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FAYETTEVILLE CITY COUNCIL WARD 4

Keeping Fayetteville Local

Enabling small business, local character, and the next generation of good jobs

Local businesses give Fayetteville its character and keep money in town. This month Tiny Tim's Pizza, on the square since 1982, got a notice to vacate over one late rent check after its building changed hands. It worked out, but it showed how thin the margin is. Rising rents, high interest rates, and rules written for big standardized buildings squeeze the places that make Fayetteville itself.

The City cannot set interest rates or regulate private leases, and the state constitution bars it from lending its credit to private companies. It does control what is legal to build, how fast it says yes, and where public dollars go. This proposal uses those three levers. All of it can pass by ordinance or budget vote, within Arkansas law, without new debt.

Policy 1: Make It Easy to Open Small

- **Small Formats by Right:** Dividing an existing commercial building into smaller bays would need only a building permit. Market stalls, container shops, and food-truck courts would be allowed on underused lots with an administrative permit.
- **Reuse First:** Opening a business in a building more than 20 years old would no longer trigger a site-wide zoning redesign. Fire safety and accessibility rules still apply.
- **Life-Safety Grants:** A capped matching grant for the code costs that stop a local opening in an older building, such as sprinklers, grease interceptors, and ADA restrooms.
- **A Permit Clock:** One point of contact for small commercial projects, a pre-application meeting within ten business days, and a published target for plan review, reported quarterly.
- **Home-Based Starters:** Home occupation rules would allow clients by appointment, one outside employee, light production, and a small sign, with hours and parking rules kept in place.
- **Child Care by Right:** Licensed child care should be an allowed accessory use at every house of worship and school, in any zone, with no rezoning or conditional use permit.

Policy 2: Help Local Businesses Last

A business qualifies if its main office is in Northwest Arkansas, it has fewer than five locations, and no franchise agreement dictates its menu, products, or design.

- **Years 8 to 14, Lease Survival:** Free lease counsel through a contracted attorney, so a tenant can ask for renewal options, a buyout of their improvements, and a first look if the building sells.
- **Years 15 to 24, Ownership:** First priority in the partner loan program to buy the building or open a second local location.
- **Years 25 and Up, Succession:** Funded help selling to employees, a worker cooperative, or a local buyer, so a business does not close because nobody planned the handoff.
- **Capital Through Partners:** The City would grant funds to a nonprofit community lender such as FORGE or Communities Unlimited to hold as a loan-loss reserve. A few hundred thousand dollars can back several million in loans from local banks, with the City's risk capped at the grant.
- **A Fair Trade:** An owner who accepts City money for a property agrees to give the current local tenant a renewal option and a first look at any sale.

Policy 3: Meet at the Curb

- **Match the Storefront:** When an owner invests in a facade, the City matches it and moves that block up the sidewalk and streetscape list: a wider sidewalk, a street tree, a bench, a safer crossing.
- **The City as Customer:** Publish City bids to the local business registry, break large contracts into lots small firms can bid on, and report the local share of City spending each year.

Policy 4: Build the Workforce for the Next Generation of Jobs

A city council does not recruit factories. It controls land, permitting, infrastructure, and part of the pipeline of people, and employers care about those more than incentives.

- **The Chip Fab Next Door:** In November 2025 the University of Arkansas opened MUSiC, a $95 million silicon carbide research fab at the research park in south Fayetteville, open to companies of any size. The City's job is to make sure the companies that grow out of it find lab and flex space nearby, zoned by right, and streets and transit that serve the park.
- **Land for Making Things:** Protect the serviced industrial land that remains, and allow light manufacturing, food production, and maker uses by right in commercial and industrial districts.
- **Trades Are Good Jobs:** The water and sewer bond program means years of skilled work. Set an apprenticeship and local-hire goal on City capital contracts, and build a pre-apprenticeship pipeline with Fayetteville Public Schools and NWACC, with City departments as a first employer.
- **Housing and Child Care Are Workforce Policy:** A parent who cannot find care, or a worker who cannot afford to live here, is a job that goes unfilled. The council's housing and child care votes are also its jobs votes. Continuing our childcare voucher program is a tool to bridge the gap for low- and moderate- income families until the market is able to provide adequate supply.

Summary of Benefits

Stakeholder	How They Benefit
Local Business Owners	Smaller spaces to open in, a predictable permit timeline, help with code costs, counsel at lease renewal, and a path to owning the building.
Property Owners	Easier reuse of their buildings, streetscape investment at their frontage, and stable long-term tenants.
Workers and Families	Child care near home, and a route from a high school career-tech class to a trade or a chip-fab technician job in Fayetteville.
Residents	The local places that make Fayetteville itself, and safer, more walkable commercial streets.
City Government	A larger tax base, sidewalks funded where they pay off, and a package within state law and the council's own authority.