse - \$0.02	Annually	Yes	Yes, price varies.				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					Required if serving liquor	Signage license and fee may apply
Clarkson Valley	http://www.clarksonvalley.org/business%20license.htm	Yes, available online	\$75	Annually, renewal fee is the same as licensing fee															
Clayton	http://www.claytonmo.gov/government/Departments/Planning_Development_Services/Clayton%20Your_Business_in_Clayton.htm	Yes, forms not available online		Annually	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					Required if serving liquor	All businesses with a sign will require a sign license.
Cool Valley																			
Country Club Hills	http://countryclubhills.org/business/business-license	Yes	\$40	Annually	Yes														
Country Life Acres																			
Crestwood	http://ci.crestwood.mo.us/yourtempite.com/pdfs/%20NE%20Business%20Flow%20Chart.pdf	Yes	Depends on the business	Annually	Yes	\$125					Yes	Yes	Yes						
Creve Coeur	http://www.crevecoeur.org/index.aspx?nid=77	Yes, all forms online	\$30 per 1,000 square feet. Minimum \$40 and maximum \$1,000	Annually, if strict late penalties are applied	Yes	\$65	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes						Required if serving liquor	
Crystal Lake Park		No business licenses required	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No business licenses needed
Dellwood	http://cityofdellwoodmo.com/35/Business	Yes, forms available online	\$1.25 per \$1,000 in gross receipts	Annually	Yes	\$75				Yes	Yes	Yes						Required if serving liquor	Sign permit \$50. There is also an extra \$50 charge for "saloons"
Des Peres	http://mo-desperes3.civicplus.com/index.aspx?nid=113	Yes, forms available online	Retail/Sales - \$1.25 per \$1,000 in gross receipts (\$100 minimum); Office and Manufacturing - \$0.20 per square foot	Annually	Yes	\$50												Required if serving liquor	Must submit license and permit together.
Edmundson																			
Ellisville	http://www.ellisville.mo.us/index.asp?TYPE=B_BASIC&SEC=1E3C098F-E650-4292-A7A4-5C7C24792933&DEF	Yes, forms available online	\$0.50 per \$1,000 in gross receipts. Home businesses are \$25 per year.	Annually	Yes														Must also have inspection done
Eureka	http://www.eureka.mo.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Eureka_Business_License_Application_2014.pdf	Yes, forms available online	\$25 per year (pro-rated after June)	Annually	Yes				Yes, Ferguson Fire Department performs inspections		Yes	Yes						Required if serving liquor	Sign permit required for external signage.
Fenton	http://www.fentonmo.org/index.aspx?nid=35	None required	N/A	N/A	St. Louis County - see Fenton website first for form (usually commercial re-occupancy permit)	\$50			Yes, Fenton Fire Protection District performs inspections					Yes	Yes, Available through St. Louis County Police and Fenton District.	Yes	Available through City Clerk	Per phone call March 12: There is no business license required in Fenton, however, an occupancy permit must be applied for and obtained. The occupancy permits are obtained from St. Louis County and inspections are completed by the Fenton Fire Protection District	

Municipality	Municipality Website - Business Information	Is a business license required? Where do you apply for a business license?	Is there a business license fee?	Does the business license have to be renewed? If so, how often?	Is a commercial occupancy permit required? If different from location of business license application, where can it be applied for?	Is there a commercial occupancy permit fee?	Is a picture ID required? (Y/N)	Is a copy of signed lease or settlement required? (Y/N)	Is a building inspection required? (Y/N, Agency, and Fee)	Is a fire inspection required? (Y/N including location)	Is a copy of Missouri sales tax I.D. required? (Y/N)	Is a copy of Missouri Certificate of No Tax Due required? (Y/N)	Is verification of registration required? (Y/N)	Is a separate letter to describing the business required? (Y/N)	Is a layout and/or site plan of space to scale required? (Y/N)	Is an emergency contact form required? (Y/N including location)	Is a letter of intent required? (Y/N)	Is a liquor license required?	Notes
Ferguson	http://www.fergusonmo.gov/124/Starting-locating-a-business	Yes. Available through Finance Department - City Collector	\$30 - \$50,000	Annually	Yes. Available through Public Works-Inspection Department	\$100	Yes	Yes		Yes. Ferguson Fire Department performs inspections	Yes				Yes			Available through City Clerk	
Floridell Hills		Yes. Available through City Clerk.	\$50		Yes. Available through City Clerk	\$75		Yes		Inspection required, fee \$100. Who performs inspection was not specified.			Yes	Yes				Available through City Clerk	First step is board (council) approval. Once approval is obtained, paperwork can be started.
Florissant	http://www.florissantmo.com/topic7/topicid=195	Yes. Available through Florissant Business Licenses (via Finance Department)	Based on gross receipts, but new businesses may pay the minimum of \$25 for first year or estimate first year sales	Annually	Yes. Available through Florissant Finance Department													Available through City Clerk	Website lists Public Works Department for occupancy permit, however, the Finance Department handles everything to do with business licensing. All applications may be picked up at Florissant City Hall on 955 Rue St Francois
Frontenac	http://www.cityoffrontenac.org/index.php?id=80	Yes	Varies by business, minimum of \$100	Calendar year (1 January - 31 December)	Yes. Available through Public Works Department														
Glen Echo Park		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Village clerk returned call on 28 March - municipality is all residential; there are no business licenses.
Glendale	http://www.glendalemo.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3392&Itemid=6	Yes. Available through City Clerk (combined application: business/occupancy license)	Minimum of \$25		Yes. Available through St. Louis County	\$126													Special note - zoning review is required. Business license and occupancy permit are on the same application.
Grantwood Village	http://www.grantwoodvillage.org/2012/06/20/resident-information/																		
Green Park		N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes. Available through St. Louis County via Green Park City Hall (only after zoning approval)	\$126				Yes. Mehlville Fire Protection District performs inspection								Available through City Clerk	Green Park contracts with St. Louis County for all inspections (fire safety inspection excluded). Zoning approval must be obtained prior to applying for an occupancy permit via City Clerk: zpoep@cityofgreenpark.com or 314.894.7336
Greendale		Yes. Available through City Clerk			\$25	\$100													
Hanley Hills		Yes. Available through Village Hall (questions via email are directed to the Village Finance Office: vhfinanceofficer@yahoo.com)	Yes, based on Gross Fees: x \$2.00 Gross Sales Made, x \$1.00 Gross Wholesale Sales, x \$3.00 Gross Retail Sales = Total Amount Due	All applications (2014-2015 due April 1st 2014, penalty of \$500 applies for businesses that do not have application completed and submitted on time)	Yes but it is a combined business and commercial occupancy permit	N/A	Y (Driver's License or State ID)		Y (Hanley Hills Building Inspection - Fee \$100)		N (Number is required, on application)	Yes						Available through Village Hall	Potential Business owners must go to Village Hall in order to begin process and to receive packet. ***No home-based business permitted in Hanley Hills.
Hazelwood	http://www.hazelwoodmo.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/HW20090200blanz0a20BusinessLicense.pdf	Yes. Available through Finance Department			Yes. Available through Finance Department													Available through City Clerk	
Hillsdale																			
Huntleigh		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				N/A					N/A	N/A		N/A	Town is all residential
Jennings	http://www.cityofjennings.org/collector.html	Yes. Available through City Collector	Yes. Minimum \$15	1 July - 30 June														Available through City Collector	
Kinloch																			
Kirkwood	http://www.kirkwoodmo.org/content/Forms-Business/2350/forms-of-opening-a-business-in-kirkwood.aspx	Yes. Available through Finance Department	Varies	Calendar year (1 January - 31 December)	Yes. Available through Building Commissioner													Available through Finance Department	
Ladue	http://www.cityofladue-mo.gov/Licenses.aspx	Yes. Available through Finance Department	Minimum \$50	Calendar year (1 January - 31 December)	Finance Department/City Hall	\$0												Finance Department	
Lakeshire																			
Mackenzie																			
Manchester	http://www.manchestermo.gov/vertical/sites/%7B6F338B65-52E2-41A2-BED8-05DD42A9F263%7D/uploads/2014_Business_License_Application_Service.pdf	Yes. Available through Finance Department	Minimum \$50	Calendar year (1 January - 31 December)	N/A	N/A	No	No		Yes. West County EMS performs inspections	Yes		No		No	Yes. Available through Manchester Police Department	No	Available through City Clerk	
Maplewood	www.cityofmaplewood.com/businesses	Yes. Available through City Clerk	Varies	1 July - 30 June	Yes. The City Clerk will coordinate the inspection with the Building Official.	No	Yes	No	Yes, the City Clerk will coordinate this with the Building Official	Yes. The Building Official is the Fire Marshal and will handle the fire inspection.	Yes	Yes	Yes	The business description is part of the application. If a business needs a conditional use permit, a marketing plan is also required.	If a buildout of the space is required, then the City requires a layout and site plan. This is handled through the Building Official.	Yes.	No.	If the business plans to sell liquor	The City Clerk (314) 646-3604 handles the business license application but the Community Development Director (314) 646-3607 will assist and guide the business through the municipal process.
Marlborough		Yes. Available through Village Clerk	\$50	Annually	Yes. Available through St. Louis County after zoning approval via Marlborough Village	\$126									Only if changes will be made			Available through Village Clerk	No information on village website. Village Clerk is available for assistance and can be contacted at 314.962.5055 (Joy Porter Drennan).
Maryland Heights	http://www.marylandheights.com/m96x.aspx?page=206	Yes. Available through City Clerk	Minimum of \$25	Annually - NLT 30 June	Yes. Available through Building and Code Enforcement Division	Minimum of \$100					Yes			Yes		Yes. Available through Maryland Heights Police Department		Available through City Clerk	

