



A Case Study in City Responsiveness: Raleigh's Small Business Shift

Economic and Social Advancement

Small Business Development Division

raleighnc.gov



Executive Summary

Raleigh's Small Business Development team was created in July 2022 with a clear purpose: to strengthen the city's economic resilience by supporting the 26,000+ small businesses that shape its character and vitality. Aligned with the City's Economic Development & Innovation strategic goals, the team serves as a dedicated ally to businesses of all types, storefronts, home-based entrepreneurs, startups, and long-standing community staples.

Since 2022, the City has implemented a wide range of policy updates, pilots, and public improvements that directly strengthen the small business environment.

Progress Highlights: 2022–Present

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| Strategic Foundations & Organizational Alignment | Established a four-person Small Business Development team aligned with the City's Strategic Plan for Economic Development and Innovation. |
| Centralized Information Hubs for Small Businesses | <p>Raleigh now offers a centralized, user-friendly small business webpage that brings together essential resources, all available in over 50 languages. Resources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Business Startup Roadmaps • Small Business Event Calendar • Small Business Insights Toolkit • Small Business Training Resources <p>The webpage also directs entrepreneurs straight to the new Planning and Development permitting portal, making it easier to find and start the permits they need. Planning and Development seeks continuous improvements to Intake Efficiency, the Utility Billing Portal, Fee Guides, and the Ask Raleigh Customer Experience Center.</p> |
| Policy & Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) | <p>Permitting & Regulatory Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UDO: Parking minimums relaxed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UDO: Home-based business permitting relaxed • Sidewalk dining permitting updates (including special events) • Food truck permitting updates • Pushcart permitting updates • Noise ordinance updates to better balance business and resident needs |

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| Mobility, Access & Public Improvements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended 2-hour free parking pilot downtown to improve short-term access for shoppers, diners, and visitors• New loading and pickup parking zones to support delivery, rideshare, and quick customer stops• Fayetteville Street streetscaping pilot with Downtown Raleigh Alliance with future phases planned to enhance walkability and public space• Increased downtown residential buildout, growing foot traffic and expanding the built-in customer base |
| New Programs, Pilots & Business Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Facade Rehabilitation Grant</u> reactivation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ City Council approved the reactivation of the Facade Rehabilitation Grant. Property owners and businesses can receive matching reimbursement grants of up to \$10,000 to refurbish the exteriors of their existing buildings.• <u>Greenway Small Business Pilot</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This pilot program through Raleigh Parks offers food trucks and carts the opportunity to serve at some of the city's busiest greenway locations. Interested vendors can reserve a space in the park for just \$50 per day.• Through City-hosted events like Winterfaire, Business in Bloom, Small Business Expo, Raleigh Tamale, and Legal Lift, as well as City-sponsored events such as Dreamville, SMASH! by Triangle ArtWorks, and the Small Business Fair by Consult Your Community, the City has increased visibility and accessibility to local entrepreneurs and small businesses. |