



STARTING YOUR BUSINESS IN DOWNTOWN FORT DODGE

Downtown Fort Dodge welcomes you to our community! The staff at Main Street Fort Dodge is here to help you start your business. We have a variety of unique spaces and resources to help make your business a success. Here are the first few steps in starting your dream business as well as a few frequently asked questions and a business checklist.

1. ASSESS YOURSELF AS A BUSINESS OWNER.

Take a readiness assessment on the Small Business Administration's website at https://eweb1.sba.gov/cams/training/business_primet/assessment.htm to determine your willingness to meet the demands of owning a small business. Then look into the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) of Iowa, which provides no cost, confidential one-one-one counseling to business owners. Their counseling services are personalized and designed to fit the unique needs of your business.

2. LOCATING YOUR BUSINESS

The importance of your location is determined by the main needs of your business including: Do customers come to your business? Is convenience an issue for your customers/employees? Are you providing products or services? Where is your competition located? Are specific zoning laws critical? How much space is required? Do you have room to grow? Do you rely on high visibility, or do you need an office setting? Main Street Fort Dodge is here to help you answer these questions.

3. PERMITS, LICENSES, & APPROVALS

Opening a business may require permits, licenses and other approvals from the City of Fort Dodge depending on the nature of your business and the needed real estate improvements. The City Clerk's office can help you schedule a building inspection and guide you through applications for any external, historic, or specialty work. Some proposals require more than one reading at Council meetings. Depending on the type of business you are opening, you may need to contact the Webster County Health Department. Set up a meeting with the Building Official for the city, Troy Brandt, at 515-576-4551x1004 and the chief city engineer, Chad Schaeffer 515-576-4551x1254.

4. DEVELOP YOUR BUSINESS PLAN & BUDGET

Startup investments can vary greatly, but certain costs are often overlooked by new businesses. Make sure you have room in your budget for: licenses and fees (typically each fee is small but together they add up), space costs (unforeseen costs of renovation can add up quickly), signage and marketing (domain names, websites, and business cards included), business and personal property taxes (engage an accountant early in the process), and outdoor maintenance (find out who is responsible for snow removal, landscaping, and the parking lot/spaces.)

5. WELCOME! START ENJOYING EVERYTHING MAIN STREET FORT DODGE HAS TO OFFER!

Main Street Fort Dodge is here to help you on your new business journey! We provide marketing, education, grant opportunities, events, and more. You are well on your way to building a successful business in Historic Downtown Fort Dodge!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How long will it take to open?

A: Registering and setting up a new business can take from 1-3 months, depending on which improvements to the space are needed.

Q: Are there incentives available?

A: Yes, a variety of competitive grant and loan programs are available. You can find them at our website www.mainstreetfd.org or in our Resource Guide.

Q: Where do I go to register my business name for Fort Dodge?

A: To register your trade name in Fort Dodge, visit the Recorder's office in the Webster County Courthouse.

Q: I need a sign for my business. What do I do first?

A: Signage must comply with city ordinances which you can find at fortdodgeiowa.org.

Q: Should I rent or own my space?

A: This is a personal choice, and Main Street Fort Dodge can help you weigh the pros and cons of each option.

Q: What other professional advice do I need?

A: You should consult with an insurance agent to find the right policy for your business type and an accountant to determine your eligibility for certain tax write-offs.

Q: Should I register with Google My Business?

A: Yes, a Google My Business account can promote your business on multiple platforms. For free, you can claim your business listing with Google, so you can find people where they are. It is important to claim your business before someone else does.

Q: How do I register for federal, state, and local taxes?

A: If you open a business in Iowa, you will probably need to collect and pay taxes to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Iowa Department of Revenue (IDR.) Learn more at

<https://www.iasourcelink.com/guides/start-a-business-guide/register-for-federal-state-and-local-taxes>.