



# City of Laredo

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT**

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**SMALL BUSINESSES  
RESOURCE GUIDE**

2025 EDITION

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	Welcome & Purpose	2
II	City Departments & Permitting Process	3
	Engineering Department	3
	Planning & Zoning Department	3
	Planning Division	3
	Building Development Services Division	3
	Health Department	4
	Fire Department	5
	Utilities Department	5
	Environmental Department	5
III	Nonprofit & Business Support Organizations	6
IV	Licensing, Permits & Compliance Checklist	9
V	Business Formation & Registration	12
	Business Structure	14
VI	Federal & State Tax Obligations	15
VII	Financial Resources & Incentives	17
VIII	City of Laredo Department Directory	19
VIII	Appendices	20
	Frequently Asked Questions	20

## **Welcome & Purpose**

Congratulations on taking the first step in your journey as a small business owner or entrepreneur in the City of Laredo. Starting or expanding a business is both an exciting and challenging endeavor, and your decision to invest in our community plays an important role in strengthening the local economy, creating jobs, and enriching the quality of life for our residents. The City of Laredo recognizes the dedication, creativity, and resilience it takes to pursue your vision, and we commend you for moving forward with this significant milestone.

The City of Laredo is committed to helping entrepreneurs succeed. Whether you are opening a restaurant, expanding your business downtown, or seeking guidance on permits, this guide will connect you with the right departments, nonprofit organizations, and financial resources. Our goal is simple: to make doing business in Laredo easier, faster, and more successful. Within these pages, you will find practical tools, step-by-step information, and direct contacts designed to guide you through the process with clarity and confidence.

We welcome you to Laredo's business community and look forward to supporting you at every stage of your journey. Together, we can continue building a thriving, innovative, and vibrant local economy.

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# City Departments & Permitting Process

## Engineering Department

The Engineering Department is responsible for the planning, design, and construction of capital improvement projects, ensuring compliance with City standards as well as local, state, and federal regulations. The department also works closely with other City divisions to review and process residential, commercial, and industrial land development projects. In addition, the department plays a vital role in promoting the safe and efficient movement of traffic throughout City streets. This includes illuminating intersections and major roadways, enforcing parking regulations, and overseeing the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of traffic signals, traffic signs, traffic calming measures, street lighting, and pavement markings across the City of Laredo.

- **Contact:**  
1110 Houston St.  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Phone: (956) 791-7346
- 

## Planning & Zoning Department

The Planning and Zoning Department is dedicated to promoting safe, healthy, and sustainable growth throughout the City of Laredo. Its mission is to implement land use policies, zoning regulations, and building standards that encourage responsible development, safeguard community well-being, and serve the public interest. The department directs the City's physical development through coordinated land use planning, project review, and enforcement of development standards. It is structured into two primary service areas:

### Planning Division

- Manages long-range planning and zoning administration
- Processes zoning change requests, Special Use Permits (SUPs), and Conditional Use Permits (CUPs)
- Reviews subdivision plats to ensure compliance with subdivision regulations
- Provides staff support to the Planning and zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and Historic/Landmark Board
- **Contact:**  
1413 Houston St.  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Phone: (956) 794-1613

### Building Development Services Division

- Reviews construction plans for code and safety compliance
- Issues building permits for residential, commercial, and industrial projects
- Conducts field inspections during construction
- Issues Certificates of Occupancy once requirements are met
- Enforces building codes and accessibility standards under the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS)
- Promotes safe, accessible, and compliant construction across the City

- **Contact:**  
1413 Houston St.  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Phone: (956) 794-1625 | bldgpermits@ci.laredo.tx.us
- 

## Health Department

All businesses are required to comply with the regulations established by the City of Laredo's Building and Zoning Department. In addition, certain types of businesses, especially those handling food, health, or public services, must obtain permits from the Health Department, Environmental Health Division.

The Environmental health Division is responsible for safeguarding public health by conducting inspections and enforcing sanitation, safety, and state health regulations. They issue permits, monitor compliance, and provide guidance to ensure businesses operate safely and protect the community.

### Functions of the Health Department - Environmental Health Division

- Issue food permits and conduct routine health inspections
  - Ensure proper food handling, preparation, and storage practices
  - Monitor waste disposal and grease control to prevent sewer blockages
  - Check facilities for adequate plumbing, sinks, and restroom sanitation
  - Inspect water quality and swimming pools (public and semi-public)
  - Oversee tattoo and body art establishments for compliance with health standards
  - Enforce state and local regulations for child and adult care facilities
  - Provide education to business owners on sanitation and public health practices
  - **Contact:**  
2600 Cedar Ave – P.O. Box 2337  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Phone: (956) 795-4904
- 

## Fire Department

The Fire Department's Fire Marshal's Permit Office is responsible for reviewing plans, issuing permits, and conducting inspections related to various safety systems and new construction projects. This includes oversight of new building developments, alterations, and renovations to ensure compliance with fire codes. We also perform inspections necessary for business to obtain Certificate of Occupancy, ensuring all fire safety standards are met before opening. Additionally, we review, permit, and inspect specialized systems such as overhead and underground fire sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, clean agent systems, fire suppressions systems above cooking equipment, as well as above / underground storage tanks and tent permits. Our goal is to promote safe building practices and fire safety compliance throughout the development process.

### Key Responsibilities:

- Review plans. Issue permits, and perform inspections for new construction, alterations, and fire safety systems.
  - Conduct inspections for Certificate of Occupancy related to fire safety.
  - Ensure compliance for fire sprinkler, alarm, suppression, storage tanks, and tent permits.
  - **Contact:**  
Permit Division  
1413 Houston St.  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Phone: (956) 794-1633 / (956) 794-1645 / (956) 794-1638
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## Utilities Department

The City of Laredo Utilities Department is responsible for delivering safe, reliable water and wastewater services to the community. The department ensures that new and existing businesses comply with water quality, wastewater pretreatment, and environmental protection standards to safeguard public health and infrastructure. For new entrepreneurs, the Utilities Department provides guidance on requirements related to grease traps, backflow prevention, and industrial waste systems.

### Fat, Oils, and Grease (FOG) Program

If you plan to open a food-related business, you must follow the City's FOG Program requirements to protect the sewer system and prevent costly issues.

- Protects wastewater systems, equipment, and staff
  - Reduces fats, oil, grease, and food waste discharged into sewers
  - Requires use of approved grease traps/interceptors for effective removal
  - Prevents sewer blockages, obstructions, and overflows (SSOs)
  - Reviews backflow prevention and grease trap sizing
  - All food establishments (restaurants, cafeterias, caterers, etc.) must contact the Water Utilities Department for specifications and approvals
  - Business owners are responsible for installing a property sized grease trap per City police
  - **Contact:**  
City of Laredo, City Hall Annex  
1102 Bob Bullock Lp.  
Laredo, Texas 78043  
Phone: (956) 721-2000  
(956) 721-2007
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## Environmental Services

Stormwater runoff pollution happens when rain carries debris and contamination like oils, plastics, and chemicals into creek rivers. This type of pollution, called Non-Point Source (NPS) Pollution harms, water quality for people, fish, and wildlife. Business such as restaurants, tire shops, mechanics, and car sales can unintentionally contribute through improper waste disposal outside their buildings.

Environmental Services helps by:

- Educating applicants on stormwater rules and regulations
  - Providing guidance to prevent contamination from daily operations
  - Promoting proper disposal of hazardous materials and liquids
  - **Contact:**  
619 Reynolds St.  
Laredo, Texas  
Phone: (956) 794-1650
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## Nonprofit & Business Support Organizations

- **TAMIU Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**

The TAMIU Small Business Development Center supports entrepreneurs and small business owners by providing guidance, training, and resources to help them start, grow, and succeed. Its goal is to strengthen local businesses, create jobs, and promote economic growth in the community.

The TAMIU SBDC is a proud member of the Texas South-West SBDC Network, is funded through the State of Texas and a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), is hosted by the University of Texas at San Antonio, and accredited nationally by America's SBDC.

- **Services offered:**
    - One-on-one business advising (business planning, financial analysis, marketing, human resources, etc.) at no cost.
    - Low-cost or no-cost training, workshops, and webinars covering topics like finance, marketing, accounting basics, computer skills, and business growth strategies.
    - Research and data support: market research, demographic data, financial modeling to help businesses make informed decisions.
  - **Contact Information:**
    - Sue & Radcliffe Killam Library, Room 321, 5201 University Boulevard
    - Phone: (956)326-2827
    - Website: <https://www.tamtu.edu/sbdc>
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- **Laredo Chamber of Commerce** → Networking, business advocacy, and promotional opportunities.

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is a member-based nonprofit supporting local entrepreneurs, strengthening the economy, and encouraging investment in the region. It serves as a hub for entrepreneurs seeking resources to grow, connect, and gain visibility in the community.

### Services for Entrepreneurs & Small Business Owners

- **Networking:** Access events, ribbon cuttings, and a membership directly to connect with peers and potential customers.

- **Business Growth Resources:** Guidance on starting or expanding a business, alternate financing, and procurement opportunities.
- **Advocacy:** Represents members' interest at the local, state, and federal levels to promote a stronger business environment.
- **Visibility & Promotion:** Highlights member business through marketing channels, business spotlights, and directory listings.

## Mission & Values

The Chamber's mission is to provide leadership by connecting, building, and advocating for the business, tourism, and education sectors of Laredo and Webb County. Its vision is to be a trusted partner and resource for the business community, grounded in values of honesty, integrity, trust, and respect.

- **Contact Information**
  - Address: 5702 McPherson Rd, Suite 8B, Laredo TX 78041
  - Phone: (956) 722-9895
  - Website: [laredochamber.com](http://laredochamber.com)

- **Workforce Solutions for South Texas (Laredo, TX)**

Workforce Solutions helps build a skilled workforce to meet the needs of local employers. The goal is to connect business with qualified workers and give entrepreneurs the support they need to hire, train, and grow.

### Services for Business Owners

- Free assistance with recruiting, hiring, and training employees
- Access to work-ready candidates and customized workforce planning
- Guidance on labor laws and compliance issues
- Childcare assistance programs that support working parents and improve employee retention
- Career counseling, skills, training, and job placement support for the local workforce
- **Contact Information**
  - 1406 Jacaman Rd, Laredo, TX 78041
  - (956) 794-6500
  - [southtexasworkforce.org](http://southtexasworkforce.org)

- **Laredo Main Street**

Laredo Main Street is dedicated to revitalizing downtown by supporting small business, preserving historic character, and encouraging community events that attract residents and visitors. Its mission is to strengthen the heart of the city while creating opportunities for entrepreneurs and local business owners.

### Services and Support for Small Business

- Free and low-cost workshops (such as social media marketing) to help businesses grow their customer base.
  - Special events and festivals (e.g., Farmer’s Market, Veggies Fiesta) that bring foot traffic and visibility to downtown business.
  - Promotion of local shops, restaurants, galleries, and lodging through its platforms
  - **Contact Information**
    - 1000 Zaragoza Street, Suite 107, Laredo TX 78040
    - (956)523-8817
    - 🌐 Learn more: [laredomainstreet.org](http://laredomainstreet.org)
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- **Laredo Economic Development Corporation (LEDC)**

LEDC acts as the primary private-sector partner for new and growing businesses in Laredo & Webb County. They make the region, attract investment, and make it easier for entrepreneurs to navigate incentives, site selection, and economic data.

**Services for Business Owners**

- Offers community data, economic indicators, and market research to help you make informed business decisions.
  - Helps find and evaluate commercial or industrial sites for your operations.
  - Screens and assists with local, county, and state incentives to reduce costs to support expansion.
  - Provides support for new business prospects, especially those targeting international trade or growth industries.
  - **Contact Information**
    - Address: 616 Leal Street, P.O. Box 2682, Laredo TX, 78041
    - Phone: (956) 722-0563
    - Website: [laredoedc.org](http://laredoedc.org)
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- **MileOne**

MileOne, part of the Laredo Economic Development Corporation, empowers, entrepreneurs with workspace, mentorship, and startup tools to grow their business locally and beyond.

**What Mile One Offers You**

- Coworking & private offices with professional amenities at flexible rates
- Business incubation and growth acceleration programs with mentorship & expert guidance
- Early-stage startup support (Launchpad) to refine your business model scale operations
- Access to conference/meeting rooms, printing/scanning, mail services, high-speed internet, and networking events to help you connect and grow
- **Contact Information**
  - Address: 1312 Houston St., Laredo TX 78040
  - Phone: (956) 413-8855

- Website: [mileoneinc.com](http://mileoneinc.com)
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- **Laredo College**

Laredo College provides a wide range of career and technical training programs designed to meet industry standards. Students receive expert instruction and hands-on experience to build essential workplace skills. The college also offers specialized training to prepare for new careers or to enhance skills for existing jobs,

The Laredo CARES is a workforce skills, development and certification program that is open to individual who had been laid-off, furloughed, or underemployed due to the pandemic. This program is available through a partnership between the City of Laredo, Laredo College, and Workforce Solutions for South Texas and allows eligible participants to choose from a wide-ranging set of highly skilled programs and become certified in a span of less than six months. There are 18 short-term programs offered at Laredo College that have been identified due to their high demand in the job market.

- **Contact Information**

- Dean of Workforce Education: (956) 721-5802
  - Campuses:
    - Fort McIntosh Campus: West End Washington Street, Laredo TX 78040
  - Website:  Workforce Education Division: [laredo.edu/Academic-Departments/workforce-education](http://laredo.edu/Academic-Departments/workforce-education) [laredo.edu](http://laredo.edu)  
Continuing Education / Professional, Industry & Workforce Trainings: [laredo.edu/Academic-Departments/continuing-education/professional-industry-workforce-training](http://laredo.edu/Academic-Departments/continuing-education/professional-industry-workforce-training)
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## Licensing, Permits & Compliance Checklist

### Before You Open:

- ✓ Check zoning clearance.
- ✓ Submit building permit plans.
- ✓ If selling alcohol, obtain a state license and an Alcoholic Beverage Permit from the City Secretary's Office
- ✓ Obtain health permit (restaurants, food-related businesses).
- ✓ Schedule fire and building inspections.
- ✓ Secure Certificate of Occupancy

### After You Open:

- ✓ Renew permits as required.
- ✓ Maintain grease trap & stormwater compliance.
- ✓ Follow signage and ROW rules.

## Local Compliance & Zoning

- **City of Laredo Building & Zoning Department** – Reviews zoning, building codes, and inspections required before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.
  - Website: [Building Development Services](#)
  - Building Development Services - [New Business Permit Application Requirement](#)
- See the Land Development Code, Section 24.38 Permitted Land Uses for the City of Laredo. For more information contact the Business Liaison at (956)791-7459.
  - Planning Department Website – [Permitted Land Use Map](#)
  - Planning Department Website - [Zoning Map](#)
- **Webb County Appraisal District** – Appraises business personal property for tax purposes and administers annual renditions.
  - Website: [webbcad.org](http://webbcad.org)

**LICENSES AND/OR PERMITS REQUIRED** – The type of permit license is needed based on the specific type of business.

- **Texas Economic Development & Tourism – License & Permit Guide** – Lists state licenses and permits required for specific industries.
  - Website: <https://gov.texas.gov/business/page/business-permits-office>
  - 2024-2025 Guide: Texas Licenses & Permits Guide (PDF) - [https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/business/Texas\\_Licenses\\_Permits\\_Guide.pdf](https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/business/Texas_Licenses_Permits_Guide.pdf)
- **Governor’s Small Business Resource Portal** – Interactive tool to identify permits, licenses, and resources tailored to your business type. <https://gov.texas.gov/business/page/small-business-portal>
- **Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC)** – Issues liquor licenses and alcohol permits for businesses selling or serving alcohol.

The Licensing division of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission investigates and processes application for all phases of the alcoholic beverage industry. Contact the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for initial information and initial guidance as to the type of permit is required for the type of business you are operating.

**Primary Licensing Office for Webb County**

Nightingale Plaza, Suite D  
 6521 North 10th Street  
 McAllen, TX 78504  
 Phone: (956) 687-5141

**Secondary Licensing Office for Webb County**

San Antonio Regional Office – Goliad Building, Suite 120  
 4203 Woodcock Drive  
 San Antonio, TX 78228  
 Phone: (210) 731-1720  
 Website: [tabc.texas.gov](http://tabc.texas.gov)

Please be advised that TABC applications are composed by different requirements. These requirements are governed by numerous levels of government and/or entities. The City of Laredo, as a municipality, only oversees one part of the application. The County of Webb, the Controller's Office and the TABC oversee the other parts of the application.

- **City of Laredo City Secretary's Office**

City of Laredo City's Secretary's Office- For formal processing with the City of Laredo, hand deliver a complete, original, notarized TABC application to the City secretary's Office. Application initial drop-off, certification and/or payment hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.

Contact information:

1110 Houston Street Laredo Texas  
City Hall, City Secretary's Office  
(956) 791-7312

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- **FOOD SERVICE PERMITS / LICENSE**

**Business Requiring Health Department Permits**

- Commercial Food Establishment
- Street Vendors and Mobile Food Trucks
- Tire Shops an Semi-Public Pools
- Tattoo and Body Piercing Shops (must also receive approval from the Texas Department of Health Services)
- Schools
- Commercial Adult and Child Day Care Facilities
- Temporary Food Vendors
- Temporary Food Parlors
- Temporary piercing vendors

**Certification for Food Handlers**

- Classes are offered at the City of Laredo Health Department:
  - **Tuesday:** 2:00 PM (Registration: 1:30 PM)
  - **Friday:** 9:00 AM (Registration: 8:30 AM)
  - **Location:** 2600 Cedar Ave
- Cost: \$25.00
- Certificate is valid for two years
- All food establishment employees must take the class within the first 14 days of being hired
- Online options (state-approved websites)
  - [www.learn2serve.com](http://www.learn2serve.com)
  - [www.statefoodsafety.com](http://www.statefoodsafety.com)
  - [www.nrfsp.com](http://www.nrfsp.com)

**Certification for Food Managers**

All food establishments handling potentially hazardous foods must have a certified **Food Service Operator (FSOP)** on duty during all hours of operation.

**How to Obtain an FSOP ID:**

- Provide proof of accredited training (**Food Manager Certification**)
- Pay a **\$30 fee** (Health Department issues the FSOP ID once training is complete)

**Training Options:**

- **Laredo College**
  - Cira H. Hernandez: (956) 794-4520
  - Eddie Rangel: (956) 721-5374
- **State-accredited online courses** (English & Spanish)
  - learn2serve.com
  - statefoodsafety.com

For more information contact the City of Laredo Health Department:  
Environmental Health Services Division  
2600 Cedar Ave – P.O. Box 2337  
Phone: (956) 794-4904

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- **CONTRACTOR LICENSING AND REGISTRATION** – The city of Laredo requires all City and State licensed contractors to be registered with the Building Development Services prior to the issuance of any permit(s). First time contractors registering with the City will need to register in person at the city of Laredo Planning and Zoning Department, Building Development Services or email application at [bldgpermits@ci.laredo.tx.us](mailto:bldgpermits@ci.laredo.tx.us).

Contact Information:

1413 Houston Street. Laredo Texas  
Planning and Zoning Department, Building Development Services Division  
(956) 794-1625

Website: <https://www.cityoflaredo.com/departments/building-development-services/permit-applications-requirements>

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## Business Formation & Registration

**Business Formation** – The decision regarding a business structure is a decision that a person should make in consultation with an attorney and accountant, and taking into consideration issues regarding formality of operation, tax, liability, and management. These resources guide entrepreneurs through the legal requirements at the city, county, state, and federal levels when starting a business

- **Tip for Entrepreneurs:** Each step builds on the other. Start by selecting your business structure, register your name, secure licenses/permits, and then complete state and federal tax obligations. Always check local zoning and inspection requirements **before signing a lease**.

- **Texas Secretary of State** – File a Certificate of Formation to establish an LLC, Corporation, or other entity, or file a Certificate of Authority for foreign entities. Required for businesses seeking legal recognition at the state level.
    - Website: [sos.state.tx.us](https://sos.state.tx.us)
    - Guide: [Selecting a Business Structure](#)
    - Online Filing: [SOSDirect Portal](#)
  - **Webb County Clerk’s Office** – Register a Sole Proprietorship, General Partnership, or Assumed Business Name (DBA). Essential for businesses not incorporated with the state.
    - 1110 Victoria St. #201, Laredo TX 78040
    - (956) 523-4266
    - Address: 1110 Victoria Street, Suite 203, Laredo, TX 78040
    - Website: [Webb County Clerk](#)
    - Assumed Name Certificate Form: [Assumed Name Certificate](#)
  - **Governor’s Small Business Handbook** – A detailed guide with checklists and best practices for launching and managing a business in Texas.
  - **Texas Economic Development & Tourism: Start a Business in Texas** – Provides step-by-step resources on state registration, permits, and incentives available to entrepreneurs.
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### Out-of-State or Foreign Entities

Corporations, LLCs, and Limited Partnerships formed outside of Texas must obtain a **Certificate of Authority** from the Secretary of State to conduct business in Texas.

### Online Filing

The Secretary of State’s **SOSDirect** portal allows you to file formation documents, assumed name certificates, and other business filings online.

📍 **Office Address:** James E. Rudder Building, 1019 Brazos St., Austin, TX 78701

☎ **Phone:** (512) 463-5555 | [Texas Secretary of State Website](#)

🔗 [SOSDirect Filing Portal](#)

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### Foreign Citizens Doing Business in the U.S.

Foreign nationals who wish to start a business must:

- Obtain a **B-1 Visitor Visa** from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
- File **Form I-526 (Immigrant Petition by Alien Entrepreneur)** with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

📍 **USCIS Laredo Office:**

707 East Calton Road, Suite 301, Laredo, TX 78041

## Business Structure

- **Sole Proprietorship**

The simplest and most common type of business structure. A sole proprietorship is owned and operated by one individual without formal organization. If the business uses an assumed name (different from the owner’s surname), a **DBA (Doing Business As) certificate** must be filed with the county clerk where the business operates. If there is no physical business location, the DBA must be filed in every county where the business name is used.

- **Assumed Name Certificate** – If a business will operate as a sole proprietorship or a partnership, an Assumed Name Certificate or DBA (Doing Business As) for each name that the business will use must be on file with the county clerk office in which business will be conducted. In this case assumed name certificate must be registered with the Webb County Clerk’s Office

- **General Partnership**

Formed when two or more individuals agree to operate a business for profit. A written partnership agreement is common but not required, and there is no state filing requirement. If the partnership operates under an assumed name, a **DBA certificate** must be filed with the county clerk where the business is located—or in all counties where the business name is used if there is no fixed location.

- **Corporation**

Formed by filing **Articles of Incorporation** with the Texas Secretary of State. The Secretary of State provides standard forms that meet minimum state requirements, and filings can be submitted online through **SOSDirect**.

- An “S” Corporation is a federal tax election made with the IRS, not a state filing

- **Limited Liability Company (LLC)**

Formed by filing a Certificate of Formation with the Secretary of State (also available online through SOSDirect). An LLC combines features of a partnership and a corporation, offering limited liability and flexible management.

- Owners are called members, which can include individuals, corporations, or other entities.
- LLCs generally provide limited liability protection and can benefit from favorable tax treatment.

- **Limited Partnership (LP)**

Formed by two or more people, with at least one general partner (manages and has liability) and one or more limited partners (investors with limited liability). Must file a Certificate of Formation with the Secretary of State.

- **Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)**

A general or limited partnership may register as an LLP to limit the liability of its partners. Registration is filed with the Secretary of State and can be submitted online through SOSDirect.

## **Texas Secretary of State**

All corporations operating in Texas must file **Articles of Incorporation** with the Secretary of State.

- If the corporation uses a name other than the one filed, an **Assumed Name Certificate** must also be registered with the **Webb County Clerk**.
- Other entities that must file with the Secretary of State include:
  - Limited Partnerships (LP)
  - Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP)
  - Limited Liability Companies (LLC)
  - Professional Corporations (PC)
  - Professional Associations (PA)
  - Nonprofit Corporations

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## **Federal & State Tax Obligations**

### **Business Tax Identification Numbers & Federal Taxes**

Tax Identification Number (TIN) – is a number used by the IRS to identify taxpayers. Most individuals use their social security number (SSN) as their TIN, but businesses may need other IDs depending on their structure.

- Most small businesses use the owner’s **Social Security Number (SSN)** as their TIN.
  -  [IRS – Taxpayer Identification Numbers](#)

**Employer Identification Number (EIN)** – An EIN is issued by the IRS to identify a business entity for tax purposes.

- Required for:
  - Sole proprietors with employees
  - All partnerships, corporations, LLCs, and nonprofits
- Apply by completing **Form SS-4**.
- How to apply:
  - Online: [IRS EIN Application](#)
  - By phone: **IRS Business & Specialty Tax Line (800) 829-4933**
  - By mail or fax: instructions are provided on the IRS website.

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**Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts** – Administers state tax obligations including sales tax, fuel tax, and franchise tax.

- **Sales and Use Tax Permit**

Every business—whether a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, or other entity—should contact the **Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts** to determine if a Sales and Use Tax Permit is required for the products sold, rented, leased, or services provided. There is **no fee** for the permit, though a bond or security may be required. The Comptroller also provides information on tax exemptions.

- Apply for a Sales Tax Permit (Retail, Restaurant, Grocery): [comptroller.texas.gov](http://comptroller.texas.gov)
- Fuel Tax Agreement (Freightliner Owner-Operators): [comptroller.texas.gov](http://comptroller.texas.gov)
- Local Office: 5219 McPherson Rd., Suite 302, Laredo, TX 78041
- Phone: (956) 722-2859

**NOTE: Penalty for Operating Without a Sales and Use Tax Permit**

Operating a retail business in Texas without a valid Sales and Use Tax Permit—or continuing to operate after a permit has been suspended—is a criminal offense. Business owners and corporate officers may be fined **up to \$500 per day** for each day the business operates without the required permit.

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## Federal Business Taxes

Businesses must comply with federal tax requirements, depending on their structure and operations:

- **Federal Income Tax** – Most businesses must file an annual return. Partnerships file an **information return** instead. Taxes are paid as you earn income, usually through withholding or quarterly estimated tax payments.
  - More info: [IRS Business Taxes](#)
- **Self-Employment Tax** – Covers **Social Security and Medicare contributions** for individuals who work for themselves. Payments ensure coverage under the Social Security system.
  - Details: [IRS Self-Employment Tax](#)
- **Employment Taxes** – If you have employees, you must withhold income tax, Social Security, and Medicare taxes. Use **IRS Publication 15 (Circular E, Employer’s Tax Guide)** for guidance.
  - Download: [IRS Publication 15](#)
- **Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)** – A federal and state program that funds unemployment compensation for workers who lose their jobs. FUTA is reported and paid separately from Social Security, Medicare, and withholding taxes.
  - Info: [IRS FUTA Tax](#)

## Financial Resources & Incentives

- **Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ)**  
Created by the City's Economic Development & Building Development Services. Offers **municipal property tax abatements** and **fee waivers** to property owners who build or rehabilitate residential, multi-family, commercial, or mixed-use properties in designated NEZ areas. Eligibility includes being in a NEZ area, investing or rehabilitating property (e.g., rehab must be at least 20% over County Appraisal District improvement value), proper zoning, no tax liens, etc. [City of Laredo - NEZ](#)
  - **Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)**  
A financing tool that enables property owners to fund infrastructure upgrades (energy efficiency, water conservation, etc.) through long-term repayment via property assessments. Helps with improvements like solar panels, efficient HVAC, lighting upgrades, insulation, etc. [City of Laredo - PACE](#)
  - **Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) #1 Downtown**  
A TIRZ captures the increase in property tax revenue generated by new development or rising property values in the zone and reinvests that back into the zone for infrastructure, beautification, streetscape improvements (e.g., murals, signage, lighting) to support downtown revitalization. [City of Laredo - TIRZ](#)
  - **Chapter 380 Incentive Program**  
Local program allowing the City to rebate property taxes or provide other incentives (services, grants, etc.) to projects that stimulate economic development or investment, especially in targeted areas. Business/commercial activity that creates jobs or revitalizes areas (like downtown) are strong candidates. [City of Laredo - Chapter 380](#)
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## State of Texas Incentives

- **Texas Enterprise Zone Program (EZP)**  
State-level program to encourage private investment and job creation in economically distressed areas. Offers **sales and use tax refunds** on qualified expenditures for entities that meet capital investment and job creation/retention thresholds. Requires nomination by jurisdiction and meeting criteria. [Texas Enterprise Zone Program](#)
  - Other state grants & incentives include resources for workforce development, job training programs (e.g., Skills Development Fund), and tax incentive programs for "targeted" industries. [Texas Business Incentives and Programs](#)
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## Federal (SBA & Others)

- **SBA 7(a) Loans**  
General small business loans backed by the Small Business Administration. Good for startup costs, working capital, expansion, etc. [U.S. Small Business Administration Funding Programs](#)
- **SBA 504 Loans**  
Loans specifically designed for major fixed assets like real estate or large equipment. Lower down payments, long repayment terms. [U.S. Small Business Administration Funding Programs](#)

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## Local / Non-Profit & Microfinance

- **LiftFund**

Lift-Fund is a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and Community Development Corporation (CDC) that supports small business owners with limited access to capital through small business loans and technical support for their dreams of entrepreneurship. LiftFund supports thousands of small businesses through microloans, small business loans, and other resources such as providing direct capital to clients through SBA microloans, SBA Community Advantage, SBA 504 Loans, and EDA Loans.

- **Contact Information**

Laredo Texas Office: 902 E. Calton Road  
Laredo, Texas 78041  
1-888-215-2373

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## Contacts Directory (Quick Reference)

### City of Laredo Department Directory

Department	Phone Number
Economic Development Department	(956) 791-7397
Engineering Department / Traffic Safety Division	(956) 791-7346
Planning Department	(956) 794-1613
Building Development Services	(956) 794-1625
Utilities Department	(956) 721-2000
Health Department	(956) 795-4900
Health Department – Environmental Health Services	(956) 795-4904
Environmental Services	(956) 794-1650
Animal Care Services	(956) 625-1860
311 Program	Dial 311
Laredo Police Department	(956) 795-2800
Human Resources	(956) 722-7444
Parks and Recreation	(956) 729-4610
Community Development	(956) 795-2675
Purchasing	(956) 790-1800
Solid Waste	(956) 796-1098
Public Works	(956) 795-2500
Convention & Visitors Bureau	(956) 795-2200
City Secretary	(956) 791-7308
City Manager	(956) 791-7302
Finance	(956) 791-7425
Fire Department	(956) 718-6000
Solid Waste Management	(956) 796-1098

## Appendices

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### **Q: Where do I pay permit fees?**

Permit fees are paid through the City of Laredo's **Building Development Services Department**.

You may pay them in person at 1413 Houston Street or online [Click2GovBP](#)

For details, visit: [Permit Applications & Requirements](#).

Once fees are paid, notify Building Development Services by calling **(956) 794-1625** or emailing **bldgzone@ci.laredo.tx.us**.

#### **Q: How do I schedule inspections?**

To schedule an inspection you may call (956) 734-1660 or online, [Click2GovBP](#)

Inspections must be scheduled **after the business application fee has been paid** in the following order:

1. **Building Inspector** – (956) 286-3715 | Contact: Nadia Peña
2. **Utilities Department** – (956) 721-2007 | Contact: Robert Estrada
3. **Environmental Department** – (956) 794-1650 | Contact: Ivan Santoyo
4. **Health Department** – (956) 795-4904
5. **Fire Department** – (956) 794-1633

*Note: The Fire Department will not schedule its inspection until the Building Inspector's inspection has been completed and approved.*