

Main Street Fort Smith Mini-Grant Program

Application Packet - Summer 2026 (FY 2027)

About Main Street Fort Smith

Main Street Fort Smith is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening and preserving the downtown historic commercial district. As a designated Main Street Arkansas and Main Street America community, we support projects that drive business development, celebrate arts and culture, and create vibrant spaces that strengthen our historic downtown.

Our Mission:

To create a thriving downtown through business development, arts and culture, placemaking, and special events.

We achieve this by following the Main Street America Four-Point Approach, a nationally recognized framework for revitalization:

- **Design** – Protecting and enhancing the unique architectural character of downtown through historic preservation, façade improvements, signage, lighting, and streetscape projects.
- **Economic Vitality** – Supporting business development and property improvements that attract and retain businesses.
- **Promotion** – Showcasing downtown as a vibrant destination through events and marketing.
- **Organization** – Building strong partnerships among businesses, property owners, city leaders, and the community.

Program Purpose

The Mini Grant Program is offered to businesses and property owners in the Main Street Fort Smith district (see attached map) who wish to improve their buildings while preserving the historical and architectural value of these structures.

All projects must adhere to the City of Fort Smith's form-based codes, ensuring that improvements are compatible with the historic character and long-term vision of the downtown district.

The program's priorities reflect Main Street's mission:

- **Historic Preservation & Design** – Restoring and enhancing architectural features that tell Fort Smith's story for future generations.
- **Economic Vitality** – Investing in projects that strengthen businesses and attract new activity downtown.
- **Community Impact** – Supporting improvements that increase foot traffic, improve safety, and create a welcoming environment.

***Note:** An emphasis will be placed on projects with the highest visual and economic impact, such as façade improvements: awnings, exterior paint, masonry, and lighting.*

This program is made possible through funding from Main Street Arkansas and the Arkansas Department of Heritage.

Review & Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a committee appointed by Main Street Fort Smith and approved by Main Street Arkansas consultants. Award decisions will be based on:

- Alignment with Main Street Fort Smith's mission and district priorities (outlined above)
- Compliance with the City of Fort Smith's form-based codes
- Preservation impact and ability to maintain historic and architectural integrity
- Visual and economic impact of the project
- Feasibility and applicant's ability to complete the project by deadline
- Demonstrated commitment to the required match

Program Overview

- **Grant Size:** Main Street Fort Smith will award up to **\$15,000 in 50/50 matching grants**, with individual awards typically ranging from **\$1,500 – \$7,500** depending on project type and number of applicants.

- **Match Requirement:** Grantees must provide a **matching investment** (cash or documented in-kind contributions).
- **Type:** This is a **reimbursement grant**. Funds will be issued within 30 days after Main Street Fort Smith receives complete documentation that the project is finished.
- **Eligible Applicants:** Property owners and business owners located within the Main Street Fort Smith district. (District map attached)
- **Approval Requirement:** Applicants must obtain **approval from Main Street Fort Smith, written consent from property owner (if applicant doesn't own the building/space), and meet all City of Fort Smith permitting requirements *before beginning any work***. Projects started prior to approval will not be eligible for funding.

Disqualification

Applications and/or projects will be **automatically disqualified** if any of the following occur:

- The project begins before Main Street Fort Smith approval is granted and/or proper permitting is not obtained from the City of Fort Smith.
- The project is not completed by the March 15, 2027 deadline.
- Required documentation (invoices, proof of payment, photos, etc.) is not submitted in full.
- The applicant fails to meet the required matching contribution.

Important Dates

- **Applications Open:** June 15, 2026
- **Applications Close:** October 1, 2026 (5:00 p.m.)
- **Grant Awards Announced:** October 15, 2026
- **Project Completion & Documentation Deadline:** March 15, 2027
- **Extension Clause:** At the discretion of the Executive Director of Main Street Fort Smith, applicants may be granted up to a **30-day extension** (until April 14, 2027) to complete

the project and submit all required documentation. Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing prior to the March 15 deadline.

Eligible Project Examples

- Façade improvements (painting, awnings, masonry repair, signage, lighting)
- Restoration of architectural details or historically appropriate features
- Accessibility upgrades that respect historic design
- Placemaking or beautification projects that enhance the district
- Interior improvements that enhance customer experience while preserving building character

(Note: Final eligibility is at the discretion of Main Street Fort Smith.)

Application Form

Business/Property Owner Information

- Name of Applicant/Business: _____
- Property Address: _____
- Contact Person/Title: _____
- Phone: _____ Email: _____

Project Information

- Project Title: _____
- Brief Project Description (attach additional pages if needed):

Estimated Project Cost

- Total Project Budget: \$ _____
- Requested Grant Amount: \$ _____
- Matching Contribution (cash and/or in-kind): \$ _____

Timeline

- Expected Start Date: _____
- Expected Completion Date: _____

Attachments Required

- Project budget (itemized)
- Photos of current conditions
- Design materials appropriate to the scope of work, which may include:
 - Drawings, renderings, or mockups (for larger or more complex projects)
 - A descriptive design narrative and/or product samples (for smaller-scale projects)
- Proof of property ownership or tenant agreement with owner's approval
- Permitting Documentation:
 - Proof of required permitting from the City of Fort Smith (if obtained), **or**
 - A signed statement from the applicant confirming that the scope of work has been reviewed with the City and that staff are in general agreement that the project is eligible for permitting
- Completed W-9 form (for payment processing)
- Copy of Articles of Organization/Incorporation (business applicants only)



Certification

I understand this is a reimbursement grant and funds will only be distributed upon completion of the project and submission of required documentation (including invoices, proof of payment, and after photos). I further acknowledge that **approval from Main Street Fort Smith is required before the project begins**. I also understand that projects must be completed by March 15, 2027, unless a written extension of up to 30 days is granted at the discretion of the Executive Director of Main Street Fort Smith. I certify that the information in this application is true and complete.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Media Release Agreement

Applicant hereby grants Main Street Fort Smith (MSFS) permission to use photographs, videos, logos, or other digital media submitted by the applicant or taken by MSFS that pertain to improvements made possible by this grant, without payment or other consideration.

I hereby irrevocably authorize MSFS to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish, or distribute these materials in print and digital formats for any lawful purpose, including but not limited to: marketing, advertising, promotional materials, social media, press releases, reports, and grant documentation.

Signature of Applicant: _____ **Date:** _____

Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted via email by **5:00 p.m. on October 1, 2026** to:

Amanda Hager
Executive Director, Main Street Fort Smith
director@mainstreetfs.org