



**The City of San Diego**  
America's Finest City

# Business Resource Guide



Perfect Weather.

Perfect Place  
To Do Business.

[www.sandiego.gov/BRC](http://www.sandiego.gov/BRC)

# The City of San Diego

understands the important role businesses play in the local economy and quality of life. The City offers an array of business development programs through various departments and partner agencies to assist entrepreneurs in starting and growing businesses.

The Office of Small Business provides start-up information, development programs, and advocacy and referral services to enhance business success and promote a business-friendly climate.

The Office of Economic Growth Services implements economic development programs for the City in order to create and retain jobs and taxable investment in the City of San Diego.

Other City programs aim to enhance contracting competencies and opportunities for local and small businesses; strengthen business organizations; and improve commercial neighborhoods.

Information on the array of City programs and services is now available through the City's Business Resource Center (BRC) which was created with grant funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Visit the BRC kiosk in the lobby of the City Administration Building or access the online BRC for additional information and enhanced services (such as making payments and completing forms) at [www.sandiego.gov/BRC](http://www.sandiego.gov/BRC).

For more information on the following programs, contact the City of San Diego at (619) 236-6700 unless otherwise noted or visit [www.sandiego.gov/directories/business.shtml](http://www.sandiego.gov/directories/business.shtml).

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Hospitality



Construction



Manufacturing



Health & Wellness



Real Estate



Retail



Technology



and more...

# Financial Resources and Incentives

## Small Business Loans

The San Diego Regional Revolving Loan Fund (SDRRLF) and Small Business Micro Revolving Loan Fund (SBMRLF) offer financial assistance to expanding small to mid-size business owners requiring capital, but are unable to meet the terms of traditional banks. Through careful screening of loan applicants and creative loan structuring, the “gap financing” program can get business owners closer to their goal by supplementing private financing of new or rehabilitated buildings, fixed machinery and equipment, working capital and soft costs. The SDRRLF area includes businesses in the Cities of San Diego and Chula Vista while the SBMRLF only includes businesses in the City of San Diego.

## Storefront Improvement Program

This award-winning program was created in 1986 and is designed to enhance and revitalize older commercial neighborhoods throughout the City of San Diego. It stimulates private investment and customer patronage in the City’s older commercial districts by focusing on revitalizing building facades visible to customers, neighboring merchants, and residents. As part of a comprehensive approach to small business assistance and neighborhood revitalization, the City of San Diego provides design assistance and construction cost incentives to small businesses.



After



Before



## Enterprise Zones

The Enterprise Zone (EZ) is a geographical area designated by the State of California to stimulate business investment and job creation. The EZ provides businesses with greater access to resources and promotes wage increases for workers. Businesses that operate in an EZ can claim tax credits for employee wages as well as purchases for qualifying manufacturing, data processing, and communications equipment.

EZ businesses can also take advantage of accelerated depreciation on qualified business property, development permit expediting and assistance, access to specialized technical and financial assistance programs. A no-cost job referral service is available to help find employees whose wages can be claimed as tax credits.

Additionally, EZ businesses may be eligible for State of California procurement preference points. Non-profit organizations may also be eligible to apply for State grant preference point certification.

A “special enterprise zone” is (LAMBRA) located at Liberty Station at the former Naval

Training Center near the San Diego International Airport.



To learn more about Enterprise Zones or to determine whether your company qualifies as an Enterprise Zone business, visit [www.SDREZ.org](http://www.SDREZ.org).



# Business Development Advocacy and Regulatory Relief

## Foreign-Trade Zone Program

Businesses that import foreign goods into the United States, and in some cases export goods, may realize significant savings. Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) program benefits include: U.S. Customs duty deferral, duty exemption, and other benefits.

The San Diego Foreign-Trade Zone No. 153 has reorganized its FTZ procedures to assist businesses to more easily participate in the program. Companies located within San Diego County can now secure Foreign-Trade Zone Status for warehousing and distribution operations within approximately thirty (30) days from the time an application is accepted for filing. Manufacturing companies may also benefit from additional streamlined procedures. For more information on the FTZ program visit [www.sandiego.gov/FTZ](http://www.sandiego.gov/FTZ).

## Recycling Market Development Zones

Manufacturers of recycled products and recycling processing operations are encouraged to locate their facilities in several industrial areas throughout San Diego that are designated as Recycling Market Development Zones (RMDZs). The RMDZ designation provides these businesses with access to a state low-interest loan program, permit assistance, and help with identifying sources of recyclable materials for their businesses and business referrals. The RMDZs are located in the Otay Mesa, Miramar and Rancho Bernardo industrial areas. For more information, call (858) 492-5085.

## Business Expansion, Attraction and Retention Team

The Business Expansion, Attraction and Retention (BEAR) Team pro-actively assists manufacturing and logistics businesses that are vital to the region's economic health by offering direct assistance and other incentives to retain these businesses by promoting their expansion in San Diego.

## Cleantech Initiative

In 2007, the City launched a new Cleantech (Clean Technology) Initiative in an effort to promote the expansion, attraction and retention of businesses that develop products and technologies that provide environmentally sustainable solutions. Clean technologies enable a more valuable use of natural resources and reduce ecological impacts to the region. The Initiative seeks to develop an emerging cluster that will enhance the quality of life and reputation of San Diego. Efforts of the Initiative include promoting, fostering, and coordinating strategic alliances and collaboration among local, regional, state, and federal institutions to develop and execute the City's clean technology business attraction strategy.



## Business Advocacy, Outreach and Ombuds Services

The City's Small Business Ambassador serves as a first point of contact for small business inquiries and requests for assistance. The Small Business Ambassador collaborates with local, state, and federal governmental agencies and business development and assistance organizations to identify and promote various training, technical assistance and counseling services available to small businesses throughout the region. Call **(619) 533-6474** for assistance.

The Development Services Department has appointed a Small Business Liaison who can assist businesses with issues relating to permitting in the City of San Diego. For assistance, call **(619) 446-5297**.

## Small Business Advisory Board

The Small Business Advisory Board (SBAB), staffed by the Small Business Ambassador, consists of 11 unpaid members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The Board advises the Mayor and City Council on City policies and regulations that affect the ability of small businesses to succeed in San Diego. Small business owners are encouraged to attend board meetings and to learn about programs and services, and discuss issues affecting small business in the City of San Diego.



# Contracting Opportunities

## Doing Business with the City

The City is continually seeking vendors, suppliers, and contractors who can provide quality products and services at competitive prices. Interested businesses may register with the City for contracting opportunities. The City also has a variety of programs designed to increase opportunities and assist businesses in contracting with the City.

- **The Purchasing & Contracting Department** offers workshops on how to conduct business with the City and maintains a list of contracting opportunities.
- **The Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program** is designed to encourage greater availability, capacity, and contract participation by Small Local Business Enterprises ("SLBEs") in City contracts. This program provides **Bid Discounts and Preference Points** for certified SLBEs which are additional enhancements in the bidding process designed to increase the chances for selection of SLBE firms in competition with other firms.
- **The SD Small Contracts Program** provides construction bid and sub-contracting opportunities under \$1 million for roofing, plumbing, excavation, signage, demolition, installation of playground equipment, landscaping, paving, erosion control, environmental monitoring, concrete work, electrical or other trades.



- **The Small Local Business Development Program** provides an in-depth understanding of “How to do Business with the City”. The Program identifies and assesses the training needs of small businesses to better position themselves as potential bidders and offers technical assistance and training specifically tailored to meet participants needs. Contact the City’s Small Business Ambassador at **(619) 533-6474** for more information.
- **The Mentor Protégé Program** pairs protégé firms with mentor firms and provides support to help protégés build capacity, develop business networks, and access public works contracting opportunities. For more information about this program call **(619) 236-6000**.

For additional information, visit the Purchasing & Contracting Department’s webpage: “Frequently Asked Questions” at [www.sandiego.gov/purchasing/faq/](http://www.sandiego.gov/purchasing/faq/).

## The Contracting Opportunities Center

The San Diego Contracting Opportunities Center (COC) offers free training workshops and personalized contracting and bidding technical assistance services to San Diego small businesses interested in doing business with public agencies such as the city, state or federal governments. The SDCOC is one of four Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC) in California that receives matching funds from the federal government. The City’s Small Business Enhancement Program has provided local funding to the program. The SDCOC is an Economic Development program hosted by Southwestern College. For more information visit [www.ptac-sandiego.org](http://www.ptac-sandiego.org).

## HUBZone

The Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) was created to stimulate economic development and employment growth in economically distressed communities by providing Federal contracting preferences to small businesses. Administered by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), these preferences go to HUBZone certified small businesses that employ residents living in designated HUBZone areas as well as maintain its “principal office” in one of the specially designated areas. The HUBZone Program offers Federal contract benefits and specialized assistance. For more information on the HUBZone Program and whether your company is in a designated area, visit [www.sba.gov/hubzone/](http://www.sba.gov/hubzone/).

## Commercial District Revitalization

The City of San Diego not only assists individual businesses, but also focuses on strengthening business organizations and improving business districts throughout San Diego. Following are several programs that strengthen San Diego’s small business communities.

### Business Improvement Districts

San Diego’s Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are City-designated areas where business owners are assessed annually to fund improvements and activities to promote the economic





# Indirect Assistance

## Small Business Enhancement Program Grants

By providing matching grants to non-profit organizations through a competitive application process, the program seeks to leverage the funds and volunteer efforts of those organizations that are already present within the community. Examples of the services and training provided include business development, contracting and procurement, disability accommodations and technical assistance training.

## Economic Development and Tourism Support Program

The City's Economic Development and Tourism Support Program provides Transient Occupancy Tax funds through a competitive merit based application process. These grants are awarded to qualified non-profit, tax-exempt organizations that produce significant services, programs and events that improve the San Diego economy by boosting tourism, attracting new businesses, and increasing jobs in the area.

## Tourism Marketing District

The San Diego Tourism Marketing District (SDTMD) was conceived and developed by a coalition of lodging business owners and managers representing the San Diego County Hotel/Motel Association and the San Diego Lodging Industry Association. The SDTMD is a citywide benefit assessment district designed to improve tourism activity and increase hotel room night consumption in the City of San Diego. Lodging business owners assess themselves in order to pool resources to fund marketing efforts, tourism promotion activities and special events and programs.

more than \$1.3 million annually and partners with merchants associations representing assessed business owners to implement programs to promote businesses and revitalize many of the City's older commercial neighborhoods.

## Community Parking Districts

The City is home to six Community Parking Districts located within the Uptown, Mid-City, Pacific Beach, Old Town, La Jolla and Downtown areas. Under this program, a portion of the City's parking meter revenue is allocated back to districts where the meters are located. The funds help finance solutions to parking supply challenges primarily in commercial areas.

## Maintenance Assessment Districts

Economic Development staff administers several self-managed maintenance assessment districts in commercial and mixed-use corridors throughout San Diego. These special districts raise funds from property owners to provide enhanced services and capital improvements in the public right-of-way. Enhanced services include landscaping, enhanced lighting, graffiti removal, security, and installation/removal of banners and seasonal decorations.



# Information and Regulations



## Water Conservation

The City of San Diego continues to stress the importance of using water wisely. Learn more about achieving greater water use efficiency at [www.sandiego.gov](http://www.sandiego.gov) by entering “water-wise” into the search box. Business resources and programs include:

- water-wise business survey
- Rebates for water saving devices
- Guaranteed Water Program
- Commercial Landscape Survey Program

## Recycling Technical Assistance and City Recycling Ordinance



The City's Environmental Services Department provides technical assistance to businesses to help design and implement recycling programs. San Diego Municipal Code §66.0701 – §66.0718 requires businesses to have a recycling program in place to recycle all paper, cardboard, plastic and glass bottles and jars, and metal containers (empty aerosol cans, aluminum, and metal cans). For more information, call **(858) 694-7000**.

## Think Blue

All businesses operating within the City of San Diego (including mobile businesses that provide services within City limits) must implement applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent runoff from entering the City storm drain system. Information about these BMPs for businesses can be found under “Public Education & Outreach” at [www.thinkblue.org](http://www.thinkblue.org) or by contacting the Storm Water Division at **(858) 541-4300**.



## Local Business Tax Information

The Office of the City Treasurer is responsible for administering and collecting the Business Tax/Rental Unit Business Tax and the Transient Occupancy Tax. This office also receives assessments from businesses in the City-designated Business Improvement Districts and the San Diego Tourism Marketing District.

The San Diego Municipal Code requires all persons engaging in any business, trade calling, or occupation as defined in §31.0110 to pay the Business Tax. This includes self-employed persons, home-based businesses, and independent contractors.

Companies not located within San Diego city limits but conducting business within the City are also required to pay the City's Business Tax. Call **(619) 615-1500** for more information.

## Business Listings

The City Treasurer makes certain information available on its website about businesses registered with the Business Tax office. This information may be accessed at [www.sandiego.gov](http://www.sandiego.gov) by entering “master business listings” in the search box.

## Police Permits and Licensing

Certain business activities require a Police permit or license. More information may be found under “Forms and Permits” at [www.sandiego.gov/police/](http://www.sandiego.gov/police/)







# The City of San Diego

America's Finest City

## Economic Development and Economic Growth Services

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Economic Development Division

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in alternative formats upon request.

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## Opening or Expanding Your Business

Business owners may need to obtain permits or fulfill certain regulatory requirements when opening or expanding a business. The list below provides contact information for typical elements of a construction project.

- **Building and Construction Permits**  
Remodeling, additions, new or moved plumbing, kitchen fixtures: (619) 446-5000
- **Land Use Regulation**  
Parking requirements, landscaping, Conditional Use Permits: (619) 446-5000
- **Zoning Information and Requirements**  
Check if a business activity is allowed in the neighborhood: (619) 446-5000
- **Sign Information and Requirements**  
New or replacement signs, including electrical requirements: (619) 446-5000
- **Fire Code**  
Hazardous materials inspections, exiting and sign-notice requirements: (619) 236-6880
- **Water and Sewer Requirements and Fees**  
Additions of fixtures, larger service: (619) 446-5000