



## BUSINESS REGISTRATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a business registration?
2. Who needs a business registration?
3. How do I get a business registration?
4. Do I need a business registration to sell pumpkins or Christmas trees once a year?
5. I am a solicitor/peddler, what must I do?
6. I want to do massage therapy in San Carlos. What do I need to do?
7. Once I've applied for my business registration and paid the fee, how long before I receive the actual business registration?
8. What is the fee to get a replacement copy of a business registration?
9. What is the fee for changes to an existing business registration?
10. How long does my business registration last?
11. What happens if I pay late?
12. What if my business is in my home?
13. Can I start my business as soon as I pay the fee?
14. Are there any restrictions on where I do business?
15. I have a wonderful idea for a great sign!
16. How do I obtain a Fictitious Business Name?
17. How can I pay for the business registration fee?
18. What if I have more than one business or more than one location?
19. I just purchased this business. Can I use the business registration from the previous owner?
20. What do I need to do if my business is a nonprofit organization?
21. Do state-licensed contractors also need a San Carlos business registration?
22. Can I use my registration to do business in another city?
23. What do I need to do to close my business?
24. Who can I call with additional questions?
25. Additional resources

1. **What is a business registration?** A business registration is an annual tax for doing business within the incorporated area of the City of San Carlos. The San Carlos Municipal Code requires that you obtain a registration when you conduct any business activity within the City - even if your business is located OUTSIDE the city limits or you have a business registration from another city.

2. **Who needs a business registration?** You need a business registration in the City of San Carlos if:

- You are conducting **any** kind of business for profit or for your livelihood within the City of San Carlos
- You have a fictitious business name certificate
- You have a State Board of Equalization resale permit
- You have a listing in the Commercial Directory Yellow Pages, Business White Pages, the newspaper, local business guides, real estate multiple listing books or any other similar listings
- You have a home based business

3. **How do I get a business registration?** Follow the steps listed below to obtain or renew a business registration:
- a) You must apply for a business registration. You can do this a few ways:
    - You may apply or renew online at <https://sancarlos.hdlgov.com>
    - You can call the City of San Carlos Business Support Center at **(650) 769-4148**. Where a specialist can mail you an application or assist you with your renewal.
    - If applying by mail, please send completed form to:  
City of San Carlos  
**Business Support Center**  
8839 N. Cedar Ave. #212  
Fresno, CA 93720
    - You can also scan and email your completed form to:  
[sancarlos@hdlgov.com](mailto:sancarlos@hdlgov.com)
  - b) Fill out the all information on the form or online **completely**. Incomplete information provided can delay the approval process.
  - c) Pay the required fees.
  - d) The application will be processed. Please see #7 for information on length of processing.
  - e) Business registration fees are non-refundable.
  - f) Always check with the City's Planning Department to ensure that your business is permissible in the location you are considering, including home occupations. [planning@cityofsancarlos.org](mailto:planning@cityofsancarlos.org) or (650) 802-4263. Appropriate permits and/or approvals from Planning, Building, Sheriff's Office and/or any other department of the City may have to be secured before your business may start. All applicable federal, state, county and city laws, ordinances or regulations must be followed before your business may start.

[Back to the Top](#)

4. **Do I need a business registration to sell pumpkins or Christmas trees once a year?** Yes, a business registration is required for a temporary business location to sell any vegetables, fruits or Christmas trees. Before a registration is issued the Planning Department will review all applications.
5. **I am a solicitor/peddler, what must I do?** It is unlawful for any person to engage in commercial solicitation within the City without both a valid solicitation permit issued by the Sheriff's Office and a valid business registration issued by the City of San Carlos Business Support Center. Solicitors must also review & comply with the "Do Not Knock" registry available on the city website or via the City Clerk's Office.

After receiving a Solicitor's Permit, you must obtain a business registration from the City of San Carlos Business Center and pay the business registration fee. Once you have both documents in hand and have reviewed the "Do Not Knock" registry, then you may start soliciting. It takes approximately 3-6 weeks to obtain a solicitor's permit because a Live Scan criminal background check is required. **Please contact the City of San Carlos Business Support Center for more information about obtaining a Solicitor's Permit.**

[Back to the Top](#)

6. **I want to do massage therapy in San Carlos. What do I need to do?** Please contact the City of San Carlos Business Support Center at (650) 769-4148 or email us at [sancarlos@hdlgov.com](mailto:sancarlos@hdlgov.com).
7. **Once I've applied for my business registration and paid the fee, how long before I receive the actual business registration?** This depends on the type and location of the business, required department approvals and permits, completeness of application, etc. For applications that require additional City review (Massage, Solicitation, etc.) the time frame can be several weeks but generally, applications are approved within 2-4 weeks. The business registration will be mailed to the mailing address you indicate on the application.
8. **What is the fee to get a replacement copy of a business registration?** Please see the [City Fee Schedule](#) for the most current cost of a replacement copy.

[Back to the Top](#)

9. **What is the fee for changes to an existing business registration?** If the ownership changes, the business registration is not transferable and you will need to apply for a new business registration and pay the appropriate fees. There is no charge to change a mailing address or business name on a business registration. If your business address is changing, it will require new zoning clearance and payment of zoning clearance fees.
10. **How long does my business registration last?** Your business registration is a non-refundable annual tax. The business registration needs to be renewed annually. You will receive a renewal notice 30 days before its expiration; however, it is your responsibility to renew the business registration on time even if the renewal notice is not received. Penalties are assessed for delinquent accounts for In-Town Businesses, regardless of whether you received a renewal notice.
11. **What happens if I pay late?** The In-Town Business Registration penalty for a delinquent registration is 20% of the business registration fee and will be applied every month that it is late until 100%.

[Back to the Top](#)

12. **What if my business is in my home?** You are still required to obtain a business registration if your residence is in San Carlos city limits. Check with the Planning Department to ensure that your business is permissible from your home as certain Home Occupation businesses are prohibited.
13. **Can I start my business as soon as I pay the fee?** No. All the appropriate permits and/or approvals from Planning, Building, Sheriff's Office and/or any other City department may have to be secured before your business can start. All federal, state, county and city laws, ordinances and regulations must be complied with as well.
14. **Are there any restrictions on where I do business?** Every business must meet zoning requirements to ensure that the business activity and site are compatible. BEFORE SIGNING any lease or rental agreement, we suggest that you check with the City's Planning Department to make sure your business activity is appropriate for the area's zoning and that it will not require a public hearing or special parking considerations. Call (650) 802-4263 or email [planning@cityofsancarlos.org](mailto:planning@cityofsancarlos.org) for additional information.

[Back to the Top](#)

15. **I have a wonderful idea for a great sign!** Check with the Building Department before using or installing ANY type of sign, flag or banner, even balloons. Permanent and temporary signs require review and approval prior to issuance of permits and installations.
16. **How do I obtain a Fictitious Business Name?** The City does not issue Fictitious Business Names. You must file a Fictitious Name registration or a “doing business as” (dba) with the County of San Mateo if you are using a name other than your own. Contact the San Mateo County Clerk’s office at (650) 363-4712 or visit their website [www.smcacre.org/fictitious-business-names](http://www.smcacre.org/fictitious-business-names)
17. **How can I pay for the business registration fee?** You may pay for a new registration or renewal online at the City of San Carlos Business Support Center website <https://sancarlos.hdlgov.com>.
18. **What if I have more than one business or more than one location?** If you own more than one business, a separate business registration is required for each type of business and for each location.

[Back to the Top](#)

19. **I just purchased this business. Can I use the business registration from the previous owner?** No. A business registration cannot be transferred or re-assigned. As a new owner, you need to apply for a business registration in your name.
20. **What do I need to do if my business is a nonprofit organization?** If your business is a nonprofit organization, it is exempt from the registration fee. However, tax-exempt organizations are required to provide proof of their nonprofit status in order to receive a business registration. They must provide a copy of the statement from the California Secretary of State or the Internal Revenue Service stating that the business has a nonprofit status.
21. **Do state-licensed contractors also need a San Carlos business registration?** Any person licensed as a contractor by the State Contractor’s Board must obtain a business registration if they are (1) conducting business in the City of San Carlos; or (2) based in the City, whether conducting business in or outside of the City.

[Back to the Top](#)

22. **Can I use my registration to do business in another city?** No. This registration is for doing business in the incorporated area of the City of San Carlos only. If you plan on doing business in another city, you must contact that city in order to obtain their requirements for a business registration.
23. **What do I need to do to close my business?** Business registrations are NOT automatically canceled. When a business is sold, closed, or moved out of San Carlos, the business registration must be inactivated. You may send written notification via US mail or email at [sancarlos@hdlgov.com](mailto:sancarlos@hdlgov.com). Please provide the date the business closed or sold and the name of the new owner, if applicable.

24. **Who can I call with additional questions?**  
San Carlos Business Support Center  
(650) 769-4148  
[sancarlos@hdlgov.com](mailto:sancarlos@hdlgov.com)

[Back to the Top](#)

## 25. Additional resources:

### Federal Tax ID Number

If your business is a corporation or partnership, you need to apply for a Federal Tax ID Number.

Federal Building  
450 Golden Gate Avenue,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Suite #5403  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(800) 829-1040  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

### CA State Contractor's License Board

9812 Business Park Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95827  
(800) 321-2752 or (916) 255-3900  
[www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov)

### Resale Number

When involved in selling, you need to get a Seller's Permit Number or Resale Number.

State Board of  
Equalization  
121 Spear Street #460  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(800) 400-7115  
[www.boe.ca.gov](http://www.boe.ca.gov)

### Planning Department

Before you buy or lease a building, check with the Planning Department to make sure that the proposed use is in conformance with the zoning for the property.

City of San Carlos  
Planning Department  
600 Elm Street  
San Carlos, CA 94070  
(650) 802-4263  
[www.cityofsancarlos.org/planning](http://www.cityofsancarlos.org/planning)  
[planning@cityofsancarlos.org](mailto:planning@cityofsancarlos.org)

### Chamber of Commerce San Mateo County

For more information and additional business resources

Chamber San Mateo County  
1450 Veterans Blvd. Suite 125  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
(650) 364-1722  
[www.chambersmc.org](http://www.chambersmc.org)  
[info@chambersmc.org](mailto:info@chambersmc.org)

### State Tax Identification Number

If you will have employees, you need to obtain your Employer Identification Number or State Tax ID Number.

Employment Development  
Department  
800 Capitol Mall, MIC 83  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(888) 745-3886  
[www.edd.ca.gov](http://www.edd.ca.gov)

### Unincorporated Areas Business Licenses

San Mateo Tax Collector's Office  
555 County Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
(650) 363-4142  
[www.sanmateocountytaxcollector.org](http://www.sanmateocountytaxcollector.org)  
[Taxmaster@co.sanmateo.ca.us](mailto:Taxmaster@co.sanmateo.ca.us)

### Alcohol Beverage License

When selling any liquor, beer, or wine, you must obtain a permit.

Alcoholic Beverage  
Control Board  
185 Berry Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
(415) 557-3660  
[www.abc.ca.gov](http://www.abc.ca.gov)

### Fictitious Business Name

You must file a Fictitious Name registration or a "doing business as" (dba) if you are using a name other than your own.

San Mateo County  
County Clerk's Office  
555 County Center  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
(650) 363-4712  
[www.smcacre.org/fbn-how-register-or-renew-name](http://www.smcacre.org/fbn-how-register-or-renew-name)  
[countyclerk@smcare.org](mailto:countyclerk@smcare.org)

### Golden Gate Better Business Bureau

1000 Broadway #625  
Oakland, CA 94607  
(866) 411-2221  
[www.bbb.org/local-bbb/golden-gate-better-business-bureau](http://www.bbb.org/local-bbb/golden-gate-better-business-bureau)

[Back to the Top](#)

## **Selling Food Items**

A health permit is required for businesses that dispense food to the public. A permit is needed before opening or being issued a business registration. Anything to do with food preparation is not allowed for home occupied businesses.

Environmental Board of Health  
455 County Center, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
(650) 363-4305  
[www.smhealth.org/environ/](http://www.smhealth.org/environ/)

[Back to the Top](#)