



LAUNCH & GROW IN STOUFFVILLE

A Business Starter Guide

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Message from the Mayor

On behalf of Council, I'm delighted to welcome you to the very first edition of Stouffville's New Business Guide. Whether you are an entrepreneur looking to invest in our community, or an existing business looking to expand, this guide is for you!

Entrepreneurship thrives in Stouffville, in a supportive environment with practical resources to help you start strong and grow with confidence. Stouffville is ready to partner with you—whether you're scaling operations, opening a second location, or modernizing your space. Our team can connect you with permitting guidance, site selection support, local networks, and our Chamber and community partners, to accelerate your plans.

Thank you for choosing Stouffville. We look forward to celebrating your milestones—ribbon cuttings, grand openings, and the successes ahead—together.

Warm regards,

Iain Lovatt





Getting Started in Stouffville

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Stouffville is pleased to present this business guide, which provides essential information to help entrepreneurs start or grow a business in Stouffville. Inside, you will find practical steps and local insights to guide you from your first idea to your grand opening and beyond.

ABOUT STOUFFVILLE

Stouffville is a thriving and welcoming community- ideal for starting, growing, or expanding a business. Key benefits include a diverse population, a strong entrepreneurial spirit, and access to a skilled regional workforce, all supporting new and established ventures. Its strategic location connects you to major highways and GO Transit, providing convenient access to Greater Toronto Area (GTA) talent, suppliers, and customers, while also offering an exceptional place to live, work, and invest.

- [Learn more about Stouffville](#)
- [Learn more about York Region's economy and workforce](#)
- [View the York Region's Business Support Page](#)

SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN STOUFFVILLE

Starting a business can be overwhelming, but in Stouffville, you benefit from personalized support. Our Economic Development team offers guidance on permits, connections to local networks, specialized training, and marketing resources, helping you navigate challenges and accelerate growth. With these dedicated supports, Stouffville is a place where small businesses can thrive. [Learn more about our Economic Development Department](#)

STOUFFVILLE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Town of Stouffville's [2021–2025 Economic Development Strategy](#) is a roadmap for growth, innovation, and long-term prosperity. It outlines goals for the Town, the Economic Development Office, and the business community to strengthen the local economy and create new opportunities. By aligning with this strategy, entrepreneurs help build a thriving and resilient Stouffville.

Learn more: [Stouffville Economic Development Strategy 2021–2025 \(PDF\)](#)

THE VILLAGE OF STOUFFVILLE

The Village of Stouffville is the community's historic downtown, blending heritage charm with modern business opportunities. Businesses benefit from local improvement initiatives, guidance from the Village of Stouffville Advisory Committee, and upcoming streetscape enhancements through the Main Street Revitalization Project.

- Learn more about [the Village of Stouffville](#)
- View Village of Stouffville [Advisory Committee Meeting Times](#)

The Downtown Revitalization Project

Stouffville's Downtown Revitalization Project is transforming Main Street into a vibrant business destination. Key benefits include improved streetscapes, increased walkability, and enhanced accessibility, all of which create a dynamic public space that supports business growth and community life. These enhancements will make downtown more attractive, resilient, and boost visibility and foot traffic for local businesses.

For the latest updates, design milestones, and engagement opportunities, visit [Stouffville's Downtown Revitalization Project](#).



BUILDING BUSINESS IN STOUFFVILLE: HOW TO START:

Connect with Stouffville's Economic Development Department to get started. They will guide you through licensing, permits, and local resources, and provide tailored advice to help your business succeed. If you have any questions or require support, please contact the Economic Development team at ecdev@townofws.ca

1. Shape Your Idea & Business Plan

- Define your mission, goals, and target market.
- Research competitors and identify your advantages.
- Prepare a budget, financing plan, and cash-flow forecast.

2. Confirm Location & Zoning

- Use the [Interactive Zoning Map](#) to check if your business type is permitted at your location
- Request a [Preliminary Zoning Review \(PZR\)](#) before signing a lease or buying property.
- Consider parking, accessibility, and visibility for your site.

3. Register Your Business with the Ontario Business Registry

- Register through the [Ontario Business Registry](#).
- Choose a structure: sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation.
- Get your Master Business License (valid for 5 years).
- See page 12 for step by step instructions

4. Apply for Licenses & Permits in Stouffville (If required)

- Check [BizPal](#) for all potentially required municipal, provincial, and federal permits.
- Apply for [Stouffville business](#) licenses if required (e.g., Short-Term Rental, kennels, tourist camps).
- Secure health approvals if operating food or personal service businesses.
- [For more information, visit York Region Public Health – Food Premises](#)
- [For more information, visit York Region Personal Services](#)

5. Building, Renovation & Signage

- Contact the Town of Stouffville's Building Services before construction or renovations.
- Apply for [permits](#) for Interior renovations, signage, or changes of use.
- Review accessibility requirements (entrances, washrooms, parking).

6. Taxes & Financial Accounts

- Register with the [CRA](#) for:
 - GST/HST (mandatory if earning \$30,000+ per year).
 - Payroll accounts (if hiring staff).
- Set up a business bank account and bookkeeping system.
- Learn about [municipal property taxes](#) and fees.

7. Insurance & Risk Management

- Obtain general liability and property insurance [through a registered insurance agency](#).
- Consider sector-specific coverage (e.g., liquor liability, errors & omissions).
- Confirm snow clearing and fire safety responsibilities in your lease. If you own the building, review applicable Town [by-laws](#) to understand your maintenance and safety requirements.

8. Accessibility & Customer Service

- Train staff using free [AccessForward](#) modules.
- Ensure barrier-free entrances, washrooms, and parking where required [under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#).
- Post notices for service disruptions as they occur (e.g., automatic doors, elevators)

9. Waste, Recycling & Grease Management

- Arrange a private hauler for garbage/recycling.
- Install and maintain grease interceptors if serving food.
- Follow [Town of Stouffville](#) and [York Region](#) disposal rules.

10. Fire & Public Health Safety

- Schedule required fire inspections (alarms, sprinklers, extinguishers) by calling Fire Prevention at 905-640-9595 or fire.prevention@townofws.ca
- For food and personal service businesses, contact [York Region Public Health](#) at least 14 days before opening.
- [York Region Public Health – Food Premises](#)
- [York Region Personal Services](#)

11. Staffing & Employment Standards

- Follow [Ontario's Employment Standards Act](#) (hours, wages, breaks).
- Provide [accommodations](#) and [safe workplaces](#).
- Train staff on [workplace health & safety requirements](#).
- [Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development](#)

12. Market & Launch Your Business

- Install [storefront signage](#) / window graphics to help brand your storefront.
- Create a [Google Business Profile](#) so customers can find you online.
- Set up social media channels and begin sharing opening updates.
- Register your business with the [Town of Stouffville Business Registration Program](#) to stay connected with the Town and be added to the Business Directory.
- Coordinate a grand opening, ribbon cutting, or launch promotion. You can email the Economic Development team at ecdev@townofws.ca for support with this.

DEVELOPING A BUSINESS PLAN: A KEY STEP TO STARTING YOUR BUSINESS IN STOUFFVILLE

Before starting your business and applying for a business license, it's essential to create a business plan. This plan outlines your vision, goals, and strategies, helping you build a strong foundation for success.

A business plan should include:

- Vision and Mission Statement
 - Business location
 - Budget and financial projections
 - Current and future financing needs
 - Set realistic goals and timelines
 - Secure external funding
 - Identify opportunities and risks
 - Measure progress and success
 - Clarify operational needs
 - Build reliable financial forecasts
- Market analysis
 - Marketing strategy

A well-developed plan will help you:

Resources are available to help you develop your business plan. The following organizations can help you get started.

York Small Business Enterprise Centre (YSBEC)

Free consultations, workshops, and business plan templates for York Region entrepreneurs.

<https://www.york.ca/business/assistance-businesses/york-small-business-enterprise-centre>

Small Business Centres Ontario

Province-wide network offering one-on-one support and planning tools.

www.sbcontario.ca

Futurpreneur Canada

Offers free templates and support for entrepreneurs aged 18–39 (open to others for reference).

www.futurpreneur.ca

Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)

Provides business plan guides, examples, and financial forecasting tools.

www.bdc.ca

Canada Business Government of Canada

Federal business resources, including planning checklists and guides.

www.canada.ca/en/services/business.html

REGISTERING YOUR BUSINESS IN ONTARIO

If you're starting a business in Stouffville, one of the first steps may be registering it through the [Ontario Business Registry](#).

Registration is required if you have employees, a physical location, or operate under a name other than your own. The process is quick, online, and ensures your business is legally recognized.

Registration allows you to:

- Legally operate your business and avoid fines.
- Open a business bank account.
- Apply for licenses and permits.
- Access funding, grants, or loans.
- Register for GST/HST and payroll accounts.
- Protect your business name in the province.
- Build credibility with customers and suppliers.

How to Register Your Business– Step by Step

❑ Create a My Ontario Account and a ServiceOntario account

- For more help setting up your account, please refer to the [My Ontario Account help guide](#).

❑ Choose Your Business Structure

- Decide how you want to operate:
 - Sole Proprietorship – one owner
 - Partnership – two or more owners
 - Corporation

❑ Pick a Business Name: If you're not using your personal name (e.g., "Jane Doe"), you must register your business name.

- [Search your name online first to check if it's available](#).

❑ Register Online Through the Ontario Business Registry

- Visit: www.ontario.ca/businessregistry
- Log in to your MyOntario Account.
- Complete the registration form and pay the fee.

You'll get a Business Identification Number (BIN) instantly after registering.

❑ 5. Register for CRA Program Accounts (if needed)

You may need to register with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for:

- GST/HST (if you earn over \$30,000 per year).
- Payroll deductions (if you hire staff).
- Import/export accounts.

Register at: www.canada.ca/business-registration

Once you've registered, you can open a business bank account, apply for grants, hire staff, and start operating legally in Ontario.

Compliance Made Simple: Zoning, Reviews & Approvals

Before opening, ensure your location, zoning, and permits are in order. Taking care of this early can save you time, money, and stress.

The Town's website is the best place to find the most up-to-date information on zoning rules, permits, and approvals, so be sure to check it regularly as you plan.

- [Visit the Stouffville's development and land use webpage](#)
- [Visit the Stouffville's building and renovating webpage](#)

1. CHOOSING YOUR LOCATION & ZONING

Before signing a lease or starting renovations, confirm that your business is permitted at your chosen location.

- **Check the Zone:** Use the [Interactive Zoning Map](#) to find your property's zoning designation.
- **Review Permitted Uses:** See the [Comprehensive Zoning By-law](#) and [Commercial Zone Breakdown](#) to confirm your business is allowed.
- **Optional – Letter of Zoning Compliance:** This official letter confirms zoning permissions for lenders, lawyers, or York Region approvals (e.g., for home-based businesses). Apply through [Stouffville's portal](#).

Zoning Tools:

- **Property Information Report (PIR):** Gives a high-level overview of zoning and permitted uses.
- **Preliminary Zoning Review (PZR):** Reviews specific business or building plans against zoning rules. Required before most permit or variance applications.

2. HOME-BASED BUSINESS RULES

Home Occupations are a great way for local entrepreneurs to get started with a new business idea or have a secondary cash flow, and allow home owners to conduct small, low-impact business activities within the home they live in. Home occupations are intended to be "invisible" from the street, and conducted entirely within existing structures on the property, with no exterior signage or retail sales. You can learn more with Stouffville's Zoning Bylaw ([Section 3.27](#)) which list of rules for Home Occupations.

3. IF YOUR USE ISN'T PERMITTED

You have two options:

- **Minor Variance:** For small deviations (e.g., setbacks, parking). This involves a Preliminary Zoning Review, application, public notice, and review by the Committee of Adjustment.
 - [Minor Variance Application](#)
- **Rezoning:** For new uses not allowed under current zoning. This requires a complete planning application, public meeting, and Council approval.
 - [Planning application](#)

4. SITE PLAN APPROVAL

If you plan to build, expand, or significantly renovate, Site Plan Approval may be required before construction. See [Site Plan Control Requirements](#) for details.

5. BUILDING PERMITS & CHANGE OF USE

A [Building Permit](#) ensures your project complies with the [Ontario Building Code](#) and [Stouffville's zoning requirements](#).

You typically need a building permit to:

- Construct new or add to commercial/industrial buildings
- Complete tenant fit-outs or major interior alterations
- Change business use (e.g., retail → restaurant)
- Install fire systems, signage, or commercial kitchen equipment

Apply for a Building Permit via the Town's [online portal](#).

6. FEES, INSPECTIONS & AVOIDING DELAYS

- [See the Fees & Charges By-law](#) for current application and permit fees.
- Book required inspections (e.g., framing, plumbing, fire) as work progresses.
- Avoid pitfalls: Don't sign leases before checking zoning, start construction without permits, or overlook accessibility/fire code requirements.

For questions about permits, fees and inspections contact : buildingpermits@townofws.ca

Accessibility and Opening a Business

In Stouffville, accessibility standards are shaped by the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#), the [Ontario Building Code \(OBC\)](#), and Town [By-laws](#). This section highlights the key responsibilities and practical steps every business should follow to help you stay compliant and make your business more inclusive for everyone.

For the most up-to-date standards and design requirements, always check:

- [Town of Stouffville accessibility webpage](#)
- [Ontario AODA](#)
- [Ontario Building Code – Barrier-Free Design](#)

Building Accessibility Requirements

As of January 1st, 2025, full accessibility is the requirement for new retail, restaurant, office, and personal-service spaces. Key highlights:

- **Entrances:** Barrier-free with power-operated doors and ramps $\leq 1:12$ slope.
- **Washrooms:** One universal washroom with clear turning space, accessible fixtures, and an emergency call system.
- **Signage:** Tactile/Braille, high contrast, mounted consistently.
- **Parking:** At least one accessible space per lot, with more required as lot size increases.
- **Patios:** Maintain a clear, accessible pedestrian path of 1.5 m.

Learn more at:

- [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#)
- [OBC 2025 Updates](#)

Accessibility and Older Buildings & Renovations

Accessibility requirements always apply to operations, but physical upgrades are only triggered by:

- Outdoor redevelopment – [AODA's Design of Public Spaces](#) applies.
- Interior renovations or change of use – [OBC Part 10 and 11](#) apply, requiring at least one barrier-free route and a universal washroom.

You can learn more about the [Town of Stouffville's Accessibility Plan](#).

TAXES FOR BUSINESSES IN STOUFFVILLE

As a business owner, you'll deal with Federal, Provincial, and Municipal taxes. Always check the relevant websites for the most current information.

Federal & Provincial Taxes

| Business Income Tax | HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) | Payroll Taxes |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sole proprietors and partnerships: report business income on your personal tax return (T1).• Corporations: file a separate corporate tax return (T2). <p>Learn more at Government of Canada Business Taxes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required once you earn \$30,000+ annually.• Register early to claim Input Tax Credits. <p>Learn more at: Government of Canada GST/HST for Businesses.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you hire employees, you must register a payroll account with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and deduct CPP, EI, and income tax from wages. <p>Learn more at: Government of Canada Payroll</p> |

Municipal Property Tax

- **Leasing:** Property taxes are usually included in rent under TMI (taxes, maintenance, insurance). Check your lease to confirm.
- **Owning:** You'll receive a property tax bill from the Town, based on your property's MPAC-assessed value.
 - Learn more at:
 - [Town of Stouffville Property Tax](#)

Operating Within Local Bylaws

STAYING COMPLIANT WITH BYLAWS

Once your business is up and running, it's important to stay on top of local By-laws. These rules help keep Stouffville clean, safe, and accessible for everyone. Most By-laws are available online, and it's your responsibility to review and comply with the ones that apply to your operations.

Explore all Town by-laws here: [Whitchurch-Stouffville By-laws Library](#).

Getting Your Business Registered & Licensed

BUSINESS LICENSING IN STOUFFVILLE

Licensing and registration help keep businesses safe, legal, and part of a thriving Stouffville community. Requirements depend on your business type, location, and services, and may change over time. Always check the Town's website: [Business Licences – Town of Stouffville](#) for the most up to date information.

Some industries also have provincial or regional licensing. Common examples:

- **Food & Beverage:** [York Region Food Premises](#)
- **Personal Services:** [York Region Personal Services](#)
- **Childcare:** [Child Care & Early Years](#)
- **Massage Therapy / Health:** [College of Massage Therapists of Ontario](#)
- **Liquor Licensing:** [AGCO iAGCO Portal](#)

For a full list of licenses & permits across all levels of government, use [BizPaL](#).

SIGNAGE REGULATIONS

Signs help customers find your business, but they must meet Town, Regional, and sometimes heritage rules.

Quick overview:

- **Permanent signs:** [require a Permit.](#)
- **Temporary / Portable signs:** [Need a Temporary Sign Permit.](#)
- **Signs on Regional roads:** [Follow York Region Road Use rules.](#)
- **Heritage properties and Districts:** [May require a Heritage Permit and must follow special design guidelines.](#)

Read the [Sign By-law](#) for exact size, placement, and lighting rules.

Tip: Always confirm your design and location with Building Services before fabrication to avoid fines or removal.

Signage Contacts

- General inquiries: customer.service@townofws.ca | 905-640-1900
- Building & Zoning: buildingpermits@townofws.ca | 905-640-1900 ext. 2249
- Heritage: heritage@townofws.ca | 905-640-1900 ext. 2299

Keeping Your Business Fire-Safe

FIRE SAFETY

All businesses are required to comply with the [Ontario Fire Code](#), which sets out standards for fire prevention, building maintenance, and life safety. Building maintenance and fire safety responsibilities are shared between the property owner and the tenant. The specific division of duties often depends on the lease or agreement in place.

Fire Safety Plans

Some buildings require a Fire Safety Plan, which must be updated annually and whenever there are major changes to the use or layout. Plans may need to be prepared by a qualified consultant for larger or more complex properties. Visit [Stouffville's website to see if your business requires a fire safety plan](#).

If you have questions, please visit our website or contact us at fire.prevention@townofws.ca or 905-640-9595

- View [Stouffville's Fire and Emergency Services webpage](#) for more details.

Managing Waste & Recycling at Your Business

Proper waste management keeps your business clean, compliant, and environmentally responsible.

Residential vs. Commercial Collection

Municipal curbside collection is only for residential properties. All Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (ICI) properties must arrange private waste and recycling services. Mixed-use buildings (e.g., apartments above shops) must keep commercial and residential waste separate to comply with Ontario's Blue Box Regulation.

Visit [Stouffville's Webpage: Garbage, Recycling and Composting](#)

Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) Disposal

Food businesses must never pour FOG down drains. York Region's [Sewer Use By-law](#) requires:

- Installing and maintaining grease interceptors for all food premises.
- Proper disposal of grease through licensed haulers or York Region depots.
- Submit a Discharger Information Report before operations begin.

Private septic systems.

Businesses in rural areas must maintain private septic systems and obtain permits for new or modified systems.

You can learn more on [Stouffville Website: Septic Permits](#)

For questions about septic inspections or permits, contact the Town of Stouffville at 905-640-1900 or 1-855-642-TOWN (8696).

COMMERCIAL HAZARDOUS WASTE

York Region's depots are for residents only. Businesses must:

- Use licensed hazardous waste companies for collection and disposal.
- Store in labelled containers and keep disposal records in accordance with provincial law.

For guidance, call York Region Hazardous Waste at 1-866-665-6752 or visit the [York Region webpage](#).

CLOSING: READY TO OPEN IN STOUFFVILLE

Starting or growing a business is a big step, and you don't have to take it alone. From site selection and zoning clarity to permits, funding pathways, marketing connections, and mentorship, Stouffville can help you move from idea to opening day with confidence. Whether you are planning a new venture, expanding to a second location, or scaling operations, we're here to make the process clear, efficient, and welcoming.

Next step? Email ecdev@townofws.ca with your business concept or location, and an introductory call will be scheduled to help outline your path forward.

LOCAL & REGIONAL BUSINESS SUPPORTS FOR STARTING AND GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

Town of Stouffville Economic Development

Provides support to businesses at every stage, including guidance on permits, site selection, marketing, and navigating municipal resources.

- Contact: ecdev@townofws.ca
- Website: [Economic Development - Stouffville](#)

Village of Stouffville Advisory Committee

Focuses on downtown revitalization and promotion. Supports members through beautification projects, collective marketing campaigns, special events, and business-to-business collaboration.

- Contact the Staff Liaison: ecdev@townofws.ca
- Website: <https://discoverstouffville.ca/downtown/>

Greater Stouffville Chamber

The Greater Stouffville Chamber of Commerce supports local businesses by providing resources, networking opportunities, and advocacy, helping create a strong, connected, and thriving business community.

- Email: admin@stouffvillechamber.ca
- Website: stouffvillechamber.ca

Digital Main Street

Helps businesses adopt digital tools, set up e-commerce, improve online marketing, and access grant funding to strengthen their online presence.

- Website: Digitalmainstreet.ca

[York Link \(York Region Economic Development\)](#)

Offers free support to businesses across Stouffville and the broader York Region. Whether you're starting up or looking to expand, York Link provides personalized services, including one-on-one consultations, local market insights, introductions to potential business partners, access to government programs, and more.

- Contact: edo@york.ca
- Website: Yorklink.ca

[York Small Business Enterprise Centre \(YSBEC\)](#)

Offers one-on-one consultations, business planning resources, and workshops for entrepreneurs.

- Contact: ysbec@york.ca
- Website yorksmallbusiness.ca

[VentureLAB](#)

York Region's innovation hub supports entrepreneurs in technology, hardware, and software. Provides access to prototyping labs, mentorship, accelerator programs, and investment networks. For Stouffville businesses, VentureLAB offers pathways to scale innovative ideas, connect with capital, and access resources that strengthen competitiveness in local and global markets.

- Contact: hello@venturelab.ca
- Website: venturelab.ca

[YSpace](#)

An innovation hub supporting startups and entrepreneurs through programs such as the Food & Beverage Accelerator, Tech Accelerator, and Women's Entrepreneurship initiatives. Provides mentorship, co-working space, and community events to help businesses grow and connect.

- Contact: yspace@yorku.ca
- Website: yspace.ca

[York Region Agri-Food Network](#)

Supports local farms, food producers, and agri-businesses by providing resources for farm-gate sales, farmers' markets, and agri-tourism opportunities. The network strengthens the local food economy and positions Stouffville's rural and agricultural sector as an important driver of growth and community prosperity.

- Contact: accessyork@york.ca
- york.ca/agriculture-and-agri-food

Key Contacts (Quick Reference)

Regional / Provincial Partners

York Region Public Health (Food Premises, Personal Services)

• 1-800-361-5653

York Small Business Enterprise Centre (YSBEC)

ysbec@york.ca • yorksmallbusiness.ca

York Link (York Region Economic Development)

yorklink.ca/business-support

YSpace (York University Entrepreneurship Programs)

yspace.yorku.ca

VentureLAB (Innovation & Hardware Hub)

venturelab.ca

Disclaimer: This guide summarizes common requirements. Regulations and fees may change. Confirm current requirements with the Town and relevant authorities before proceeding.

Regulatory Bodies

Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO)

www.agco.ca • 1-800-522-2876

Apply via the iAGCO portal

Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)

1-877-372-7233 • esa.cambridge@electricalsafety.on.ca

Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA)

1-877-682-8772 • customerservices@tssa.org

Canada Revenue Agency – Business Accounts

canada.ca/business-registration