



MAKING YOU A SUCCESS IN CARY

GUIDE TO STARTING A BUSINESS

Cary • Cary Chamber of Commerce



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■ INTRODUCTION

Cary and Cary Chamber of Commerce are interested in the success of your new business and want to partner with you and help you navigate through the process. You may encounter things along the path to opening a business that will be unexpected, so when it comes to working with Cary, we want to help you understand each step before you get started. Whether you plan to operate your business from your home or a storefront, it is important to familiarize yourself with Cary's regulations.

Home-Based Businesses

Most home-based businesses are permitted in all residential zoning districts within Cary and may not require a permit. However, if you are having customers/clients come to your home or you have an employee working in your home who does not reside there, an [Accessory Use Permit](#) is required for your home occupation. If you have any questions on starting a home occupation, contact Planning & Development Services at 311@carync.gov.

Storefront Businesses

If you are planning to operate your business from a storefront, we encourage you to review this guide thoroughly **prior to signing a lease or purchasing property for your new business.**

Development Liaison Service

Cary offers a [Development Liaison Service](#) to help you successfully navigate the development and permitting process for your business. The Development Liaison staff primarily focus on business customers and has experience in planning, zoning, permitting, building code, and application processing.

Cary recommends you apply for a building permit before signing a lease to confirm the land use and building uses are compatible.



■ ZONING & LAND USE

STEP 1

Step 1: Verify Your Zoning & Land Use

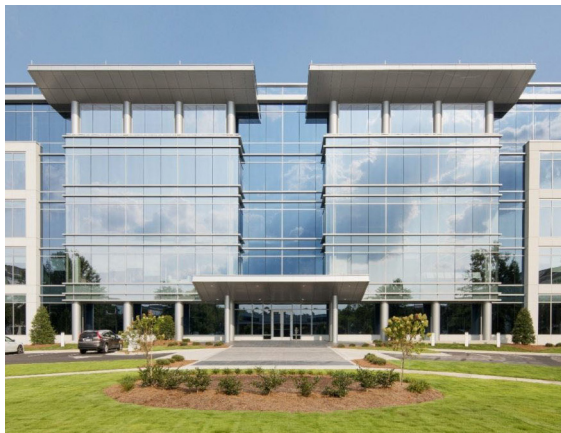
Ensure the proposed location of your business is consistent with the [Cary Community Plan](#) and has the appropriate zoning designation for the type of business you plan to open. The [Future Growth Framework Map](#) outlines the community's vision for growth and development, and controls where residential, office, commercial, and industrial uses fit best in the community.

The zoning districts create geographic areas of compatible uses which helps to bring balance to the community by regulating the type of development according to the [Future Growth Framework](#). The Tables of Permitted Uses in the [Land Development Ordinance \(LDO\) 5.1](#) identify the zoning districts (subdistricts in the Town Center) which permit the Use Type associated with your business. If you need help making this determination we recommend contacting the Development Liaison Team at 311@carync.gov.

Once it is determined the zoning allows the use, check the [use-specific standards](#) listed in the right-hand column in the [Table of Permitted Uses](#) to determine if there are other specific limitations to consider. Uses in each zoning district are either permitted, prohibited, or permitted with an approved Special Use permit.

Visit Cary's [Property Research Map](#) to confirm the zoning and the land use ([Future Growth Framework](#)). Property can be searched by the address, or with the property identification number (PIN 10). If the use is not permitted by the zoning, you may request to [rezone](#) the property or look for another location which will meet your business needs. If you have questions please contact us at 311@carync.gov.

Cary recommends you obtain a building permit before signing a lease to confirm the land use and building uses are compatible.



Typical zoning districts consistent with small business uses include:



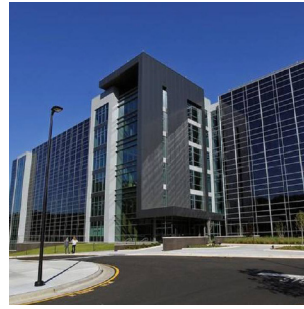
Office and Institutional District (OI)

The OI district provides for the development of professional or medical offices, and community institutions.



General Commercial District (GC)

The GC district generally provides for uses that provide goods and services to residents of the community.



Office/Research and Development District (ORD)

The ORD district provides for a wide range of employment, generating office, institutional, research and development, light manufacturing, and "flex space" uses.



Industrial District (I)

The I district provides for light and heavy industrial activities such as manufacturing, warehousing and wholesaling activities with limited contact with the general public, but may generate heavy traffic.



Town Center District (TC)

The TC district provides for a variety of subdistricts that permit non-residential uses including High Intensity Mixed Use (HMXD), Mixed Use (MXD), Office/Institutional (OFC/INS), Office/Industrial (OFC/IND), Commercial (COM), Commercial Low Intensity (CLI), Cottage Business and Residential (CB&R), and Institutional (INS).



Planned Development District (PDD)

The PDD district provides for a mixture of uses with innovative design and layout. PDD's may contain a mixture of residential and non-residential uses. Information on Cary's PDD's, including permitted uses, conditions and approved land use plans can be found by visiting our [Property Research Map](#).



Mixed Use District (MXD)

The MXD district is only located within Mixed Use Overlay Districts (MUOD). MXD provides flexibility for a mixture of commercial, office and residential uses subject to specific requirements set forth in a Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) or site plan.

BUILDING CLASSIFICATION

STEP 2

Step 2: Verify Your Building Classification

Once it is determined the zoning is appropriate the next step is to determine if the building meets the safety standards set by the [North Carolina State Building Code](#). The minimum building code requirements are applied based on the business activities and the [occupancy classification](#) of the tenant space as determined the NC State Building Code Section 302 and confirmed by the building official. We recommend you collaborate with an architect or licensed general contractor in determining whether the space meets the minimum code requirements based on the use. Building modifications may be necessary to meet the minimum building standards for each occupancy class.

The building code was established by the state to create minimum building standards to safeguard the public health, safety, and general welfare. The following are examples of building elements which are reviewed as part of the application process:

- Maximum size in area, and the maximum height of buildings
- Required fire-rated separation between tenants
- Proper use of building materials
- Fire sprinkler system or fire alarm system requirements
- Maximum number of people allowed (occupant load)
- Minimum number of exits
- Maximum travel distance to the exits
- Minimum lighting and ventilation levels
- Minimum number of plumbing fixtures (i.e. toilets, lavatories, drinking fountains, etc.)

Cary recommends you obtain a building permit before signing a lease to confirm the land use and building uses are compatible.



Occupancy Classification Groups



Assembly Group A

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) used for the gathering of persons for purposes such as civic, social, religious, recreation or for the consumption of food or drink. Examples include theaters, restaurants, churches, martial arts studios, dance halls, or sporting areas.



Business Group B

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) used for office, professional or service transaction or the storage of record and accounts. Examples include banks, beauty shops, dry cleaners, laboratories, and professional offices.



Educational Group E

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) intended for educational purposes of 6 or more persons up to the 12th grade.



Factory Group F

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) used for assembling, disassembling, fabricating, finishing, manufacturing, packaging, repairing, or processing operations.



Institutional Group I

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) in which people are cared for or live in a supervised environment, having physical limitations, because of health or age are harbored for medical treatment, or other care or treatment. Examples include assisted living facilities, convalescent facilities, group homes, and social rehabilitation facilities.



Mercantile Group M

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) used for the display and sale of merchandise and involves stocks of goods or merchandise accessible to the public. Examples include department stores, drug stores, motor fuel-dispensing facilities, and sales rooms.



Residential Group R

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) used for sleeping purposes but not one- or two-family dwellings. Examples include boarding houses, hotels, apartments, dorms, live/work units, and other residential care facilities.



Storage Group S

Spaces (a building structure or portion thereof) used for storage that is not classified as a hazardous occupancy.



Utility Group U

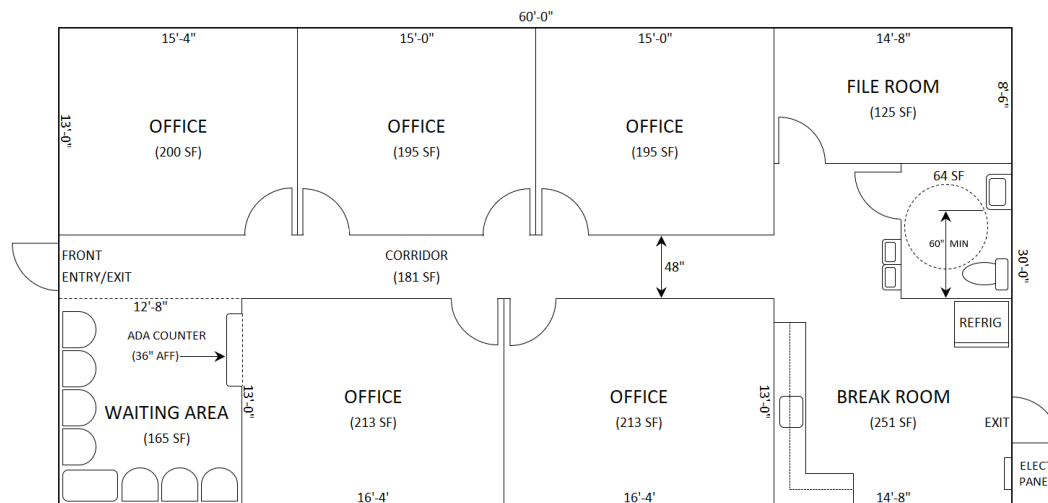
Building or structures not classified as any specific occupancy. Examples include agricultural buildings, carports, grain silos, private garages, retaining walls, sheds, tanks, and towers.

Step 3: Applying for a Building Permit in an Existing Building

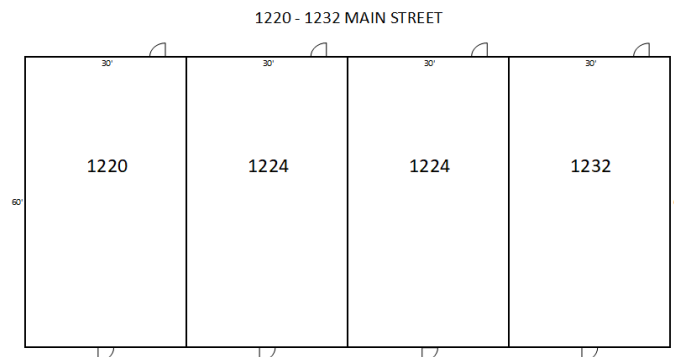
A permit is required when a new tenant moves into a building or suite even if no work is proposed. Application types include:

- **Change of Tenant - No Work:** This application type applies when a new tenant is moving into a space which was previously approved for the same occupancy class and no work is planned. An example is an insurance office moving into a space previously approved for a law office (both uses are classified as Group B - Business).
- **Change of Occupancy:** This application type applies when a new tenant is moving into a space which was previously approved for a different occupancy class. An example is a pet grooming business (Group B - Business) moving into a space previous approved for retail (Group M - Mercantile).
- **Alteration:** This application type applies when physical changes to the building or system are proposed. Alterations may include general construction, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, etc.

The example below shows the floor plan for one of the suites shown in the key plan.



Sample Floor Plan



Sample Key Plan

Step 3: Applying for a Building Permit (cont.)

The [Commercial Plan Submittal Guide](#) provides the information needed for each application type. Typically, all applications require a floor plan of the suite, a key plan or suite layout of the building, and an [Abbreviated Building Code Summary](#). The standard [Building Code Summary](#) is required when a professional designer is preparing the documents. We recommend consulting with a professional designer (i.e. architect, professional engineer, registered interior designer, etc.) when new work is proposed. The design professional will provide the plan documents and supporting information and may offer advice on options to meet the code requirements and may provide the estimated costs associated with the improvements.

If a change in occupancy is proposed, the building is subject to the code requirements of the new use. As an example, the air and ventilation requirements will change which may result in required modifications to the ventilation and/or exhaust systems. A fire alarm may be required for educational uses, or additional plumbing fixtures may be necessary if the occupancy load increases, and the approval of [fats, oils and grease systems](#) will be necessary if food service is proposed. A change of occupancy to a more intense use may trigger unanticipated costs such as building improvements and additional development fees. A change in occupancy may increase the required parking which will require a development plan.

Cary recommends you obtain a building permit before signing a lease to confirm the land use and building uses are compatible.

The [Commercial Building Permit Application](#) is found on the Cary's website. To get started you will need to register and then start the application. The prompts in bold are required and the others are optional, and if you do not understand the question, there are tips to help with the information to provide. You will have the opportunity to add your contractors, and to upload the required documents. The application and plan documents will be reviewed by all disciplines, so you only need to apply once.

Following the review, the applicant will receive an email informing them the application has been approved, or the application has been denied which will include comments from the plan reviewers. If revisions are required, the applicant will need to log in to the electronic plan review portal and respond to the plan review comments and provide the additional information, revised plans, etc. When the permit application has been approved, the applicant will receive an email which will include the fees due, instructions on how to make payment, along with instructions on how to download the approved plans.

Remember that work, including demolition cannot start until the building permit has been issued. At the appropriate times during the renovation, it will be necessary to [schedule inspections](#) for the Town officials to inspect the work to verify compliance with the state building codes and the local ordinance. Once the improvements are completed and all the inspections are approved, the Town will mail you a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or Certificate of Completion (CC) based on the type of the permit. If no work is being performed as part of the application, only final inspections by the building inspector and fire inspector will be required.

Additional Licensing or Permitting Agencies for Consideration

You may need approvals from other agencies in addition to your building permit. For example, most food service establishments require a [Food Service Establishment Plan Review Application](#) through Wake County Environmental Services with the exception of bakeries, frozen ice cream and yogurt which require [NC Department of Agriculture](#) approval. If your business serves alcohol (even temporarily), you will need to obtain a permit from the [North Carolina Alcohol & Beverage Control Commission](#). Local approvals are required as outlined in the [Local Government Opinion](#) under permitting.

Making Changes or Additions to the Building Façade or Property's Exterior?

If there are any improvements to the outside of the building, a development plan will be required. If you have questions contact a Development Liaison at 311@carync.gov. Typical changes which require a development plan include:

- Change to the exterior color of the building
- Building façade changes, including relocation of windows and doors
- Relocation, installation, or construction of trash enclosures, fences, tanks, mechanical equipment, or other structures
- Changes in landscaping, sidewalks, parking or other site-related work

Keep in mind that building signs go through a separate permit process (see Step 6).

■ SIGNING A LEASE

STEP 4

Step 4: Signing Your Lease

Steps 1-3 outlines some of the due diligence research recommended before signing a lease. Before entering a contract for a property, it is important to:

- Verify the land use and zoning to confirm it will allow your type of business (Use Type)
 - Make sure your [contractors are licensed](#) when required by the state prior to signing a contract
 - Apply for and obtain a building permit
-

■ ESTABLISHING A UTILITY ACCOUNT

STEP 5

Step 5: Establishing a Utility Account

You will need to establish water and sewer services for the property unless your utilities will be handled through the landlord or management. Contact Cary's [Utility Account Services](#) to get started.

Other utility services will also need to be established with the appropriate utility providers. Electric service is primarily provided by [Duke Energy](#) and gas service is primarily provided by [Dominion Energy](#).

■ GETTING YOUR SIGNS

STEP 6

Step 6: Getting Your Signs

All permanent signs and time-limited signs require a permit. Forms of advertising, such as wind-blown devices, pennants, sign spinners, are prohibited signs and listed online. Prior to purchasing a sign or other forms of on-site advertising, review Cary's sign resources online.

Time-limited banners are permitted for a maximum of 30 days and are issued within the first 60 days of the issuance of the building permit, certificate of occupancy (CO) or certificate of completion (CC). Some businesses choose to use a portion of the 30 days to advertise "Coming Soon" and the remainder of the 30 days for "Now Open", while other businesses may choose to use all 30 days to say, "Grand Opening" or "Now Open". Cary does not regulate the content of the sign but regulates the size and duration of time. Time-limited banners are governed by Cary's Land Development Ordinance (LDO) [9.2.5 \(N\) New Business Alternative to Permanent Wall Sign](#) and require approval of a [Time Limited Banner permit](#).

Permanent signs are regulated by Cary's [Land Development Ordinance \(LDO\) 9.2](#). Permanent signs require an approved Sign Permit application and some permanent signs require a building permit. Electric signs with internal wiring or lighting equipment, and/or external lighting equipment that directs light on signs, require an electrical permit. It is recommended you hire a professional sign contractor to help you design, construct, and install your permanent sign(s). Questions regarding permanent signs should be directed to a professional sign contractor or the Planning Department at 311.carync.gov.

Most non-residential developments in Cary have Master Sign Plans (formerly known as Uniform Sign Plans), which outline the overall design, number, and location for all signs within that development. Locate and download a copy of the Master Sign Plan at your business location (if applicable) by searching the [Property Research map](#) by address and selecting the [Master Sign Plan](#) list on the website. Instructions for signage is available on the Sign Permit Application Required Documents page which should be reviewed prior to application.

■ READY TO OPEN

STEP 7

Step 7: Ready to Open

There are many ways to celebrate your opening including a grand opening event. Events such as grand openings may be approved by the Town through the [Temporary Use Permit](#) process. These permits are good for a maximum of 7 calendar days or 3 events per year, whichever is less. The Temporary Use Permit allows you to place temporary structures such as tables, tents, bounce houses, signs, etc. on the property. Apply for your Temporary Use Permit on our [electronic plan review portal](#). You may also receive a complimentary "Ribbon Cutting" per your membership. Please reach out to the Chamber if you are interested. We wish you the absolute best on your new business. Apply for your time-limited and permanent sign permit applications on the [electronic plan review portal](#).

■ RESOURCES

Start Your Business

U.S. Small Business Association www.sba.gov

Phone: (800) 827-5722

The primary functions of the SBA include delivering loans, loan guarantees, contracts, counseling sessions and other forms of assistance to small businesses.

Small Business & Technology Development Center www.sbtcdc.org

Phone: (800) 258-0862

The SBTDC provides management counseling and educational services to small and mid-sized businesses. All services are confidential, and most services are free.

Small Business Center Network of North Carolina www.ncsbc.net

Phone: (919) 807-7217

The SBCN is a community-based provider of training, counseling, and resource information. The network is made up of 58 Small Business Centers across the state.

Site Selection

For traditional real estate options you can search for property on the [Cary Economic Development Website](#). Direct any further questions regarding site selection to at the Cary Chamber of Commerce. Phone: (919) 319-4281

Co-Working Environments

- [Cary Innovation Center](#)
- Blush Cowork



■ FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Cary

FINANCIAL GRANT	DESCRIPTION	REQUIREMENTS
Façade Improvement Program	Approved property owners or tenants who improve the exteriors of existing businesses may seek reimbursement for half the cost, depending on the amount.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must undertake at least \$2,000 of improvements • Project site must be located within the Town Center Area Plan boundary • Tenants must have a minimum of two years remaining on their lease or have option to renew • Improvements must be on the façade of the building facing the primary street orientation
Individual Incentives	The Town of Cary does not have a set policy regarding economic incentives. Each case is evaluated by the Town Council on its individual merits and incentives may be awarded if approved by Council. Items considered are, number of jobs, quality of jobs, capital investment, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide number of jobs, salary of jobs, and amount of capital investment that the project will generate • There are no minimum requirements for the above items, and each project is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Wake County

Business Investment Grant	The county will award a grant worth up to 2.25% of the new investment that will be paid over a period of up to eight years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must meet either New Investment Threshold and/or New Jobs Threshold
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State of North Carolina

Job Development Investment Grant	A discretionary incentive that provides sustained annual grants to new and expanding businesses measured against a percentage of withholding taxes paid by new employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project results in a net increase in employment • Project increases opportunities for employment and strengthens the state's economy • Project is consistent with the economic development goals of the state and of the area in which it is located • Project is competitive with other state(s) or country • Grant is necessary for the completion of the project in North Carolina
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State of North Carolina (cont.)

FINANCIAL GRANT	DESCRIPTION	REQUIREMENTS
One North Carolina	Helps recruit and expand quality jobs in high value-added, knowledge-driven industries. It also provides financial assistance to those businesses or industries deemed vital to a healthy economy that are making significant efforts to expand in North Carolina.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The company must agree to meet an average wage test.• Local units of government (city or county) must agree to match financial assistance to the company.
Small Business Technology Transfer	A program that expands funding opportunities in the federal innovation research and development arena. Central to the program is expansion of the public/private sector partnership to include the joint venture opportunities for small businesses and nonprofit research institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organized for profit, with a place of business located in the United States;• At least 51 percent owned and controlled by one or more individuals who are citizens of, or permanent residents of the United States, and;• No more than 500 employees, including affiliates.
Tax Credits in North Carolina	North Carolina is consistently ranked among the best business climates in the nation by Forbes, CNBC, Chief Executive and Site Selection. Several tax credit programs contribute to this business environment that makes North Carolina a place where companies Thrive.	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interactive Digital Media• Renewable Energy• Technology Development

■ ENTREPRENEURIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Cary Innovation Center

The Cary Innovation Center is the community for innovation and entrepreneurship in Cary. They seek to innovate, educate and develop successful entrepreneurs. If interested, become a participant in their I.D.E.A.L. entrepreneurial courses aimed at increasing knowledge for all levels of entrepreneurs.

Address

201 W. Chatham Street
Cary, NC 27511

Contact

Ian Henshaw
(919) 633-0055
ian@caryinnovationcenter.com
www.caryinnovationcenter.com

Blush

Blush is a women-focused coworking space with childcare.

Address

201 Shannon Oaks Circle
Suites 102 and 103
Cary, NC 27511

Contact

(919) 413-5743
info@blushwork.com
www.blushcowork.com



■ BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
Cary Chamber of Commerce	Connecting Business with Community. The Cary Chamber serves as the voice of the Business Community in Cary. It provides leadership and support to facilitate a thriving and collaborative Business environment. The Chamber believes that such an environment is characterized by the strength & growth of our companies, by the quality & stability of the local workforce, and by the attractiveness of our market to future businesses.	Mailing Address: 307 North Academy St Cary, NC 27513 Phone: (919) 467-1016 Email: info@carychamber.com www.carychamber.com
Association for Corporate Growth	A global organization with 14,000 members comprising 55 chapters in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia. By bringing together business leaders and middle market deal-makers, the organization assists in growth and business- building by ensuring member access to data, content, and networking opportunities.	Mailing Address: 1404 Sky Hill Place Wake Forest, NC 27587 Phone: (919) 453-2997 www.acg.org/raleighdurham
MCNC	A nonprofit organization committed to building partnerships among academic, research, government, and business communities for more than a quarter of a century. These partnerships enable and advance education, innovation, and economic development throughout North Carolina by delivering the world's foremost information technology services through the North Carolina Research and Education Network.	Mailing Address: 3021 E. Cornwallis Road PO Box 12889 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 Phone: (919) 248-1900 www.mcnc.org
National Association of Women Business Owners	Provides support to women entrepreneurs in social, economic, and political arenas. NAWBO focuses on promoting economic development, creating innovation and effective change, building strategic alliances, and influencing public policy.	Susan Stanhope, President Mailing Address: 1204 Village Market Place, Box 193 Morrisville, NC 27560 Phone: (919) 218-4783 nawbo-raleigh.org
Research Triangle Institute	A not for profit corporation established by leaders in academia, business, and state government, which provides contact research to federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as to private industry and foundations. Capabilities span the physical, life, and social sciences including survey research, behavioral studies, chemistry, energy, and environmental research, population, education, health systems, economics, statistics, state planning, engineering, technology applications, virtual reality applications, toxicology, and toxic wastes.	Phone: (919) 541-6000 Email: Listen@rti.org www.rti.org

■ TRAINING & EDUCATION

Capital Area Workforce Development Board

Capital Area Workforce Development is a public-private partnership that focuses on economic development by ensuring the local workforce has the skills, training and education to meet the needs of local employers.

Contact:

Capital Area Workforce Development Board
(919) 856-6040

Wake Technical Community College

Workforce Development – Customized Training Program

The Customized Training Program provides training assistance that supports full time production and direct customer service positions created in North Carolina. The growth potential of NC companies is enhanced while simultaneously preparing NC's workforce with the skills essential for successful employment in emerging industries. [Read More.](#)

Course Listings

Wake Tech offers a broad selection of courses and degrees that will prepare students for whatever field they choose to pursue. Students at Wake Tech receive an education that is high-quality and very affordable. [See Them Here.](#)

Small Business Center

The Wake Tech Small Business Center (SBC) is a state-funded organization which is part of the Small Business Center Network of North Carolina (SBCN). The SBC provides a multitude of free resources for small business owners, whether they are starting or expanding their business. [Read More.](#)

Continuing Education

Wake Tech provides a wide range of workforce training and lifelong learning classes for professional and personal enrichment, offered at a variety of campuses and community sites throughout Wake County. [Read More.](#)

Entrepreneurship Initiatives

Wake Tech's Entrepreneurship Initiatives department places a dual emphasis on information and activities on campus and in the community. [Read More.](#)

Contact:

Western Wake Campus
3434 Kildaire Farm Road
Cary, North Carolina 27518
(919) 335-1000
www.waketech.edu

CONTACT US

Cary Planning & Development Services

316 N Academy Street

Cary, NC 27513

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carync.gov

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Carychamber.com



Why Join?

