



# City of Vienna

## Downtown Business Development Guide

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# Vienna, Georgia



**Shops on the Square**



**Mural Project—1 of 3**



**Carr Building—East Union Street**



**Welcome To Historic Vienna**



## *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 continuously strives to take advantage of all programs and opportunities available through our State and Federal Governments. We have received the following designations: Certified Community of Ethics, Better Hometown Community, City of Excellence, Preserve America Community, Entrepreneurial Friendly Community, and a Community of Opportunity. Vienna has also been selected by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to participate in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing program. 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. Most 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 and restaurants 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 miles 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  
Industrial Parks  
Industrial Buildings  
Business Incubator  
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 grant funds become available, the City of Vienna makes improvements 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 immediate downtown area.
- **Utilities** - 2 months free water & sewer service for new business in immediate downtown area
- **State Job Tax Credits** – Dooly County is identified as a Tier I level. This qualifies the County for the highest state income tax credit of \$3500 per job up to five years as long as the jobs are maintained. A minimum of 5 jobs must be created and certain definitions met to qualify.  $\$3500 \times 50 \text{ jobs} \times 5 \text{ years} = \$875,000$  used to reduce or eliminate Georgia income tax.
- **EZ Job Tax Credits** – Dooly County is a designated Rural Empowerment Zone. This qualifies the County for a wage credit against Federal taxes up to \$3,000 per employee per year until the expiration of the EZ status. The credit amount is 20% of wages up to \$15,000, but does not exclude any person making wages above this amount. This applies to existing employees and new hires that live within the EZ (all of Dooly County and part of Crisp County). The credit is available for part time and full time employees as long as they have been employed for at least 90 days. A qualified business must have at least 35% of their employees living within the EZ.
- **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

- **100% Freeport Exemption** – Vienna and Dooly County offer 100% Freeport Exemption from local property taxes on all 3 classes of merchandise:
  1. **Manufacturer's raw materials and goods-in-process.** Inventory of goods in the process of manufacture or production, which shall include all partly finished goods and raw materials, held for direct use or consumption in the ordinary course of the taxpayer's manufacturing or production business in the State of Georgia.
  2. **Finished goods held by the original manufacturer.** Inventory of finished goods manufactured or produced within the State of Georgia in the ordinary course of the taxpayer's manufacturing or production business when held by the original manufacturer or producer of such finished goods. The exemption provided for herein shall be for a period not exceeding twelve (12) months from the date such property is produced or manufactured.
  3. **Finished goods held by distributors, wholesalers, and manufacturers destined for out-of-state shipment.** Inventory of finished goods which, on the first day of January, are stored in a warehouse, dock or wharf, whether public or private, and which are destined for shipment to a final destination outside the State of Georgia and inventory of finished goods which are shipped into the State of Georgia from outside the State and stored for transshipment to a final destination outside this State. The exemption provided for herein shall be for a period not exceeding twelve (12) months from the date such property is stored in this State.

Companies file for the exemption annually with the local Dooly County Tax Assessor

### ➤ **Loans & Financing**

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

- **Tax Exempt Bond Financing** – The Dooly County Industrial Development Authority and the City's Development Authorities (DDA/VDA) are 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.

- **Entrepreneur and Small Business (ESB) Loan Guarantee Program** – In partnership with the OneGeorgia Authority, the state can provide loan guarantees to spur entrepreneurial growth in specified rural communities. The guarantee amounts can range between \$35,000 and \$250,000, can be used for hard assets or for start-up and working capital and require a 10 percent cash equity injection by the borrower.
- **Georgia Cities Foundation** – low interest business loans for qualifying projects
- **Middle Flint Revolving Loan Programs** – low interest business loans for qualifying projects
- **USDA, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and the Small Business Administration** offer low interest business loans for qualifying projects.

### ➤ **Hiring, Training, and Education**

**Hiring Assistance** – Georgia's Department of Labor (DOL) assists companies in recruitment by posting job notices, collecting and screening applications and/or resumes, providing interview space, scheduling interviews and hosting job fairs.

**Quick Start Employee Training** – Georgia's nationally ranked employee training program, Quick Start, provides customized training for new employees in skill-based jobs at no cost to qualifying companies. The training program is given to the company for its future use.

**Southwest Georgia Business Development Center** - meets business development needs in the Southwest Georgia area by providing a variety of services, including:

- Training for low-income individuals and other community members in new business development.
- Technical assistance for current small business owners
- Access to financial information and funding through partnership with local banks, Fort Valley State University, Middle Flint Regional Development Center and potentially through development of additional programs such as revolving loans and microloan fund.
- Provides new and expanding businesses with physical plant facilities and services  
Call 229-268-8944 for more information.

### ➤ **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 (229-268-4920)

➤ **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 titled “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 the United States Senator is located in his restored law office in Busbee Park. The other museum is the Georgia State Cotton Museum located just off Interstate 75 at 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 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006. The event has won numerous awards over the years and draws thousands of spectators each November. The BIG PIG JIG® is the official Georgia State Championship BBQ Cookoff.

The Vienna City Council designated the Vienna Central Historic District in 2004 with the adoption of the Historic District Ordinance. In 2005 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 the City 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 quality development and smart growth for our community.