



Sherwood LaunchPad

Igniting Entrepreneurs. Launching Sherwood.

Presented by Sherwood Policy Forum

Citizen + Business Engagement for Sherwood

Executive Summary

Sherwood faces a defining choice: extend \$93M in new debt for large-scale projects or consider a more disciplined, entrepreneurial alternative. Sherwood LaunchPad provides a 3-5 year, fully transparent, community-driven program to invest directly in entrepreneurs, fill market gaps, create jobs, and grow the tax base.

Unlike traditional approaches, LaunchPad relies on private investors first, uses taxpayer-backed funds only as a last-dollar backstop, and reinvests every repaid dollar into new businesses. The program is fully transparent, sunset-based, and designed to make Sherwood a national model for business-led economic development.

The Challenge Facing Sherwood

Debt Reliance: The Reimagine Sherwood initiative extends taxes for 20 years and adds \$93M in debt. Debt-driven projects (arenas, event centers, shelters) often fail to meet promised ROI.

Regressive Taxation: Sales taxes hit working families hardest. Extending them increases burdens without guaranteeing results.

Economic Leakage: Sherwood residents often travel to North Little Rock, Little Rock, or Cabot for dining, retail, and services. Those dollars could stay in Sherwood if the right businesses existed here.

Vacant Spaces: Empty storefronts and underutilized offices weaken the city's economic base and discourage further investment.

Key Question: Should Sherwood double down on debt-heavy projects, or build its future on the creativity of its entrepreneurs?

The LaunchPad Vision

Sherwood LaunchPad is built on a simple principle: Government doesn't create economies. Entrepreneurs do.

- Instead of investing in buildings, Sherwood invests in people.
- Instead of 20 years of debt, LaunchPad is a 3-5 year pilot with a sunset clause.
- Instead of closed-door decisions, LaunchPad is public, transparent, and accountable.

LaunchPad positions Sherwood as a model city — proving a small city can lead the way in entrepreneurial-driven development.

How LaunchPad Works (Shark Tank Style)

Sherwood LaunchPad operates like a community version of Shark Tank – with accountability and reinvestment.

1. Application & Screening – Entrepreneurs submit proposals with business plans and financial projections. Basic screening ensures plans are viable.
2. Pitch Nights – Held quarterly. Entrepreneurs pitch publicly before a panel of investors and business leaders. Sessions are recorded and shared online.
3. Private First – Private investors have the first chance to fund. This keeps taxpayer money out unless absolutely necessary.
4. Community Gap Fund – If private capital falls short, the LaunchPad fund may fill the gap – always as a repayable loan with clear repayment terms.
5. Repayment & Reinvestment – Every dollar repaid goes back into the fund, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.

Outcome: Every round creates jobs, fills storefronts, and expands the tax base without raising taxes.

Governance & Safeguards (Open Checkbook)

LaunchPad will run under an Open Checkbook Policy – total transparency.

- Public Reporting: Every pitch, dollar invested, and repayment is published online.
- Independent Oversight: Led by Chamber + business leaders, not politicians.
- Local Commitment: Businesses must locate in Sherwood and commit to 3-5 years of operations.
- Sunset Clause: Program ends in 3-5 years unless voters choose to renew it.

Sherwood becomes a leader in transparency and innovation, setting an example for other cities.

The Sherwood LaunchPad Framework

1. LaunchPad Scorecard (KPIs): Jobs created, businesses funded, repayment rates, vacancy reductions, tax base growth.
2. Entrepreneur Education Track: Funded businesses get mentorship and training to boost success rates.
3. The Sherwood Model: Nationally replicable framework – transparent, private-first, public-backstop economic development.
4. Media & Storytelling: Pitch nights and success stories fuel city branding and marketing.
5. Skin in the Game: Entrepreneurs must contribute capital to qualify.

6. Alumni Network: Funded businesses form a long-term network to mentor new entrepreneurs.

Marketing, Targeting & Measurable Goals

Marketing & Media:

- Pitch sessions edited into short videos for TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube.
- Social media campaign: “Meet the Entrepreneurs of Sherwood.”
- “Backed by Sherwood LaunchPad” branding for funded businesses.

Targeting Market Gaps:

- Restaurants (family dining, fast casual).
- Healthcare (urgent care, dental, pediatric clinics).
- Tech services (IT shops, coworking spaces).
- Retail gaps (sporting goods, home goods, clothing).
- Entertainment (family venues, after-hours experiences).

Measurable Targets (3-5 Years):

- \$5-10M fund capitalized.
- 75-100 businesses funded.
- 300-500 jobs created.
- 50% reduction in retail vacancies.
- 25+ office activations in existing buildings.

Financial Modeling & Scenarios

Example modeling scenarios:

- \$5M fund → 75-100 businesses, 300-500 jobs created.
- \$10M fund → 150+ businesses, 600-1,000 jobs created.

Repayment Sensitivity:

- 80% repayment rate still creates revolving reinvestment.
- 95% repayment accelerates growth, compounding fund impact.

Comparison:

- LaunchPad creates measurable, compounding returns.
- Reimagine Sherwood creates \$93M debt with uncertain outcomes.

Implementation Roadmap

Month 1-3: Fund setup, governance board formed.

Month 4-6: First round of applications and pitch night.

Year 1: 20-25 businesses funded.

Year 2-3: Scale up, track KPIs, publish scorecards.

Year 4-5: Evaluate program, issue final report, decide renewal.

Sherwood as a Model City

Why Sherwood is the right pilot city:

- Right size: Not too big, not too small.
- Part of the Little Rock metro, with strong location advantages.
- Close-knit business community, ideal for entrepreneurial collaboration.
- Appetite for alternatives as residents look for smarter solutions.

Sherwood can become the first city nationally to prove this model works – creating The Sherwood Model of economic development.

Appendix / Toolkit

Sample LaunchPad Scorecard Metrics:

- Jobs created this quarter
- Businesses funded
- Repayment rate
- Vacancies filled
- New tax revenue generated

Sample FAQ:

Q: What if a business fails?

A: Private-first funding absorbs most risk. Community funds are repaid over time by successful businesses.

Q: Why not just cut taxes?

A: Cutting taxes reduces city revenue but does not grow the business base. LaunchPad multiplies dollars and builds long-term growth.

Q: How does repayment work?

A: Terms are structured like traditional small business loans, 3-7 years, with interest tied to sustainability, not profit extraction.