

New Business Guide

Doing Business in Ridgeland, SC



Town of Ridgeland

One Town Square | P.O. Box 1119
Ridgeland, South Carolina 29936

www.ridgeland.gov | 843.726.7500

Letter from the Town Administrator

Welcome to Ridgeland. We are committed to making Ridgeland a special community to live in, work in or visit. You will enjoy the friendliness and strong sense of community that is found in a small town coupled with the benefits of a growing, thriving city. Whether you're at our annual 4th of July fireworks display, Gopher Hill Festival in October or our annual Christmas parade and tree lighting, you will find our residents to be warm and friendly.

Ridgeland is ideally located just seconds off of Interstate 95 and has three exits (18, 21 and 22), CSX rail connectivity and is home to the newly constructed Ridgeland-Claude Dean Airport, which will boast a 4,300 foot runway, new terminal and hangars. Ridgeland is centrally located 25 minutes from Savannah to the South and approximately 1 hour twenty minutes from Charleston to the North. We are 30 minutes away from the beaches of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort, and we have numerous boat ramps that open up opportunities for fishing and recreational boating. We have two business parks which have water/sewer hookups, as well as natural gas. Oh, and did I mention we are only 25 minutes away from the future Jasper Ocean Terminal (JOT)? Ridgeland is an excellent base for manufacturing/export focused companies due to its close proximity to existing and future port facilities, and relatively inexpensive commercial property.

As the Town Administrator, I am committed to doing whatever it takes to foster a favorable economic climate and ensure prompt and courteous service by the town so that your business may grow, flourish and become an integral part of Ridgeland.

The town staff is willing and equipped to help you and your business with any problems or issues that may arise pertaining to the services we offer, from utilities to permits, licensing and more.

On behalf of the Town of Ridgeland, I would like to extend a warm welcome as you embark on your new business venture and let you know how appreciative I am that you have chosen Ridgeland as your place of business. In addition, I am always interested in your input. If you have any questions or issues that you would like to discuss, don't hesitate to pick up a phone and call me at 843.726.7500 or email me at: daverkin@ridgelandsc.gov

Sincerely,

Dennis E. Averkin
Town Administrator

Contents

- **Important Contact pg. 5-6**
 - **Town Hall pg. 5**
 - **Business and Trademarks pg. 5**
 - **Incorporation pg. 5**
 - **Hotels, Motels, Extended Stays, Bed and Breakfasts pg. 5**
 - **Alcohol pg. 5**
 - **Tobacco pg. 6**
 - **Restaurants, Grocery Stores, Convenience Stores pg. 6**
 - **Mobile Businesses, Street Vendors pg. 6**
 - **Contractors pg. 6**
 - **Construction Permits pg. 6**
 - **Certificate of Occupancy pg. 6**
 - **Fire and Security Alarms pg. 6**
- **New Business Checklist pg. 6-7**
- **Business Resource Guide pg. 8-10**

Important Contacts

Whom and how to contact them throughout the process.

Town Hall

One Town Square,

Ridgeland South Carolina, 29936

Contact: (843) 726-7500, or visit www.ridgelandsc.gov

Business and Trademarks

Prior to any publicizing and circulating the name of your business and/or graphics, check the name's availability with the South Carolina Secretary of State to assure it is not already in use in the State of South Carolina. To trademark the name, you must register it with the Secretary of State's Trademarks Division.

Contact: Call (803) 734-0629, or visit www.scsos.com

Incorporation

To incorporate your business, contact the South Carolina Secretary of State.

Contact: Call (803) 734-2158, or visit www.scsos.com

If your business sells items at the retail level, it must obtain a retail license and collect and remit sales tax to the South Carolina Department of Revenue.

Contact: Call (803) 898-5000, or visit www.sctax.org

Hotels, Motels, Extended Stays, Bed and Breakfasts

If your business rents accommodation's, including vacation homes, for fewer than 90 consecutive days to the same customer, you must collect and remit a 7% sales tax on accommodations and 6% sales tax on additional services to the South Carolina Department of Revenue. **Additionally, there is a 3% local accommodations tax that is paid to the Town of Ridgeland.**

Contact: Visit www.sctax.org and <https://www.ridgelandsc.gov/executive-department/town-clerk/>

If your business sells or serves alcohol, it must obtain a permit from the South Carolina Department of Revenue's Alcohol Beverage Licensing section. If your business serves alcohol by the drink, you must also collect and remit a liquor by the drink tax.

Contact: Call (803) 898-5864, or visit www.sctax.org

Tobacco

If your business sells tobacco products, you must obtain a license from the South Carolina Department of Revenue.

Contact: (803) 896 1970, or visit www.sctax.org

Restaurants, Grocery Stores, Convenience Stores

If your business handles food it must first obtain a license from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control prior to operation. **Additionally, there is a 2% Local Hospitality Tax for prepared food that is remitted to the Town of Ridgeland.**

Contact: <https://www.ridgelandsc.gov/pdfs/A-Tax-Form-and-Ordinance-2017.pdf>

Mobile Businesses, Street Vendors

Must apply for and receive approval from the Town's Planning Department before applying for a Town of Ridgeland Business License.

Contact: (843) 726-7521

Contractors

Must possess a South Carolina General Contractor's License or Home Builders License from the South Carolina Contractor Licensing Board before applying for a Town of Ridgeland building permit.

Contact: Residential-(803) 896-4694, or Commercial-(803) 896-4686, or visit www.llronline.com

Construction Permits

Prior to any demolition or construction of real property, permits must be obtained from the Town. A full description of all documents required can be found at:

<https://www.ridgelandsc.gov/planning-and-community-development/building-permits-forms>

Contact: (843) 726-7521

Certificate of Occupancy

Businesses located within the City limits must be inspected and receive a Certificate of Occupancy from the Town before receiving a Business License, or before opening the premises to the general public.

Contact: (843) 726-7521

Fire and Security Alarms:

Must be registered with the Town of Ridgeland's Fire & Police Department.

Contact: (843) 726-7500

New Business Checklist

STEP 1: ZONING COMPLIANCE. Before signing a lease or purchase agreement, the business owner should verify the Town of Town of Ridgeland's zoning requirements for the proposed location. Prior to occupying any building (new or existing), **the business owner must obtain a Commercial Zoning Compliance Letter to ensure the business is properly zoned and permitted to operate at the proposed location.** If the applicant will be making structural changes to an existing building (additions, modifications, etc.), these changes should also be included on the application form. If the applicant will be constructing a new building, the Commercial Zoning Compliance process will also cover zoning review of the new structure and accompanying site plan. Once the Zoning Compliance Form has been reviewed, town staff will contact the applicant with a notice of approval or denial. Appeals may be submitted to the Town of Ridgeland Board of Zoning Appeals. There is a one-time fee for planning and zoning review, which may be paid at the time the permit is issued. For more information, please contact the Planning Department at (843) 726-7521.

STEP 2: FIRE MARSHAL INSPECTION. The Town of Ridgeland's Fire Department will offer a free safety inspection to any prospective business owner that intends to occupy an existing building within the town limits. The safety inspection will identify any visible code violations, fire safety issues, and possible life safety concerns. Town building staff will also provide guidance to the prospective business owner regarding recommended repairs, improvements and/or modifications to improve safety and streamline the permitting process. Please note that this courtesy inspection is not intended to serve as a replacement for a comprehensive building inspection performed by a certified professional. To schedule a free safety inspection, please contact the Ridgeland Fire Department at (843) 726-7522 or email the Fire Marshal at catwood@ridgelandsc.gov

STEP 3: BUILDING PERMIT. All new construction, additions, demolition, and/or modifications to existing buildings and building systems will require a building permit from the Town of Ridgeland. Business owners should contact the Town of Town of Ridgeland's Building Department to determine if a permit is required prior to commencing any work. Building permit applications must be submitted in person at Town of Ridgeland Town Hall, One Town Square,

Ridgeland SC 29936. A full list of commercial building permit requirements can be found here: <https://www.ridgelandsc.gov/planning-and-community-development/building-permits-forms>

Only the building owner or licensed contractor (if using a contractor) may obtain a building permit. The building permit fees are based on the value of the work to be performed. All new permits will also be subject to a plan review fee, which shall be equal to fifty percent (50%) of the building permit fee. Fees may be paid at the time a permit is issued. Once the building permit application has been reviewed, a member of the Building Department staff will contact the applicant with a notice of approval or denial. **Please note that the penalty for working without a permit is \$1,000.00.** Fees for post facto permits may also be doubled, so always verify if a permit is required BEFORE beginning any work! A business may not occupy a structure until all work is inspected and a certificate of occupancy has been issued. For more information, please contact the Building Department at (843) 726-7521.

STEP 3a: CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY. When a new business is established and there is no change in the building's occupancy classification, any non-conformities with existing building codes (with the exception of life safety issues) at the time the new business is established shall be grandfathered from the current building codes. However, when a new business is established which results in a change in a building's occupancy classification (i.e. from "Business" to "Assembly," from "Residential" to "Business," from "Mercantile" to "Business," etc.), then the building must be brought into compliance with current building codes before the new business may be established.

STEP 4: SIGN PERMIT. Any business owner who intends to place one or more signs at his/her place of business must first obtain a sign permit from the Town of Town of Ridgeland; they can be downloaded her: . A completed Sign Permit application shall be submitted to: Town of Town of Ridgeland, Attn: Planning Department, P.O. Box 1119, Town of Ridgeland, SC 29936. To expedite the process, please include the following with your application: dimensions of all proposed sign(s), dimensions of the building frontage to which the sign(s) will be attached (if signs will be affixed to a building), and color images or drawings of the proposed sign(s). All sign applications will be reviewed for compliance with the town's sign ordinance and appropriate building codes. There is a fixed fee in the amount of \$0.50/square foot for the sign permit with a \$30 minimum fee. Any signs that do not meet minimum zoning standards may be referred to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Fees may be paid at the time the permit is issued. Please note that the town's zoning ordinance does not permit off-premises signs. Once the Sign Permit has been reviewed, town staff will contact the applicant with a notice of approval or denial. Appeals may be submitted to the Town of Ridgeland Board of Zoning Appeals. For more information

about sign requirements and permits, please contact the Planning Department at (843) 726-7521.

STEP 5: BUSINESS LICENSE. Prior to opening a business inside the town limits, the business owner or manager must obtain a business license from the Town of Town of Ridgeland. Business licenses will only be issued after the Planning Director has issued a Commercial Zoning Compliance Permit. Business license applications may be dropped off at Town Hall or submitted by mail to: Town of Ridgeland, Attn: Town Clerk, P.O. Box 1119, Ridgeland, SC 29936. The Town Clerk will calculate the license fee based upon the business's classification and anticipated gross revenues during the first year of operation. The applicant will then be contacted with the total amount to be paid. Once issued, a business license shall be valid only during the calendar year in which it is obtained. The town will mail a renewal notice at the beginning of each subsequent year, and licenses must be renewed on an annual basis. For more information, please contact the Ridgeland Town Clerk at (843) 726-7502. Forms can be downloaded here: <https://www.ridgelandsc.gov/executive-department/town-clerk>

STEP 6: WATER AND SEWER SERVICE: Please call our Water Department at (843) 726-7501 and we will be glad to guide you through the process of setting up a new account.

Resource Guide

Business Development Corporation/Certified Development Corporation

The SC Capital Access Program is designed to provide financial institutions in South Carolina a flexible method of making business loans that may not meet conventional underwriting standards.

Contact: (803) 798-4064 or mail@BDCofSC.org

Department of Rural Development

An agency of the US Department of Agriculture that provides commercial lending services and renewable energy and energy efficiency programs for agriculture producers and rural small businesses.

Contact: Call: (803) 684-3136, or visit www.rd.usda.gov

FastTrac South Carolina

A privately funded non-profit organization that offers business training programs for refining and writing business plans and growing sustainable high-impact companies. Programs combine one-on-one coaching, peer learning, guest speakers and comprehensive tools to help produce solid business plans and strategies.

Contact: Mary Dickerson, (803) 805-3110, mdickerson@charlestonchamber.org

Jasper County Chamber of Commerce

The Jasper County Chamber of Commerce, by action of its organization and through the work of its committees is dedicated to the objectives of stimulating growth and development of Jasper County and the State of South Carolina, and to the preservation of the American Way of Life, with special emphasis on advancing scientific, educational, charitable, commercial, civic, industrial, agricultural and general interest of the area it serves.

Contact: Call (843) 726-8126, or visit www.jaspercountychamber.com

Low Country Council of Government

A voluntary organization of local governments that provides small business loans, economic and demographic research and analysis, mapping services, and technical assistance on financing, marketing and management.

Contact: http://lowcountrycog.org/community_and_economic_development/index.php

Phone: (843) 473-3972

New Carolina - South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness

A public-private partnership that seeks to develop and drive the state's long-term economic strategy by working with companies, government, universities, economic development organizations, and other groups to identify and implement actions and policies that will boost the competitiveness of South Carolina firms.

Contact: Laura McKinney (803) 760-1404, lmckinney@newcarolina.org

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)

A branch of the Small Business Administration that provides small business mentoring and advice on a full range of business topics at no charge.

Contact: (1-800) 634-0245, or visit www.score.org

SC Business One Stop (SCBOS)

A collaborative website of state, federal and private agencies, including DHEC, Department of Revenue and the Secretary of State, that offers electronic registrations, licenses, permits, and tax filings, as well links to a variety of sources and information for doing business in South Carolina.

Contact: (803) 898-5690

SC Department of Commerce Financial Resources

The South Carolina Department of Commerce aims to recruit new businesses to the state and help existing businesses grow and flourish. Additionally, Commerce assists companies in locating buildings and sites in which to operate and offers grants for community development and infrastructure improvements in South Carolina.

Contact: Chuck Bundy (803) 737-0440, cbundy@sccommerce.com

SC Launch!

A collaboration between SCRA, a non-profit management company, Clemson University, University of South Carolina and the Medical University of South Carolina that provides funding, counseling, mentoring, assistance with business plans and marketing analysis, access to resource partners, and networking opportunities for knowledge economy-based businesses.

Julia R. Linton (843) 760-5893 julia.linton@scra.org

SC Manufacturing Extension Partnership

An affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technologies that provides business and technology support to manufacturers through onsite consultations, partnerships with state technical colleges, research universities, and the S.C. Department of Commerce. Services include educational programs, online assessment, an e-services portal, and other business tools.

Contact: Janell Pert (803) 252-6976, jpert@scmep.org

SC Small Business Chamber of Commerce

A statewide advocacy organization representing the general interests of small business in state and local government.

Contact: Frank Knapp, (803) 252.5733, sbchamber@scsbc.org

South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce

A state agency that assists employers in areas such as worker recruitment, employee training, labor force information, unemployment insurance, and job tax credits.

Contact: (864) 573-7525

South Carolina Small Business Development Center ~ University of South Carolina/Bluffton

The SBDC offers a variety of services and management training courses tailored to meet the needs of small and medium-sized businesses. SBDC consultants at each site provide managerial and technical assistance to those wishing to start or expand an enterprise.

Contact: Martin Goodman, EDFP, Director, Call: (843) 521-4143, or visit <http://www.uscb.edu/sbdc/>

Town of Ridgeland

The Town of Ridgeland offers a step by step process to help any new or established business understand what it takes to set up a new business in our community.

Contact: Dennis E. Averkin (Town Administrator) Call: (843) 726-7500, or Joshua Rowland (Director of Planning and Community Development) Call: (843) 726-7521, or visit us at www.ridgelandsc.gov