

BUSINESSFirst

Redevelop an existing property or open a new business in an existing property with all the right tools!



This **how-to** guide provides you with an overview of the organizations you may need to work with and the tools you need to have. Please review this packet prior to attending your appointment.

Please note that all of the information in this packet are suggestions to help you get started as easily as possible. Of course, it is up to you, to utilize as much of the information as you choose. We look forward to working with you to make your business or redevelopment project successful.

How can you best utilize the services of the **BUSINESSFirst** team?

- Sign up for a 30 minute appointment with the team at: <http://businessfirst.eventbrite.com>. The team accepts appointments on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from 2:30pm – 4:30pm.
- Complete the survey to help us better prepare for your appointment. <http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BIZFirst> (this must be done one week prior to your appointment)
- Review this [how-to guide](#) prior to your meeting.
- If you have a preliminary business plan, budget, or layout drawing for your project created already, submit prior to your meeting or bring them with you. submit@businessfirst.support
- Do not sign a lease, purchase agreement or make a down payment prior to your appointment.
- If you have never owned a business before, we recommend you meet with the experts at the IL Small Business Development Center prior to your meeting with our team. Most services are free.

Let's start with the partners you may need to work with and what they do.

City of Rockford Community & Economic Development

779-348-7162

businessfirst@rockfordil.gov

425 East State Street, Rockford, IL, 61104

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/community-economic-development.aspx>

City of Rockford Construction & Development Services

779-348-7158

businessfirst@rockfordil.gov

425 East State Street, Rockford, IL, 61104

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/communiyt-economic-development/construction-development-services.aspx>

City of Rockford Land Use & Zoning

779-348-7158

businessfirst@rockfordil.gov

425 East State Street, Rockford, IL, 61104

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/community-economic-development/construction-development-services/land-use-zoning.aspx>

Rock River Water Reclamation District

815-387-7660

businessfirst@rrwr.dst.il.us

3501 Kishwaukee Street, Rockford, IL, 61109

http://www.rrwr.dst.il.us/?page_id=1888

IL Small Business Development Center

815-921-2081

businessfirst@rockvalleycollege.edu

EIGERlab, 605 S Fulton Ave, Rockford, IL 61103

<http://www.rockvalleycollege.edu/business/sbdc/index.cfm>

Let's start with the partners you may need to work with and what they do.

Winnebago County Building Department

815-319-4350

businessfirst@wincoil.us

404 Elm Street, Rockford, IL, 61101

<http://www.wincoil.us/departments/building>

Winnebago County Zoning Department

815-319-4350

businessfirst@wincoil.us

404 Elm Street, Rockford, IL, 61101

<http://www.wincoil.us/departments/zoning-and-planning>

Winnebago County Clerk's Office

815-319-4250

businessfirst@wincoil.us

404 Elm Street, Rockford, IL, 61101

<http://www.winnebago-countyclerk.com>

Winnebago County Health Department

815-720-4100

businessfirst@wchd.org

401 Division Street, Rockford, IL, 61110

http://www.wchd.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=242Itemid=732

WINGIS

Property Information (taxes, assessment, economic development tools, elected officials)

<http://ims.wingis.org/propertysearch.aspx>

There are Business District Associations (BDA) in many of our corridors.

Auburn Street Business District Association

815-963-7678

Bill Hoople

Miracle Mile Rockford

815-975-0466

info@miraclemilerockford.com

1643 N Alpine Rd, Suite 104, PBM 129, Rockford, IL 61107 (this is mailing address – there is no physical office)

<http://www.miraclemilerockford.com>

Geography: E State Street from Swedish American Hospital to Rockford College

Midtown Association

815-997-5888

secretary@midtowndistrict.com

218 7th St, Rockford, IL 61104

<http://midtowndistrict.com>

Geography: 7th Street and surrounding area

River District Association

779-207-0110

info@riverdistrict.com

102 North Main St, Rockford, IL, 61101

<http://www.riverdistrict.com>

Geography: Downtown

Southwest Ideas for Today and Tomorrow (SWIFTT)

815-965-3606

jdbove106@aol.com

1005 S Main St., PO Box 966, Rockford, IL, 61105

<http://www.facebook.org/rockfordswiftt>

Geography: South Main Street and surrounding area

Additional BDAS

779-348-7162

businessfirst@rockfordil.gov

There are additional BDA's on Broadway, 11th Street, and Auburn. Please contact City of Rockford Community & Economic Development for more information.



- *Community and Economic Development* will help you with determining what, if any, financial incentives are available for the property you are considering and if you need a business license or special use permit, for properties within the City of Rockford
- *Construction and Development Services* will review your construction drawings (with Public Works and the Fire Department) to determine what is required within City code, what permits will be required and if your location is zoned properly for your use. They can also let you know if there are any documented outstanding violations on the property.



If your business has any affect on the sanitary sewer system, the *Rock River Water Reclamation District* engineers will need to review your mechanicals to ensure they meet the needs of your business and the public sanitary sewer systems.



The *IL Small Business Development Center* will assist you in creating a business plan so that you fully understand the costs of start up and operations to sustain your business. They offer classes as well as individual counseling.



- *County Clerk* will help you if you need a business and/or liquor license and help you register if you do.
- *Zoning Department* will review your site choice and determine if it is zoned properly for your use. They can help you with determining what, if any, financial incentives are available for the property you are considering, for locations outside of the City of Rockford.
- *Building Department* will review your construction drawings to determine what is required within County code and what permits will be required.



Environmental Health Services will review your food service plans to ensure that all health sanitation requirements are accounted for.

Environmental Health Services will also review your site to ensure that all septic and well facilities serve the needs of your business.

Location is everything!

- Determine the exact location of your property that you are considering to determine if you will be working with the City or County building department.
- Work with the Small Business Development Center to review demographics and traffic count in the area to know if the location is a profitable location good fit for your business.
- There are business district associations (BDA)'s operating within most of the commercial corridors of the City of Rockford. We recommend that you contact them if you are opening a business within their district. Their contact info can be found on page 5. Also, a map showing the geography of each district can be found at <http://www.businessfirst.support.com>.

Use

- You need to know what the property was previously used for and exactly what you want to use it for next. Properties are zoned for very specific uses. If your new use is drastically different and not allowed within assigned zoning, you will need to go through a process with the Zoning Board of Appeals to request a change.
- If you intend to open any business which involves serving food or beverages you will need to work with the Rock River Water Reclamation District and the Winnebago County Health Department.
- If you intend to open a business that serves or sells wine, beer, liquor or tobacco you will have to apply through the Liquor and Tobacco Advisory Board (LTAB – City of Rockford) or Liquor Commission (Winnebago County). You must also contact your Alderman and County Board member to determine if they will support a liquor license at that location.
- If your new use requires construction of any sort, we highly recommend you hire a licensed design professional, such as an architect, and a professional general contractor.

The Potential Benefits of Ownership

- If you plan to purchase your property, speak with the City and County Economic Development Directors to determine if you may be eligible for incentives such as
 - Tax Increment Financing District (TIF)
 - Historical Tax Credits
 - Enterprise Zone
 - Rivers Edge
- Please do not purchase or lease a property until you have gone through the entire process of **BUSINESSFirst** and fully understand the costs you are about to incur.

Utilities & Mechanicals

- If your new use requires construction of any sort, we highly recommend you hire a licensed design professional, such as an architect and a professional general contractor.
- You will need them to review gas, water, electrical, HVAC, sewer, fire and fiber access for your use as well as related costs.
- Professionals can assist you in working with the local utilities and to determine what work will need to be done to improve your property.
- They will also produce the drawings and plans you will need for every step for construction permits, special use permits, liquor, tobacco and zoning hearings.

Special Use Permits

- Certain property “uses” require the application for a special use permit. These may include: sale of tobacco, sale of liquor, tattoo services, title loan stores, cash stores, gaming, auto related uses and potential others depending on location. Special use permits are different than business licenses.

Liquor & Tobacco

- If your new use is a restaurant, bar, nightclub, or includes sale of tobacco, you will need to present your business case to either the Liquor Commission (Winnebago County) or the Liquor and Tobacco Advisory Board (LTAB – City of Rockford). The staff will assist you through this process. You will need to present: security plans, construction plans, parking plans, hours of operation, music arrangements, gaming requests, cover charge, and business plan.
- The Commission or LTAB will make a recommendation which is then reviewed by the appropriate Committee. The committee may recommend to support or deny the Commission or LTAB recommendation to the full Council or Board. The full Council or Board will then vote. This process can take up to 3 months.
- There are several different liquor licenses depending on your use. The legal and zoning staff will provide you with this information.
- We highly recommend that you are completely confident that you are going to obtain a liquor permit prior to signing a lease, purchase agreement or making a down payment.

Costs/Expenses

- There are costs all along the way of opening a new business, including: licenses, professional services (architect, general contractor, attorney, accountant, insurance), permits, and construction.
- Please take your time in working with all of the **BUSINESSFirst** team as well as the Small Business Development Center to fully understand the costs you are about to incur before moving forward.

Timeline

- It is the intent of every member of the **BUSINESSFirst** team to assist you through the process of redeveloping an existing property or opening a new business in an existing property in the most efficient process possible.
- As you go through your first appointment, they will help you develop a timeline so that you have realistic expectations of when you will see that first customer walk through your door!
- It is best to take your time, work with professionals and make educated decisions up front instead of having to spend money fixing mistakes.

Research

- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) – you can submit FOIA requests to the City, County, Reclamation District and Health Department to learn about any issues that may be present with the property you are considering.

Submittals

- Prior to attending your first **BUSINESSFirst** appointment, please ...
 - If you have a preliminary business plan, budget, or layout drawing for your project created already, submit (submit@businessfirst.support) prior to your meeting or bring them with you.
 - Complete the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BIZFirst> . This must be done one week prior to your appointment so that our team may be prepared to discuss your property.
- If you choose to proceed with redeveloping your property or opening a new business, there will be more plan submittals required. Depending on whether your property is in the City or County you must submit to the appropriate email. All emails can be found on page 3 and 4 of this document.

Thank You to Our Partners

Rockford Community Partners is proud to thank the following partners for participating in the creation of **BUSINESSFirst** and working together to ensure the most efficient and effective process to assist in the redevelopment of existing properties and opening a new business in an existing property.

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| 1. Alderman Joe Chiarelli & Tim Durkee | 12. Miracle Mile Rockford |
| 2. Bath & Body Fusion | 13. Northwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council |
| 3. City of Peoria | 14. River District Association |
| 4. City of Rockford | 15. Rock River Development Partnership |
| 5. CMM & Associates | 16. Rock River Water Reclamation District |
| 6. Contemporary Hammer Works | 17. Rockford Area Association of Realtors |
| 7. Dickerson Nieman | 18. Rural on Tap |
| 8. First Midwest Group | 19. IL Small Business Development Center |
| 9. Gary Anderson & Associates | 20. Winnebago County |
| 10. Larson & Darby Group | 21. Winnebago County Clerk |
| 11. Midtown Association | 22. Winnebago County Health Department |



Working Together, Achieving Results