



Vienna, Georgia

Congratulations! You are interested in starting a business in Vienna. The City of Vienna has developed this information guide to assist you in the planning and start-up phases of your new business. We hope your transition into a new business will be as easy as possible. If you have questions or concerns regarding any information presented in this manual, please contact the City of Vienna Community Development Office at 229-268-4920.

The City of Vienna is a Certified Community of Ethics, a Better Hometown Community, and a City of Excellence. We are very pleased with these accomplishments.

Downtown Vienna is in the midst of an economic revitalization program. The City has undergone a major beautification project that included façade enhancements and streetscapes. Some of the City's historic buildings have been purchased and rehabilitated for adaptive uses in today's market.

Antiques are Vienna's niche and there has been a strong resurgence of that market with the recent opening of several antique shops and malls. Downtown is also developing an eclectic mix of retail that will attract a variety of shoppers. The market for new business continues to improve each day.

➤ **Choosing a Location**

The City of Vienna has a commercial center located on Interstate 75, Exit 109 where 55,000 cars pass daily. The Downtown Commercial District is located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 41 and State Route 90, just two mile west of I-75. This is also a busy intersection. The City of Vienna's Community Development Office maintains a database of space available for lease and buildings for sale.

➤ **Types of Spaces**

The City of Vienna offers a variety of the following property types:

- Storefronts Downtown
- Mixed-use Retail and/or Services Space
- Upstairs Downtown
- Office Space
- Historic Buildings
- Speculative Retail Building (coming soon)
- Industrial Parks
- Commercial Park at I-75 Exit 109
- Land for Development

➤ **Incentives**

A number of economic incentives are available to prospective businesses in the City of Vienna. These include:

- **Façade Grant** - The City of Vienna offers from time to time a grant program to assist business/ property owners in the downtown area or Hwy 215 corridor with improvement of their street front facades. Matching funds are required.
- **Façade Easement Program** – As funds become available, the City of Vienna makes improvement to qualified downtown historic properties through an easement program.
- **Tax Abatement** of city property tax for first 2 years in business for new businesses in the downtown area.
- **Utilities** - 2 months free water & sewer service for new business in downtown area
- **Small Business Development Center** - The Southwest Georgia Business Development Center is a joint partnership with the Crisp/Dooly Joint Development Authority. It serves as a business incubator that works with new and existing business owners, providing counseling services on issues such as business planning, registering a business, financing, regulations, licensing, training, workforce, manufacturing, environmental, and various other business management disciplines. Call 229-268-8944 for more information.
- **Empowerment Zone** – Vienna, Dooly County is located in one of the census tracts that make up the Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone. There are several federal and state tax incentives that benefit an empowerment zone. You may obtain this information from <http://www.doolyedc.org>. (also see A Tax Savings Advisory From Dooly County Economic Development, enclosed)
- **Tax Incentives for Rehabilitated Historic Properties** – Certain rehabilitation projects on historic properties located in the Vienna Central Historic District are eligible for certain state and federal tax incentives:
 - 8-year Property Tax Assessment Freeze
 - State Income Tax Credits
 - Federal Income Tax Credits
 - Charitable Contribution Deduction

➤ **Loans**

Several low-interest financing options are available for qualified applicants:

- **Tax Exempt Bond Financing** – The Dooly County Industrial Development Authority is authorized to issue bonds that generally have lower interest rates than conventional financing.
- **OneGeorgia Authority** – Dooly County is eligible for OneGeorgia assistance. The OneGeorgia Authority, created by the Governor and the Legislature, utilizes one third of the state's tobacco settlement to assist the state's most economically challenged areas. \$1.6 billion is anticipated to be available over the 25-year term of the settlement.
- **Georgia Cities Foundation** – low interest business loans for qualifying projects
- **Middle Flint Revolving Loan Programs** – low interest business loans for qualifying projects

➤ **Licenses, Permits, COAs**

Licenses:

- Business License – Vienna City Hall (229-268-4744)
- Alcoholic Beverages License – Vienna City Hall (229-268-4744)

Permits:

- Zoning Permits – Vienna Community Development Office (229-268-4920)
- Sign Permits – Vienna Community Development Office (229-268-4920)
- Building Permits – Dooly County Building Inspector's Office (229-268-6696)

Certificate of Appropriateness (COA):

- Certificate of Appropriateness is required for any exterior change to a structure located in the Vienna Central Historic District (229-268-4943)

➤ **History of Vienna**



CITY OF VIENNA 1841

First called Berrien and later Centerville, Vienna, the county seat of Dooly County was named by Wiley Cobb, a member of the legislature from Dooly County on February 28, 1841. The town was incorporated on February 18, 1854. Vienna was chosen as the county seat because at that time its location was the approximate geographical center of the county. On September 12, 1888 progress and prosperity came more rapidly to Vienna with the Georgia Southern & Florida Railroad. With the railroad came the first telegraph office, the first waterworks, and electric lights followed in 1903.

Vienna, Georgia is located on an elevated place, near the watershed between the Ocmulgee and Flint Rivers, surrounded by water and perfectly drained by natural streams. The City was described metaphorically as a woman in a 1903 promotional piece entitled “Greater Vienna”:

“The cap of the hill is in the center, her dress is hemmed with a fluted valley and the beautiful streams form a girdle around her waist and the tall pines make a green plumage about her crown.”

Vienna not only grows cotton, but has produced some very famous people as well: United States Senator Walter F. George (1922-1957), former Georgia Governor George Busbee (1974-1982), Jody Powell the popular press secretary to former President Jimmy Carter, Olympic great Roger Kingdom, and Emily Woodward founder of the Georgia Press Institute, just to name a few. There are 2 museums in Vienna. The Walter F. George law Office Museum, dedicated to the memory of Senator George, is located in his restored law office. The other museum is the Georgia State Cotton Museum located just off Interstate 75 Exit 109.

Another claim to fame is the BIG PIG JIG® held in its own little village named BBQ City, USA. This event was born when a group of local self-professed gourmets made wagers on who could cook the most succulent pig! The cooking competition was established in 1982 and celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2006. The event has won numerous awards over the years and draws thousands of spectators each October. The BIG PIG JIG® is the official Georgia State Championship BBQ Cookoff.

The Vienna City Council designated the Vienna Central Historic in 2003 with the adoption of the Historic District Ordinance. In 2004 the District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Vienna Central Historic District includes resources of a combined commercial and residential multi-resource district. The

commercial area comprises the heart of the Vienna Central Historic District with the Dooly County Courthouse and the town square being the focal point.

The surrounding area still reflects a strong rural character. Many elements in downtown Vienna reflect the community's heritage and these resources are valued by the community.

Vienna continues to be an enterprising city with recent developments in industrial growth and commercial development. The city limits have expanded to and beyond Interstate 75, with businesses clustered around the exits. The historic downtown has undergone historic restoration changes and beautification projects that have resulted in a more user-friendly downtown and an eclectic mix of retail and services. Antiques and cultural heritage tourism serves as the draw that will make us a destination.

Our past is the building block of our future and opportunities of that future are at hand. The Mayor and City Council are dedicated to the citizens, quality of life and planning and preparation that will ensure development and growth for our community.