

STARTING A BUSINESS

IN DOWNTOWN AMERICUS

WE WANT YOU!

DISCOVER

USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

STEPS TO OPENING A BUSINESS

STEPS TO OBTAINING FINANCING



AMERICUS

MAIN STREET

Hometown. Forward Bound.

Americus Main Street

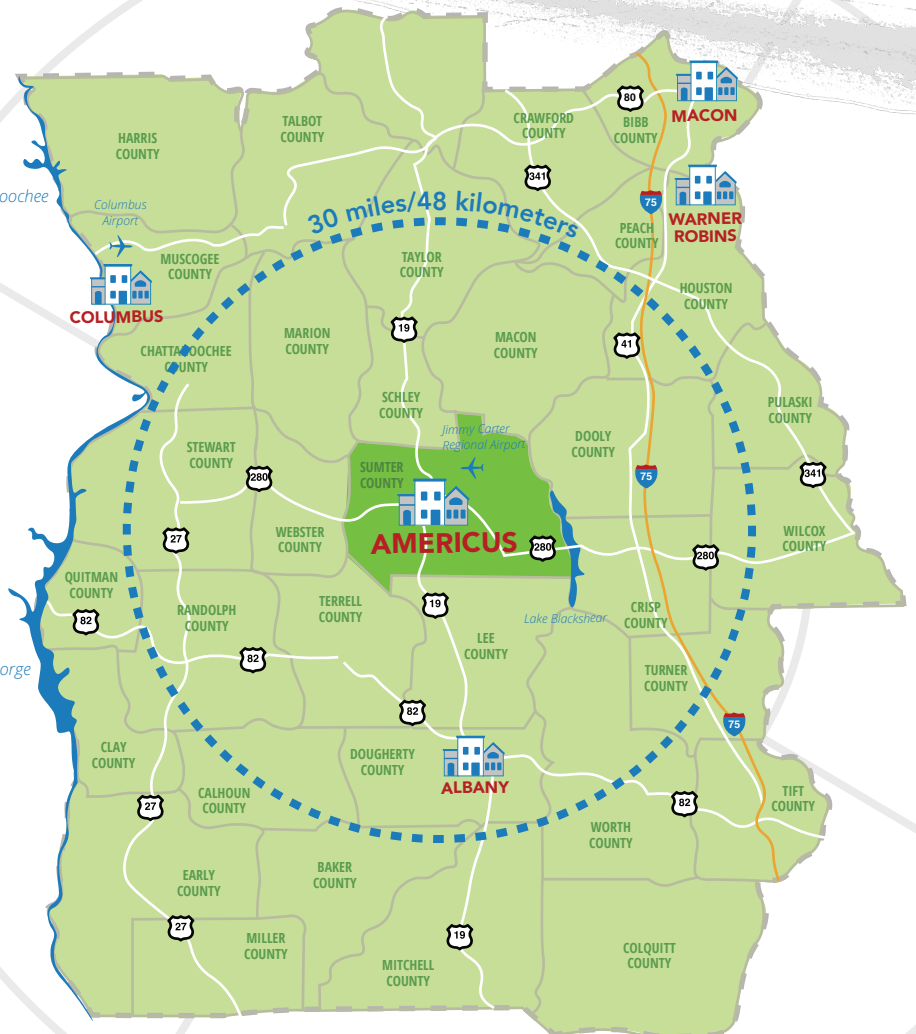
(Located inside City Municipal Building)

101 West Lamar Street

Americus, GA 31709

229 . 924 . 4411 ext. 247

qwillis@americusga.gov



Get Your Business Started

Follow this basic step-by-step guide to plan your business venture in Downtown Americus! Utilize the useful contacts and references provided to guide you along the way.

#1

SELF ASSESSMENT / BUSINESS IDEA

If you have dreamed of owning your own business and have an idea that you believe to be worth exploring, Americus Main Street has compiled a directory of contacts and references listed under the green arrows to assist you as you assess the feasibility of turning your dream into a reality.

#2

PERFORM MARKET RESEARCH

To ensure your business idea is viable and sustainable, it is important that you gather market research data.

- Evaluate the industry in which you are looking to start a business.
- Determine who your anticipated customer will be and research your target audience.
- Identify your local/regional competition to determine if there is room for growth.

RESEARCH NOT LOOKING GOOD?

You may want to consider a different direction or business idea...

#3

START-UP ANALYSIS

To start (and sustain) a business, it is important to identify costs associated. Items to consider when determining what start-up will entail should include:

- **Location** – Once you determine what area you want to locate your business in, you will need to also determine whether you will rent, build new, renovate existing, or purchase multi-use investment property that could assist in offsetting operational costs.
- **Assets** – It is critical to create a list of start-up needs required to operate your business (equipment, inventory, etc.).
- **Finances** – Estimate funds required for start-up and the investment needed to assist you in determine financing options for business start-up.
- **Zoning** – Ensure that the current zoning conforms to your new business and if not, determine feasibility to change and what steps are necessary to accomplish.

COSTS A LITTLE BIT HIGH OR CANNOT BE SUSTAINED?

May want to go back to the drawing board...



USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

Americus Main Street & Downtown Development Authority (DDA):

Qaijuan Willis, Program Coordinator
Office: 229-924-4411 ext. 247
Email: qwillis@americusga.gov

Americus Main Street and the DDA can assist you in obtaining the latest market data and research as well as provide insight into the local and regional economic forecast.

Sumter County Chamber of Commerce

Carolyn Wright, Interim President
Office: 229-924-2646
Email: cwright@sumtercountycommerce.com

The Sumter County Chamber of Commerce and their countywide resources can be a great asset to your business and the initial development of your business concept. With over 300 members, representing businesses, industry, non-profit and public institutions, the Chamber of Commerce serves as a great networking organization to help you meet individuals in similar businesses who can help guide you toward achieving your goals. The Chamber hosts numerous educational, programmatic, and networking events each month throughout Sumter County.

USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) The University of Georgia (Albany Office)

Americus Office located within Sumter County Chamber of Commerce
Debbie Finney, Area Director
Office: 229-420-1144
Email: dfinney@georgiasbdc.org

SBDC is your source for obtaining general industry information and area data. This organization, a free service, is connected to various sources throughout the region that will provide insight into your business sector.

#4

WRITE A BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan is a written description of your business's future, a document that tells what you plan to do and how you plan to do it. It is a crucial step to starting a business and is a requirement for financing. Some components that will need to be included are:

- Executive Summary
- Business Description
- Market Analysis
- Organization Management
- Sales Strategies
- Funding Requirements
- Financial Projections

It is always helpful to include any supporting documents that may be required based on your business type. Assistance with this step is available locally (see useful contacts & references).

USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) The University of Georgia (Albany Office)

Debbie Finney, Area Director
Office: 229-420-1144
Email: dfinney@georgiasbdc.org

SBDC can also assist with additional resources and business plan development.

South Georgia Technical College

Wally Summers, Vice President Economic Development
Office: 229-931-2040
Email: wsummers@southgatech.edu

Georgia Southwestern State University

Dr. Gaynor Cheokas, Director, Center for Business and Economic Development
Office: 229-931-2726
Email: gaynor.cheokas@gsw.edu

Americus is fortunate to have two great higher education institutions within minutes of the downtown area. Both institutions and their faculty are great resources for anyone looking to find out more information on starting a new business.

#5

RESEARCH & OBTAIN FINANCING

Whether you have working capital or need financing, Main Street has a number of incentives and loan programs available that you may want to research. For additional information, call Americus Main Street at (229) 924-4411, ext. 247.



Americus Main Street offers grant programs, facade improvement, and many other state and regional funding opportunities.

#6

START-UP CHECKLIST

Once you have completed steps 1-5, you will need to formalize your business with the local, state, and federal governing bodies. A list of things you will need will include:

- Business name (must check availability)
- Legal structure (file or register)
- Licensing requirements
- E-Verify #
- Sales and Use Tax #
- State and federal tax designations
- Register for Employer Identification # (EIN)
- Protection for Intellectual Property
- Business Insurance
- Zoning and local requirements
- Site preparation (including environmental considerations)
- Image and branding

You may want to consider hiring an attorney to review your documents, an accountant to set up your business structure, and a design/marketing company involved in the development of your initial brand image.

File your D.B.A. with the County Clerk's Office: 229-928-4537

USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

Before Selecting a Location:

- Contact Americus Main Street for assistance in researching available properties, grants, and other financing options
- Contact the City of Americus' Planning and Zoning Office to receive an overview of the permitting process

Americus Planning and Inspections Department

Aimee Argo, Zoning and Code Enforcement Officer
Office: 229-924-4411, ext. 246
Email: aargo@americusga.gov

Before Modifying or Construction:

Contact the City of Americus Planning and Inspections Department before making any modifications to the interior or exterior of the building. Exterior alterations require approval from the Americus Historic Preservation Commission.

City of Americus Building and Inspections Department:

Roger Willis, Building Inspector
Office: 229-924-4411 ext. 232
Email: rwillis@americusga.gov

[See next page for more resources on location/site selection](#)

#7

LOCATION/SITE SELECTION

As you seek potential locations in the Central Business Improvement District, there are a few additional steps that will need to be addressed. See the next page for a few of the necessary steps that are unique to Downtown Americus.

#7

LOCATION/SITE SELECTION - CONTINUED

Additional Notes: Special consideration must be given when working in the food industry. In addition, when planning to work on major rehabilitation where work will encroach on public property (i.e. sidewalks, parking spaces, etc.), special permissions must be given by governing authorities.

Before Modifying or Construction

- If your business will be in the food industry, contact Environmental Health at Sumter Health Department.
- For any changes to the exterior of the property (signage, exterior construction, or restoration), you will need to submit application to the Historic Preservation Commission for approval.
- If a construction dumpster must be placed within a public right-of-way, please contact Americus Department of Public Works.
- If your project will require a disturbance to the roadway or side walk contact the Americus Department of Public Works.
- If you require construction work, employ licensed plumbing, electrical, and mechanical contractors. A list can be found by contacting the City of Americus Building and Inspections Department.
- For a new business license contact the Business License Department.

USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

Health Department

Lincoln N. Mitchell, Environmental Health Specialist IV
Office: 229-928-2982
Email: Lincoln.mitchell@dph.ga.gov

Historic Preservation Commission

Deborah Goodin, Code Enforcement
Office: 229-924-4411, ext. 239
Email: dgoodin@americusga.gov

Americus Public Works Department

Larry Riner, Director
Office: 229-924-4411, Press 3
Email: LRiner@americusga.gov

Business License Department

Daisy Little
Office: 229-924-4411 ext. 231
Email: dlittle@americusga.gov

#8

CONSTRUCTION

During the construction or modification process on your property/building, it is critical to look into the proper permitting and codes required in the area.

USEFUL CONTACTS & REFERENCES

During Construction or Modification:

City of Americus Building and Inspections Department:

Roger Willis, Building Inspector
Office: 229-924-4411 ext. 232
Email: rwillis@americusga.gov

Utilities:

Electricity

- Georgia Power, 888-660-5890 (www.georgiapower.com)

Water, Sewer and Garbage

- City of Americus, 229-924-4411, Press 1

Heating (Natural Gas)

- City of Americus, 229-924-4411, Press 1

Telecommunications

Internet and Cable

- AT&T, 229-514-4343 (www.att.com)
- Mediacom, 855-633-4226 (www.mediacomgeorgia.com)

For More Information please contact Americus Main Street at 229-924-4411 ext. 247 for Qaijuan Willis.

#9

DEVELOPING YOUR BUSINESS

Once your business is ready, be sure to take advantage of the business partners poised to assist you with additional business resources, networking opportunities, and advertising.

Join the Americus Chamber of Commerce to network and advertise your business

Sumter County Chamber of Commerce

Carolyn Wright, Interim President
Office: 229-924-2646
Email: cwright@sumtercountycommerce.com

Attend one of Downtown Americus' committee meetings & get involved in the Downtown Merchants group.