

12 STEPS TO STARTING A BUSINESS IN LOS ALTOS



STEP 01 YOUR BRILLIANT BUSINESS IDEA

Congratulations! You've come up with a brilliant business idea and have decided on Los Altos as the place for your business. This information will help guide you as you turn your idea into reality.

STEP 02 JOIN THE CHAMBER!

Opening a new business is incredibly challenging. Join the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce so we can help you navigate the process from finding the ideal location to getting plans and permit approvals. We can help you every step of the way. It's what we do!

STEP 03 CONNECT WITH THE CITY

Connect with the City of Los Altos Economic Development at (650) 947-2620 or econdev@losaltosca.gov for more detailed information about starting a business in Los Altos. It is crucial that you contact them early so that they can assist you in meeting all requirements and open your business quickly! Visit losaltosca.gov/ed

STEP 04 DEVELOP A BUSINESS AND MARKETING PLAN

An effective business plan serves as a navigational tool, helping you organize, operate, and expand your business. Take advantage of free counseling provided by SCORE counselors and free classes provided by Silicon Valley SBDC (Small Business Development Center) in developing your plan. Call SCORE at (408) 453-6237 or visit siliconvalleyscore.com. Call SBDC at (408) 924-1402 or visit svsbdc.org

STEP 08 APPLY FOR ZONING APPROVAL

Apply for formal Zoning Approval with the City of Los Altos Planning Division. Before you start your business you must determine if your business use is permitted. This is also true for those interested in a home occupation application. The Planning Division can be reached at (650) 947-2750.

STEP 07 DISCUSS ALL IMPROVEMENT AND CONSTRUCTION PLANS

If you plan to do any tenant improvements or construction, discuss all potential plans with: City of Los Altos planning at (650) 947-2750, City of Los Altos Building at (650) 947-2752, City of Los Altos Engineering at (650) 947-2780. It is also suggested that you consult a CASp specialist to make sure your plans are in compliance with ADA requirements.

STEP 06 CHOOSE A BUSINESS LOCATION

Look for potential locations for your business using a Commercial Real Estate Broker. Refer to the Business Directory located in this magazine, or contact the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce for a referral. Before signing a lease, it is important to contact the Planning Division to find out if the zoning for the potential property allows for your planned use or if it requires a Use Permit. Call (650) 947-2750 or email planning@losaltosca.gov

STEP 05 REGISTER A BUSINESS NAME ("DOING BUSINESS AS")

A fictitious business name (FBN) or "doing business as," also known as a DBA, gives business owners an inexpensive method of gaining the legal right to operate in a name other than their own. It protects the public, and it extends legal protections and privileges to business owners. Contact the Santa Clara County Clerk Recorder's Office at scccrosselfservice.org. Their office is located at 70 W. Hedding, First Floor East Wing, San Jose, CA.

STEP 09 REGISTER FOR STATE AND LOCAL TAXES

Be sure to obtain your tax identification number from the IRS. Register your business with the State of California to obtain a tax identification number, workers' compensation, unemployment and disability insurance. This will help make sure your business is covered.

STEP 10 OBTAIN BUSINESS LICENSES AND PERMITS

Apply for a business license from the City of Los Altos. Visit losaltos.hdlgov.com. If you plan to create new signage, please apply for the necessary permits and complete all necessary inspections with: City of Los Altos Planning at (650) 947-2750, City of Los Altos Building at (650) 947-2752, and City of Los Altos Engineering at (650) 947-2780.

STEP 11 SCHEDULE A RIBBON CUTTING

Schedule a ribbon-cutting with the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber will help coordinate the Mayor to come out and give you ideas for a fabulous Grand Opening! Many businesses will benefit from an early soft open to iron out any kinks that might arise.

STEP 12 OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

Congratulations! We are so excited to watch your business grow. Contact the Chamber of Commerce to help you along your path of success!

