



MAIN STREET FORT SMITH COMMERCE COLLECTIVE ***A DOWNTOWN BUSINESS INCUBATOR***

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Commerce Collective program is an initiative of Main Street Fort Smith designed to support entrepreneurs through temporary occupancy of a brick-and-mortar retail space in downtown Fort Smith's Entertainment and Main Street District.

The program is designed to foster sustainable businesses and serve as a transitional pathway toward permanent tenancy in downtown Fort Smith.

Program objectives include:

- Activation of vacant downtown properties
- Increased pedestrian activity and retail diversity
- Low-risk market testing opportunities for entrepreneurs
- Development of sustainable small businesses

Main Street Fort Smith covers base rent, utilities, and internet at a designated space for a four (4) month term.

The program space is located at 409 Garrison Avenue (approximately 891 square feet) and may be shared with another approved participant. Space is provided in as-is condition. No structural alterations or permanent modifications may be made without prior written approval. Participants are responsible for interior merchandising, maintaining a clean and professional retail environment, daily cleaning and trash removal, securing the space at closing, and promptly reporting maintenance concerns. Participants must maintain required business and liability insurance and name Main Street Fort Smith as additional insured.

2026 COMMERCE COLLECTIVE TIMELINE

- **Applications Open:** March 4, 2026
- **Application Deadline:** April 3, 2026
- **Finalists Announced:** April 10, 2026
- **Pitch Sessions:** May 1, 2026
- **Occupancy Term:** May 1 – September 30, 2026

Main Street Fort Smith reserves the right to adjust dates as necessary.



ELIGIBILITY

The program is open to:

- Entrepreneurs and start-ups
- Small business owners without an existing brick-and-mortar location in Fort Smith
- Artists, makers, and creative professionals
- Individuals intending to establish a permanent business in downtown Fort Smith

Food service businesses are not eligible. On-site food preparation is not permitted; however, pre-packaged food and beverage products may be sold.

The sale of alcohol, CBD products, tobacco, vape products, firearms, and other regulated goods is prohibited unless expressly approved in writing by Main Street Fort Smith and all required local, state, and federal permits are secured prior to occupancy.

Businesses requiring specialized health or regulatory approvals must secure proper licensing prior to opening.

Preference will be given to applicants demonstrating readiness, viability, and long-term commitment to Fort Smith.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Selected participants must:

- Commit to a four (4) month occupancy term
- Operate a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours per week
- Maintain consistent and publicly posted business hours
- Obtain all required city, state, and federal licenses, including a City of Fort Smith Business License, prior to opening.
- Provide proof of general liability insurance in an amount not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and name Main Street Fort Smith as additional insured prior to occupancy.
- Maintain required business and inventory insurance coverage
- Participate in required orientation and Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) consultation sessions
- Maintain a clean, professional retail space
- Submit brief monthly sales reporting for program evaluation purposes

- Participate in a program exit survey
- Attend at least one check-in meeting during the term
- Comply with all space usage policies outlined in the Space Use and Sublease Support Agreement

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications and finalist pitches will be evaluated based on the following:

- **Business Viability & Financial Readiness**
Evidence of a clear revenue model, realistic pricing structure, and operational preparedness.
- **Market Differentiation & Retail Contribution**
Distinct product or service offerings that enhance downtown retail diversity and fill a market gap.
- **Operational Capacity**
Demonstrated ability to meet required business hours, manage inventory, and maintain a professional retail environment.
- **Customer & Marketing Strategy**
Clear understanding of target customers and practical marketing plan to drive foot traffic and sales.
- **Long-Term Growth Intent**
Commitment to establishing a permanent presence in downtown Fort Smith beyond the incubator term.
- **Professionalism & Completeness**
Thorough, accurate, and timely submission of required materials.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Commerce Collective utilizes a structured review and selection process to ensure program readiness and alignment with downtown revitalization goals.

A Selection Committee appointed by Main Street Fort Smith will review applications and conduct finalist pitch evaluations. The committee may include individuals with experience in small business development, finance and banking, commercial real estate, retail operations, entrepreneurship, and economic development.

Step 1: Application Review

Submitted applications are reviewed for completeness, business readiness, and alignment with program objectives.

Step 2: Finalist Notification

Selected applicants may be invited to advance as finalists.



Step 3: Required Pitch Training

Finalists must participate in business pitch preparation training with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) at the UAFS Center for Economic Development.

Step 4: Pitch Presentation

Finalists will present their business concept to the Selection Committee.

Step 5: Final Selection & Notification

Final selections will be made based on application strength, pitch performance, operational readiness, and contribution to downtown retail diversity.

Main Street Fort Smith reserves the right to make final decisions at its sole discretion. Participation in pitch training does not guarantee selection. Applications will be accepted March 4 – April 3, 2026 for the 2026 program. There is no application fee.

BUSINESS READINESS

Please indicate the following:

Registered Business Entity (LLC, Corp, etc.): Yes No

Federal EIN Obtained: Yes No

Business Bank Account Established: Yes No

Point-of-Sale System in Place: Yes No

Workers' Compensation Coverage (if applicable): Yes No

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Applicant Name	
Business Name	
Mailing Address	
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Website / Social Media	
Type of Business	
Previous Business Locations (if any)	



BUSINESS BACKGROUND

Is this a start-up or established business? _____

If established, length of operation: _____

Describe your business concept and product/service offerings:

For established businesses, please provide:

Brief business history:

Best-selling products/services:

OPERATIONS

List individuals responsible for daily operations: _____

Current Employees: Yes No

Planned Employees: Yes No

Proposed Business Hours (minimum 24 hours per week): _____

Desired Occupancy Dates: _____

Average Price Range: _____



411 Garrison Avenue, STE 109
Fort Smith, Arkansas 72901
mainstreetfs.org

Specify the estimated square footage needed and describe your proposed layout, display fixtures, storage needs, and overall physical setup within the program space:

MARKETING & SUSTAINABILITY

Identify three strategies you will use to promote and sustain your business during the program:

Describe your target customer and how you plan to reach them:

COLLABORATION

Are you applying jointly with another business? Yes No

If yes, list participating businesses: _____

Preferred complementary vendor type (if sharing space): _____



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MEDIA RELEASE

If selected, Applicant authorizes Main Street Fort Smith to use the business name, logo, photographs, and promotional materials for marketing, public relations, and program reporting purposes without compensation.

NO GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS

Participation in the Main Street Fort Smith Commerce Collective: A Downtown Business Incubator does not guarantee business profitability, continued rent support, or future lease opportunities beyond the approved program term.

TERMINATION CLAUSE

Main Street Fort Smith reserves the right to terminate participation at its discretion for non-compliance with program requirements, failure to maintain posted business hours, unsafe practices, illegal activity, or conduct inconsistent with the mission of the program.

Participant agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Main Street Fort Smith, its board members, officers, employees, and partners from any claims, damages, liabilities, losses, or expenses arising from Participant's business operations or use of the program space.

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

I certify that the information provided in this application is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that submission of this application does not guarantee acceptance into the program.

I understand that acceptance into the program requires execution of a formal Space Use and Sublease Support Agreement containing additional terms and conditions.

Applicant Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Completed applications may be submitted by:

Email: becka@mainstreetfs.org

Mail:
Main Street Fort Smith
411 Garrison Ave., STE 109
Fort Smith, AR 72901