



WELCOME TO  
**HIAWASSEE**



**IMPORTANT INFORMATION  
ON OPENING A BUSINESS  
IN HIAWASSEE**



**HIAWASSEE**  
DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY

# WELCOME TO DOWNTOWN HIAWASSEE

The office of Downtown Development is located in the heart of Hiawassee. The office is just off the square in the City Hall at 50 River Street. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is fully devoted to the revitalization of the downtown district. The office serves as a point of contact for prospects, project management, grant programs, and the Paris Business Center (PBC), located at 73 Main Street. The DDA offers several programs and services to help better the downtown community and coordinate wonderful community events in the vibrant city center, including the First Friday Night Market on the Town Square.

The DDA was established in 2019 in accordance with the Georgia DDA Law.

The DDA powers include: to purchase and own property; to lease or rent; to finance projects; to receive government grants or loans; to execute contracts; to finance projects; and to receive tax monies. The DDA is primarily a policy and decision-making body and may also be a land developer, landlord, planning organization, or project manager. DDA Board Meetings are held the second Monday of each month in the City of Hiawassee Training Room at 50 River Street and are open to the public.

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# HIAWASSEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

## **Mission:**

"Build upon our vision statement of rebuilding the Heart & Soul of Hiawassee by creating a Dynamic, Livable, Family-focused, and Entertainment-rich, Historic and Economically-vibrant Downtown"

## **Vision:**

Rebuilding Downtown: The Heart & Soul of Hiawassee



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# DDA PROJECTS

## Paris Business Center:

The Paris Business Center (PBC) is a joint effort between The City of Hiawassee and Hiawassee DDA. PBC serves to help existing and new business grow within the area by providing services and training on business planning, budgeting, marketing, etc.

## Facade Grant Program:

The Facade Grant Program was created by Hiawassee DDA to provide funds to business to update the facade of businesses within the downtown district. Applications and guidelines for this grant can be requested from Hiawassee DDA.

## First Friday Market:

The First Friday Night Market was created to help provide opportunities for small businesses as well as create a family-oriented event in downtown. The market is held on the first Friday of each night at Town Square from May-October.

## #Hikeawassee

The #Hikeawassee program is a shuttle bus program that brings AT hikers from Dicks Gap & Unicoi Gap into Hiawassee during peak hiking season. This initiative was started as a way to support the downtown businesses during the slowest economic time of the year.

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# OPENING A BUSINESS

Below are the steps before opening a business in Hiawassee.  
For any questions, please contact Hiawassee City Hall.

## Check List

- Business License  
(Jan 1-June 30 \$100, July 1-December 31 \$50;  
renewable each year.
- Sign Permit (PRIOR TO PUTTING SIGNAGE UP!!)  
Pricing based on size ((Length X Width) X \$5)
- Building Permits  
(Only if modifications are made that require electrical,  
plumbing, decking, etc.)
- Utility Applications & Deposit  
Water \$250-\$400, Water & Sewer \$300-\$500

# VACATION RENTALS

Rentals in Hiawassee and Towns County are responsible for submitting all appropriate taxes and fees in order to operate:

- Georgia Innkeeper fee (due to the State of Georgia) \$5 per night
- Georgia and Town County Sales and Use Taxes 8%
- Hiawassee Motel and Hotel Tax 8%
- City of Hiawassee Business License \$200

Rentals should establish an account with the Georgia Department of Revenue for reporting sales and use taxes, and get a form for reporting Hiawassee Hotel and Motel taxes from the Towns County Tax Assessor's office (48 River St., Unit F, Hiawassee, GA 30546). While Airbnb already submits all the taxes due to the state and local authorities on behalf of the rentals, any direct bookings or earnings from websites should also be submitted.

## **Check List**

- Complete Business License with City of Hiawassee
  - Establish account with GA Dept. of Revenue
  - Get form of reporting from TC Tax Assesor Office
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# ADVERTISING

Have an event coming up or want to get the word out about something special?

We have several ways we can help get your message out for free!

- Social Media
- Publications
- Website

Need an advertising or marketing plan? Maybe you just want some help to better your business? Ask us for advice! We would be glad to help. All you need to do is set up a meeting and let us help you figure out what works best for your business and how the DDA can help!

Be sure to join our social media groups

Facebook: Hiawassee Downtown Development Authority

Instagram: @hiawasseegadda

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# PARKING

The Hiawassee DDA is working to develop parking strategies to better enhance visitor experience in the downtown area.

Currently, there is free public parking available around the Town Square, behind City Hall, in front of the courthouse, and behind the Old Rock Jail.

For more information or questions about parking, contact Hiawassee DDA.

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# FAQ

## **Does Hiawassee require permits for business?**

Yes! The City of Hiawassee does require both a **BUSINESS LICENSE & SIGN PERMIT**. Information for these and applications can be obtained at City Hall.

## **Is my business required to complete a 'Private Employer Affidavit'?**

If your business has employees and does payroll withholdings, then you must complete the Private Employer Affidavit pursuant to O.C.G.A 36-60-6(d), there is no exception to this. This form will need to have a federal work authorization user identification number and be notarized.

## **Where can I have my business document notarized?**

The City of Hiawassee has several notaries that work in City Hall and does not charge to notarize forms related to business licenses & permits within the city. The signer of the form must be present and sign the form in front of the notary or they will not be able to notarize it.

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# KEEP IN TOUCH

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

How Many Employees? FT \_\_\_\_\_ PT: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Media Platforms (Please Circle):

Facebook Instagram Twitter LinkedIn Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Any other facts about your business you would like us to know?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you prefer to be contacted for news & announcements?

Email Telephone Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this back to Hiawassee DDA

50 River Street

Hiawassee GA 30546

(706) 896-2202

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**Welcome To:**

*Hiawassee*

**Planning a Ribbon  
Cutting Ceremony**

**HIAWASSEE DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

73 Main St. Hiawassee, GA 30546

(706) 896-2885

[DowntownHiawassee.com](http://DowntownHiawassee.com)

[Parisbusinesscenter.net](http://Parisbusinesscenter.net)



**HIAWASSEE  
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# Welcome to Hiawassee!

## 4 Easy Steps to Planning Your Ribbon Cutting

We're thrilled you have chosen Hiawassee to be the home of your business! Following is a quick overview of the process to schedule and promote a ribbon cutting, as well as a few tips for making the event successful. As the economic and business development organization for the city, the team at Hiawassee Downtown Development Authority is here to assist you every step of the way.



### Step 1

- Contact us to begin the process . It is best to plan at least 30 days in advance of when you'd like to have the event. (A good time to contact is when you are applying for your business license)
- Below, you will find an overview of how a ribbon cutting works. We will also meet with you to discuss your business and individual needs and then work with you to identify 3-4 tentative dates for the event.
- For maximum attendance, we recommend scheduling events on weekdays and typically recommend holding the event mid-day (11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.) or late afternoon (3:00- 4:30 p.m.).
- Please note – you do not need to have your ribbon cutting the day you officially open your doors to the public. In fact, we suggest having a “soft” opening several weeks before holding your official ribbon cutting.
- **\*\*Please Note\*\*** All ribbon cuttings are held on Thursday & Friday only and must be scheduled at least 2 weeks in advance to ensure coordination of invited guest.

**LILY PONITZ**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPER**

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lponitz@hiawasseeega.gov

**CHRISTINE OSBORN**  
**DDA/PBC COORDINATOR**

73 River St. Hiawassee, GA 30546  
(706) 896-2885  
cosborn@hiawasseeega.gov

# Welcome to Hiawassee!

## 4 Easy Steps to Planning Your Ribbon Cutting

### Step 2

- Hiawassee's elected officials are committed to attending as many ribbon cuttings as possible. Our team will work directly with City Hall to coordinate the date that works best for the mayor and city council.
- We typically set the date within 24-72 hours.
- While dates are based on the availability of the mayor & council, the city cannot guarantee their attendance on the day of the event.

### Step 3

- Once the date is set for the ribbon cutting, we will send out a calendar invite for the event. The list of who we will invite is on the following page.
- A list of who you should invite is also on the next page. We suggest creating a social media event or sending personalized invites to supporters of your business.

### Step 4

- General considerations to help make your event successful follows.
- The DDA will provide ribbon & scissors.
- The DDA will also take a ceremony photo and post on the City & DDA social media



## Event Suggestions

- Consider a small giveaway for attendees. Perhaps a 20% off coupon, a coffee mug with your logo on it, notepad with your logo on it, etc.
- Have fun with your ribbon cutting! Look for creative ways to tell your business story through this event. This is your time to shine.
- Consider having someone there (staff member, friend, etc.) who can take photos and video of the event, so you can use those to promote on social media and your website.

# The Process

## Promoting and Inviting

### Promoting

- The DDA will share pictures of your event on social media and our website.
- Photos of your event will also be shared with the mayor and local chamber to help promote your business.
- You will be responsible for sharing photos/videos on your business social media account/website.



### Who Should Attend

The DDA will invite the following people to your event:

- Mayor & City Council of Hiawassee
- Hiawassee DDA Board of Directors & Staff
- Towns County Elected Officials
- Lake Chatuge Chamber

You should invite:

- Family Members
- Friends
- Supporters



### Event Suggestions

- Consider having a variety of appetizers and refreshments available for attendees to enjoy following the ceremony.
- Consider having a 'Grand Opening' banner & balloons to draw attention to your business
- Consider creating a Facebook event to share on your business social media pages.
- Be sure to have adequate staffing available to assist attendees. This is your first impression on the community!

# Event Program

What to expect

## Sample Itinerary

This is the flow of a typical ribbon cutting happening over the lunch hour:

- 11:30 - Guests Arrive & Networking
- 11:45 - Ceremony Begins
  - Welcome - Hiawassee DDA Representative
  - Hiawassee Mayor Speaks
  - Business Owner Speaks
  - Photo Op - Ribbon Cutting (we provide ribbon & scissors)
  - Countdown - Led by Mayor/Elected Official
  - Cut the ribbon & celebrate!
- 12:00 - Event Reception
  - Facility Tour
  - Refreshments
  - Networking



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# Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Checklist

- Business License Applied for or obtained
- Contact Christine Osborn
- Prepare your invitation list
- Send your invites & coordinate with the DDA
- Publicize the event

## **Congratulations!**

**You have successfully  
planned your ribbon cutting**



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**Hiawassee**