



## PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

### **Where does the City get the authority to license businesses?**

Authority to license trade or business conducted within a municipality's city limits is granted to municipalities by the State of Alabama.

### **Who is required to apply for a business license?**

Any person or entity desiring to conduct trade or provide services within the city limits of Birmingham is required to register with the City of Birmingham.

### **Are any businesses exempt from licensing or sales and use taxes?**

The Alabama State Legislature has the only authority to exempt businesses from sales and use taxation and/or licensing by the state, county or municipality governments through an Act of the Legislature. A "non-profit" or "not-for profit" status by the IRS (501 (c) (3)) is *not* sufficient justification for exemption. If your organization desires to obtain exemption status, you should contact your local legislative representative.

Nonprofit organizations that have been granted exemptions from business license taxation by specific acts of the Alabama Legislature are exempt from city license taxes. Nonprofit organizations are NOT automatically exempt from the provisions of the City of Birmingham Business License Code by virtue of having qualified for non-profit status on the federal income tax level under the provisions of USC 501(c)(3).

### **When should I apply for a business license?**

The Business License Code, Ordinance No. 97-183, requires that a license be obtained *prior* to commencement of business in the City.

### **Where do I go to apply for a business license?**

New business license may be applied for in one of two ways: 1) using the **online web portal** provided by the City's tax and licensing vendor, Avenu Insights & Analytics, or 2) applying **in person**, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. at the office of the Tax and License Administration (Revenue) Division located on the first floor of City Hall, Room TL-100, 710 North 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Birmingham, AL 35203. Applications for Alcoholic Beverage Licenses are taken *by appointment only*. Please note that there are specific documents that you are required to bring at the time you apply for a business license. If you have questions about the specific requirements for your business, you should contact the Tax and License Administration Division at (205) 254-2198. You may also obtain information from the City's official Website, [www.informationbirmingham.com](http://www.informationbirmingham.com). See also Supplemental Documentation Checklist for more information.

### **Who is responsible for processing applications and payment?**

The city has retained the services of Avenu Insights & Analytics, a local tax administration software company, to process business license applications, renewals and payments.

**Why has the city changed the licensing process?**

Birmingham's small business owners have long complained that the business licensing process is slow, confusing and difficult to complete. We have heard you and documented these concerns in the Woodfin Way Transition Report and Strategic Plan. After working on the process since Mayor Woodfin's inauguration, we unveiled the new online licensing portal, which was developed by the Birmingham-based firm, Avenu. This effort will streamline the application and renewal process, easing local business owners' workload.

**When did the changes take effect?**

Avenu handled application and payment processing starting as of December 2019.

**Who is Avenu Insights & Analytics?**

Avenu is a Birmingham-based company with over 40 years' experience with local governments.

Avenu's software solutions for administration and revenue enhancement enable jurisdictions to provide truly digital government that meets expectations of residents, employees and elected officials. The company's focus and resources give customers more predictable revenue and costs and allow governments to sustain a high quality of life.

**What is considered timely payment?**

Payments must be postmarked by the US Postal Service on or before the due date to be considered timely. The date stamped by the taxpayer's postal meter is not considered an "official US Postal Service postmark" for purposes of determining timely payment and/or filing.

**What if the due date for filing falls on a weekend or holiday?**

If the due date falls on a non-working day for the Tax and License Administration (Revenue) Division, an official US Postal Service postmark, or hand-delivery on the next business day is accepted as timely filing. **IMPORTANT NOTE: The City may not observe all federal or state holidays.** Please call the Tax and License Administration (Revenue) Division for official holiday filing requirements, or check the City's official Website for the current listing of City Holidays.

**If I have an existing business license, how do I renew online?**

In December, Avenu sent postcards to businesses about the new online access. Businesses with existing licenses were able to log into the system once they received a postcard using the unique username and password printed in the postcard.

**What do I do if I need a special permit?**

Businesses requiring special permits and licenses should still begin by using the online platform. If you need a special license, city staff from the appropriate department will contact you.

**Can someone help me file using the new platform?**

Yes! Avenu has a dedicated customer support team accepting phone calls between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CST, Monday - Friday. You can reach them by calling (800)556-7274 or email [rdssupport@avenuinsights.com](mailto:rdssupport@avenuinsights.com).

You can also visit the customer service windows in the City Hall lobby to get one-on-one guidance. City Hall is located at 710 20<sup>th</sup> Street North. You will need to enter via the doors that face 20<sup>th</sup> Street North and Linn Park.

**Will the old forms be accepted if I have them?**

Old licensing forms are no longer accepted. The city will be handling all applications and renewals through Avenu's platform.

**Where do I send my business' sales, use, lease and lodging tax going forward?**

Beginning with November 2019 taxes (due by December 20), Avenu provided an additional option to file sales, use, lease, lodging and occupational withholding taxes to Birmingham businesses. Businesses will receive additional information in November regarding the updates.

- Businesses that previously filed on the City of Birmingham's Online Tax Filing System through the City's website were directed to the updated online filing link.

- Businesses that currently file using the MAT/One Spot online portal for sales, use, lease and lodging tax may continue to do so.

- Avenu is providing online filing for sales, use, lease and lodging taxes in addition to the occupational withholding, monthly alcohol and off-road diesel taxes. When filing the occupational withholding, alcohol and off-road diesel taxes through the new site, businesses can decide to file their sales, use, lease and lodging tax on the site as well.

**What if I currently file my business' City of Birmingham sales, use, lease or lodging tax through the MAT/One Spot system?**

- Businesses that currently file using the MAT/One Spot online portal for sales, use, lease and lodging tax may continue to do so.

- Avenu is providing online filing for sales, use, lease and lodging taxes in addition to the occupational withholding, monthly alcohol and off-road diesel taxes. When filing the occupational withholding, alcohol and off-road diesel taxes through the new site, businesses can decide to file their sales, use, lease and lodging tax on the site as well.

**Still have unanswered questions?**

If you still have other questions that aren't answered here, you can contact the Department of Finance's Office of Tax & License Administration at (205) 254-2198.