



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: Economic & Workforce Development Department

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City of Oakland launches free tools to help business owners with permit requirements, location-based zoning research

Oakland, CA – The City of Oakland has launched two free online tools to simplify the process for opening a business: Oakland’s own Zoning Check (zoningcheck.oaklandca.gov) and Business Permitting tool (businesspermits.oaklandca.gov). Through a series of easy-to-answer questions, these apps quickly inform entrepreneurs whether their business venture is allowable at a particular location, what types of City licenses and permits are required, and how much the related fees will be. With these online tools, reliable information is now available 24/7 and accessible from any Internet-enabled device including smartphones. The two apps are available in English, Chinese and Spanish.

“Those looking to invest in Oakland now have a one-stop source for policies and regulations from our Planning, Building, Zoning, Fire, and Revenue divisions, all in one place,” said Mark Sawicki, Director of the Economic & Workforce Development Department. “Research shrinks to a few minutes, allowing for agile decision-making and business planning.”

“As a small business owner, this new platform to help pre-determine your permits and costs is a game-changer,” said Miz Chris (aka Christine De La Rosa), co-owner of Craft & Spoon, Town Biz, Queen of Hearts Art Gallery, and Benefit Health Collective. “When I opened my first small business in Oakland in 2013, many roadblocks I encountered had to do with permitting and my lack of knowledge about them. Having a program like this five years ago would have shortened my timeline considerably. I am excited for our future small business owners to use this program for their entrepreneurial endeavors.”

The two new online tools advance the objectives outlined in the City’s [Economic Development Strategy](#) that was adopted by the City Council in November 2017. The Strategy outlines steps to make Oakland an easy, efficient, and prosperous place to do business, while finding ways to give marginalized businesses and residents the tools and access they need to thrive now.

“I’ve used both sites and they’ve already provided a great assist in helping identify appropriate buildings for my clients efficiently and expeditiously,” said Kristi Childers, broker with Jones Lang LaSalle Brokerage, Inc.

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The City's Economic & Workforce Development Department spearheaded development of these online tools in partnership with OpenCounter, a platform that was piloted through a Code for America fellowship in the City of Santa Cruz, California and has been supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Initial development of the two apps was supported through a \$50,000 grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Oakland was one of 28 cities to receive the SBA's "Startup in a Day" grant funding to launch tools that enable entrepreneurs to obtain all the permits they need to open a business in a single day.

With exceptional transit options, a diverse population, access to a skilled workforce, a high quality of life, and affordable costs relative to the Bay Area's other large cities, Oakland is the smart choice for entrepreneurs and business owners needing a strategic location minutes from San Francisco and Silicon Valley. Online tools to speed research and permitting make it even easier to startup and thrive here. In a recent post, Riley McDermid, digital producer for the *San Francisco Business Times*, wrote, "Oakland remains one of the Bay Area's largest and most reliable locations for economic growth..."

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