

WELCOMING CENTER FOR NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

## HOW TO START A PLANT OR FLOWER SHOP IN PHILADELPHIA

Many newcomers to Philadelphia begin their careers as entrepreneurs by opening small businesses throughout Philadelphia's neighborhoods. We have found that flower shops are underrepresented in certain areas and therefore could be profitable enterprises for those looking to start a business. The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians can be a resource in helping you start your business.



Welcoming  
Center *for*  
NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

*Connecting immigrants, employers,  
and communities*

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## HOW TO START A PLANT OR FLOWER SHOP IN PHILADELPHIA

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This pamphlet provides an overview of things to consider when starting a flower shop in Philadelphia. Because every business is unique and regulations are subject to change, this pamphlet is intended for use as a *guideline*, not a comprehensive resource. It is important that you work with appropriate city departments to make sure you are in compliance with current procedures.

### WELCOMING CENTER for NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians works to connect work-authorized immigrants with opportunities they need to succeed in the region. In addition to employment services, legal clinics, and resource referrals, the Welcoming Center provides small business support.

If you are considering opening a plant or flower shop in your neighborhood, please contact the Welcoming Center. We can help with:

- Information and referral on business resources
- Small business seminars
- English language instruction and customer service training for entrepreneurs
- Technical assistance to business associations with diverse membership
- Conflict resolution training

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## **UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS**

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All businesses are required to follow regulations. These regulations differ according to the type of business that you have. It is important that business owners understand and comply with the regulations, for the protection of both their customers and their business investment.

Plant and flower shops are considered retail businesses. Therefore, they must follow the same regulations as other retail businesses, such as stores that sell clothing, electronics, hardware, furniture, etc.

Every business location must be properly zoned. Before you purchase property or begin operations, check to see that the zoning code permits the type of business you plan to establish.

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## **IMPORTANT RESOURCES AND PHONE NUMBERS**

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### **CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

#### **LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS (L&I)**

1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd., 11th Floor

Public Services Concourse

Philadelphia, PA 19102

License Information – (215) 686-2490

Permit Information – (215) 686-2471

[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

Contact the City's License Information unit for general license information and license renewals.

Contact Permit Information for building and zoning permit information.

### **CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

#### **OFFICE OF BUSINESS SERVICES**

1515 Arch Street, 12th Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19103

(215) 683-2100

[www.phila.gov/commerce](http://www.phila.gov/commerce)

The Office of Business Services is the City of Philadelphia's comprehensive business assistance resource. Call for information about City services, financing and regulations. There is free telephonic interpretation available as well as a city representative designated to working with immigrant entrepreneurs.

## STEP 1:

### PLANNING YOUR BUSINESS

#### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Think about basic business operations, including:

- Identify your potential location(s), but do not invest until you understand the Zoning and Licensing and Inspections approval process! If your business is not correctly zoned, there may be long delays until your business is approved.
- Know the law. Federal, state and local laws regulate business operations including taxes, employees, and controlled substances, such as alcohol or firearms.
- Estimate your weekly revenue and expenses. Determine a general sense of how much you will be earning and expending during the first year of operation.
- Consider creating a business plan. With a business plan, you are eligible for loans, grants, and other financing options. See the back page of this pamphlet for organizations that can help you write a business plan.
- Locate equipment and develop relationships with wholesalers.
- Research business insurance options to protect against damages, crime, or loss of income.

#### LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS APPLICATION

Request an application package from Office of Business Services to find out what licenses you will need and any other conditions you may have to fulfill. Your application package will include an application for a Philadelphia Business Tax Number, an application for each type of license you seek, and instructions about how to complete the forms. Please contact them at 215-683-2100.

#### ZONING

In the United States, the government regulates how private property may be used through a system known as zoning. Zoning governs the use of property. For example, zoning indicates whether a property can be used as a restaurant, store, daycare, salon, home, or other function. Zoning also regulates the size, spacing and other characteristics of lots and buildings.

Before you invest in a property or business, check with the Licenses and Inspections Zoning Unit to see if the zoning code permits the type of business you plan to operate. If the location is not properly used, you may not be able to open the type of business you plan to operate or you may have to appear before the Zoning Board of Appeal to seek a zoning variance.

## STEP 2:

### BUILDING APPROVALS AND INSPECTIONS

Before you start your Philadelphia business, you may need some of the following approvals.

You can apply for the following permits at the City of Philadelphia Licensing and Inspections Office:

#### ZONING

*Zoning Unit, call (215) 686-2435*

Every business location must be properly zoned. Before you purchase property or begin operations, check to see that the zoning code permits the type of business you plan to establish.

#### CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

*Building Permits, call (215) 686-2467*

*Plumbing Permits, call (215) 686-2450*

*Electrical Permits, call (215) 686-2513*

Be aware that a building permit is required for most new construction or structural alterations. The approval process may require you to submit maps, plans, drawings, and filing fees.

#### CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

*Buildings Services, call (215) 686-2448*

Some business licenses require that you have occupancy approval, usually when the building is new or where there is a change in use.

#### BUSINESS COMPLIANCE SITE INSPECTION

*Business Compliance, call (215) 685-3700*

A site inspection is required for certain licenses including parking lots and garages, auto wrecking yards, and laundromats.

#### FIRE UNIT SITE INSPECTION

*Fire Unit, call (215) 686-3712*

Businesses that use hazardous materials need this approval.

These permits are also required and must be contacted separately:

#### STREETS DEPARTMENT

*Streets Department, call (215) 686-5525*

Businesses that involve sidewalks and streets for uses including dumpsters, parking lots or news-stands, require Streets Department approval.

#### ART COMMISSION

*Art Commission, call (215) 683-2095*

Signs, awnings, canopies or similar fixtures and structures that encroach on the public sidewalk or are located in certain zoning control areas may require Art Commission approval.

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## **STEP 3:**

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### **SETTING UP YOUR SHOP**

#### **EQUIPMENT**

Before starting your flower or plant shop, consider whether you will purchase new equipment, purchase used equipment, or rent equipment. Below is a list of the equipment and supplies you will need to set up your shop:

- Floral refrigerator with air purifier and condensation evaporator
- Sink
- High pressure hose
- Van (if you plan to offer delivery)
- Vases
- Buckets
- Materials to package arrangements
- Office supplies to operate the business

#### **REACHING OUT TO WHOLESALERS**

The next thing you will have to do is develop relationships with flower and plant distributors. To ensure flexibility, it is useful to make contacts with more than one vendor. There are various websites, wholesale markets, nurseries, tradeshow and conventions where you can find out who the local wholesalers are and how to access their products. Also, contact your local business association or chamber of commerce for networking opportunities and resources. The Welcoming Center can direct you to your local business association and give you ideas for further networking opportunities.

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#### **A NOTE ABOUT BUILDING PLANS**

If a City official advises you that you will need detailed building plan drawings, be sure to ask for the reasons and get a second opinion. Often, building plans are preferred but not required. You may be permitted to draw the plans yourself, as long as they are drawn to scale. Find out what your options are.

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## FLORAL DESIGN AND PLANT CARE COURSES

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If you are new to the field of floral design and plant care, you may want to consider taking a course or attending a workshop. There are a few programs in the Philadelphia region to enhance your knowledge in the industry as well as provide you with critical connections.

### **LONGWOOD GARDENS**

Longwood Gardens offers a variety of courses, classes, and lectures in floral design and plant care. You may enroll in any particular program, or you may wish to pursue a professional certificate. All classes (other than the special lectures) are hands-on, with plenty of individual attention.

Contact the Continuing Education Department during business hours (weekdays 8:00 am–5:00 pm) at 610-388-1000 ext. 516 to find out more about:

- General information on floral design and plant care courses
- Certificate course schedules
- Certificate requirements
- Course registration information
- Class availability
- Suggestions for future classes or instructors

### **THE ARBORETUM SCHOOL OF THE BARNES FOUNDATION**

The Arboretum School offers workshops and a comprehensive course of study in the botanical sciences, horticultural practices, and garden aesthetics and design. A faculty of experienced instructors provides a wealth of knowledge on a wide range of disciplines. The various coursework provides training through a combination of classroom lecture, self-guided learning, and hands-on practice. Students may pursue a certificate of achievement upon satisfactory completion of the three-year program. Classes meet in the Arboretum House, 57 Lapsley Lane, Merion, PA (610-667-0290, ext. 1071).



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## **BASIC LICENSES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES (RETAIL)**

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Listed below are some of the most common business licenses needed to operate a retail shop in Philadelphia. Be aware that you must also meet state and federal registration and licensing requirements.

**BUSINESS PRIVILEGE LICENSE – \$250**

Every business operating or conducting business within the boundaries of Philadelphia must obtain a business privilege license and city tax number.

**DUMPSTER LICENSE – \$50 on private property, \$300 on a public street or sidewalk**

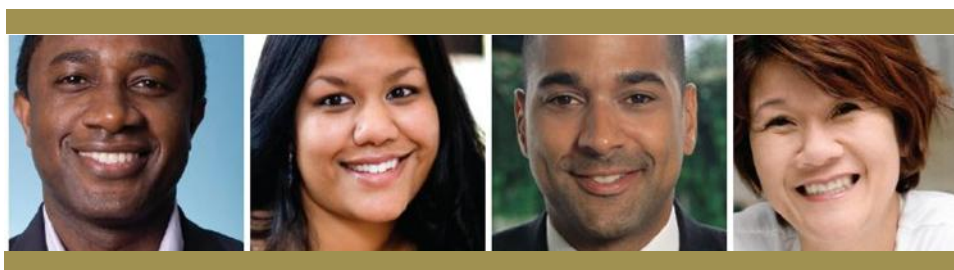
A license is required for any dumpster one cubic yard or larger.

**SALES TAX LICENSE – No Fee**

The Pennsylvania Sales Tax License is required for most retail establishments. For more information, call 1-888-PA-TAXES.

**ZONING USE REGISTRATION PERMIT – \$80**

Every business must register its business activity for each location where it does business. A new business moving into an existing store must also obtain this permit.



## SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

These organizations offer free or low-cost services to Philadelphia-area entrepreneurs.

### **EMPOWERMENT GROUP**

*(215) 427-9245*

Nonprofit organization providing entrepreneurship education, on-the-job training, and business development

### **THE ENTERPRISE CENTER**

*(215) 895-4000*

West Philadelphia-based nonprofit entrepreneur resource center offering a minority entrepreneurship program

### **THE MERCHANT'S FUND**

*(215) 399-1339*

Organization which provides merchants grants in the area of economic crisis, emergency situations, and loan matching.

### **PHILADELPHIA COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

*(215) 790-2200*

Agency providing small grants, loans, and general business support to qualifying businesses.

### **SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTER, INC.**

*(215) 790-5000*

City resource center offering consulting, a business information library, and video-conferencing and computer resources

### **SCORE**

*(215) 580-2712*

National non-profit organization which provides free one-on-one business counseling and seminars for entrepreneurs

### **TEMPLE UNIVERSITY SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

*(215) 204-7282*

Consulting and training services to plan and grow your business

### **WHARTON SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

*(215) 989-4861*

Offering information, training and consulting to entrepreneurs

### **WOMEN'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

*(215) 790-9232*

Nonprofit organization providing financial, management, technical, procurement and certification assistance

### **WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITIES RESOURCE CENTER (WORC)**

*(215) 564-5500*

Nonprofit organization offering training, individual business assistance, and access to business and financial resources

## WELCOMING CENTER FOR NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians is a nonprofit organization that works to promote immigrant participation in the region's economic, political, and social life. These individuals enhance the productivity, profitability, and stability of the region's businesses and contribute to the state's overall economic growth.

### MAIN OFFICE

1617 JFK Blvd. 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
phone 215-557-2626  
fax 215-557-2825

[www.welcomingcenter.org](http://www.welcomingcenter.org)

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