



Steps to Starting a Successful Business In Maryland and the Town of Bel Air

1. Register your business online by completing an application with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation.
2. Apply for a Federal Employee Identification Number (EIN) online with the Internal Revenue Service.
3. Register your business with the Comptroller of Maryland by filing a Combined Registration Application (CRA) businessexpress.maryland.gov.
4. Obtain a Harford County Business License through the Harford County Clerk of the Circuit Court: 24 Office Street; 410-638-3489.
5. Search the Maryland Department of Labor and Licensing website for state business / occupational license requirements and poster notices.
6. Choose your business location. An Available Space Inventory is available on our website. belairmd.org/663/Available-Space-Inventory
7. Apply for your Town of Bel Air Use and Occupancy Certificate (U&O) on our website. belairmd.org/172/Building-Permits. Any structural modifications (interior or exterior) will require a Building Permit. Four sets of architect sealed plans are required. The building permit process takes 4-6 weeks. Contact Chrissy Mullaney at Town of Bel Air Department of Public Works (410-638-4546) with any questions.
8. Apply for your Town of Bel Air Sign Permit belairmd.org/173/Zoning-Permits Contact Laura Bianca-Pruett at the Town of Bel Air Department of Planning (410-638-4540) with any questions.
9. If serving alcohol, your business will require a Special Exception from the Board of Appeals. Contact the Town of Bel Air Department of Planning (410-638-4540). Also, contact the Harford County Liquor Board (410-638-3028) to schedule a hearing.

Recommendations:

- Contact the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for assistance with business plan development. marylandsbdc.org/locations/northern-region
410-386-8390 or rdelgallo@carrollcc.edu
- Join the Harford County Chamber of Commerce. harfordchamber.org
410-838-2020 or membership@harfordchamber.org
108 S. Bond Street, Bel Air, MD 21014
- Join the Bel Air Downtown Alliance. downtownbelair.com
443-823-1797 or info@downtownbelair.com
5 N. Main Street, Suite 2B, Bel Air, MD 21014
- Hire a business attorney to review your documents.
- Hire an accredited accountant to review your financial statements on a regular basis.
- Contact the Town of Bel Air Economic Development Department when you have received your U&O to schedule a ribbon cutting.

Do's and Don'ts:

- Do create a solid Business Plan.
- Do research square footage costs to determine average rates.
- Do contact the Harford County's Business Navigator (Dept. of Inspections, Licenses & Permits), Shawn Krout, if you have questions regarding the commercial permitting process. slkrout@harfordcountymd.gov
- Don't sign a lease until you have your business plan, know the area and surrounding businesses, and understand the criteria involved in getting your Use & Occupancy Certificate (U&O)

In order to get your U&O, you will need to pass code inspections from Town of Bel Air and Harford County. If you are opening a restaurant, you will also need to get a permit from the Health Department. Regardless of your product, you may need to make improvements, repairs or install ADA ramps or restroom facilities to your establishment, so please keep this in mind before signing your lease. You cannot open for business if you do not have your U&O. Agencies you may be dealing with: Health Dept., State Fire Marshal., Bel Air Planning Department, Bel Air Public Works, Harford County Permits Department, Harford County Liquor Board.

Additional Resources:

Small Business Administration (SBA): sba.gov/district/baltimore

Maryland Department of Commerce: commerce.maryland.gov

Maryland Small Business Development Center: marylandsbdc.org

Harford County Office of Economic Development: harfordcountymd.gov/718/Economic-Development

Things to consider when selecting your site:

Town of Bel Air Development Regulations (i.e. signage)

Water and sewer hook-up fees

Parking requirements based on your type of business and your building

ADA accessibility

International Building Code (IBC) Standards

**Information contained in this document is provided for reference only and should not be considered professional advice.*