



2026 Columbia City Connect First Fridays Vendor Guidelines

Our Mission:

To foster a vibrant downtown experience by connecting our community with local businesses, entertainers, and non-profits.

Welcome to the 2026 Columbia City Connect First Fridays Season!

Columbia City Connect is excited to host the 2026 First Fridays season! Our First Fridays celebration showcases the best of our community, offering a unique experience every month. Taking place on the first Friday of each month from May to October, each event features a different theme. Enjoy live music, dining and retail specials, kid-friendly activities, and much more at every First Fridays event.

Application/Applicant

It is the responsibility of the applicant to familiarize yourself with these procedures and share with anyone who may be overseeing your space during event hours.

Upon review of the application by the First Fridays Committee, the vendor will receive an email either confirming desired dates along with payment information OR a request for further information. Please note: several factors are considered when reviewing applications such as number of Fridays the vendor has requested, application being filled out correctly and completely, and years of involvement in the event.

All vendors must be 18 years of age OR have a parent/guardian present at all times.

Location & Time

Columbia City Connect's First Fridays will be located on Van Buren Street between Main Street and Line Street as well as Chauncey Street between the Post Office and Market Street in downtown Columbia City, Indiana.

First Friday Events are the first Friday of the month from May to October from 6:00pm to 9:00pm

Check-In Process & Set-Up

All vendors are required to check in at the designated check-in location before entering the event space. Check-in begins at 5:00 pm and vendors may not enter, drive into, or begin setup within the event footprint without checking in.

This ensures your assigned spot is honored and helps us maintain a safe and efficient setup for all.

Vendors may begin setup **only during the designated setup window** provided prior to the event. Early arrival and setup are **not permitted** and will result in a strike. All vendors must be at their assigned booth space and set up by 6 pm.

Tear Down

All vendors must **remain fully set up for the entire duration of the event.** Early tear-down is disruptive, unsafe, and not permitted without staff approval in the case of emergency.

Tear down begins at 9:00 pm. Early tear down will result in a strike.

Fees

\$25.00 per date per 10x10 space.

This pricing is based on one 10x10 ft space. Additional 10x10 space(s) can be reserved for an extra fee and must be marked in the application.

ADDITIONAL SPACE IS CONSIDERED ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF THE ALLOTTED 10X10 ft SPACE AND INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO: tents, trailers, signage, product displays, etc.

Upon review of application, each vendor will receive a confirmation email from the First Fridays Team via firstfridays@columbiacityconnect.com.

Cancellations / Reschedules

There are NO refunds for any date cancellation.

First Fridays is not responsible for reimbursing any vendor fees in the event that the event is canceled due to bad weather, accident, riot, strikes, epidemic, acts of God or other legitimate conditions beyond the First Fridays control. If the event must be canceled due to weather, First Fridays event coordinators will do their best to alert you via text by 2pm. If

you have a confirmed booth assignment for a specific date and you are unable to attend, you MUST notify the First Fridays by texting Abby at (260) 503-7048 or emailing us at firstfridays@columbiacityconnect.com as soon as possible. Don't forget to include your name and business name!

Vendor No-Show & Cancellation Policy: If a vendor fails to call and cancel their participation in an event, and does not show up for two consecutive months, the vendor will forfeit their space for the remainder of the season. This policy is in place to ensure the smooth operation of our events and fair opportunity for all vendors.

Booths

Each accepted vendor will receive one 10x10 ft booth space per paid date. Extra space is limited but can be requested for an additional fee. *Extra space is considered anything needed or wanted outside of the 10x10 ft space such as additional product displays etc.* Booths are assigned by the Columbia City Connect First Fridays Committee.

Booth space is limited; therefore, early registration is required. We value the importance of a vendor staying in a specified location but cannot guarantee the same space each event of the season. However, vendors who commit for the entire season will remain in the same space.

Trucks need to be detached from trailers and removed from the closure area.

If you are NOT a Season Pass vendor (vendors who have committed to all of the season), your space is subject to change each week.

Should a Season Pass vendor cancel, more than likely their space will be assigned to another vendor.

Only one business per booth is allowed.

Health and Safety

Vendors are *not* allowed to tear-down until 9:00pm.

The vendor is responsible for damages resulting from the sale of unsafe or unsound goods.

Vehicles are **not** allowed on the sidewalk at any time, including setup and tear-down.

All vendors are responsible for removing their own garbage.

Each vendor is responsible to obtain all necessary permits and documents according to local, state and federal guidelines i.e. the Whitley County Board of Health, the State Board of Health, Indiana Department of Revenue, etc.

Food Trucks

Food trucks can and will be accepted into the event.

Food trucks must arrive at the event by 5:30pm so that all trucks have ample time to park and prepare food. Food trucks will be charged \$25.

Trucks need to be detached from trailers and removed from the closure area.

Amplified Music and Noise

Amplified music or paging systems cannot be used by vendors.

Generators are allowed, but must be notated within the 'Anything else we need to know' portion of the application.

Signage

Each booth space must prominently display a sign clearly identifying the business by name.

Signs must be in place by the opening of the event. All product descriptions must be accurate.

Permitting

VENDORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY AND ALL PERMITTING/LICENSING as well as inspections relating to Whitley County Board of Health Rules and Regulations.

Permits are required by the Whitley County Board of Health for all food categories except qualified home based food vendors. Vendors are responsible for obtaining and paying for an appropriate permit as well as setting up an inspection.

Columbia City- Whitley County Department of Health
220 W. Van Buren Street
Columbia City, IN 46725
260-248-3121

*Minimum processed food items, including maple syrup, jellies, jams, preserves and baked goods must be prepared in a licensed facility or by a qualified home based vendor, as defined by Indiana law, and sold in appropriate packaging.

*All vendors selling processed foods must prominently display their Board of Health certified kitchen licenses or appropriate labeling at their stand at all times.

Taxes and Licensing

All vendors are responsible for paying any taxes and obtaining appropriate licenses/permits needed to satisfy all local, state, and federal laws.

Communication

Most communications will come via email. Please watch for these emails as they all have important information. Please check your spam folder.

Please be sure to include your cell number when creating your vendor registration profile. Should there be an immediate need to reach you such as a weather notification, then a mass text message will be sent.

If a reply is asked of you in an email or text, please reply in a timely manner.

Continual non-response can result in dismissal from the event.

If you need to get in contact with the First Fridays committee, send an email to firstfridays@columbiacityconnect.com. ***Please, do not send a message via social media.***

Administration and Questions

The Columbia City Connect Board of Directors shall administer the Columbia City Connect's First Fridays. The Chair(s) of the Columbia City Connect's First Fridays Sub-Committee has the authority to admit vendors, assign space, settle disputes and disqualify vendors for violating the guidelines. We want to ensure a vibrant event and will handle disputes accordingly.

COMPLAINTS MUST BE EMAILED to firstfridays@columbiacityconnect.com. For urgent matters please contact Abby (260) 503-7048..

Three-Strike Violation Policy

To ensure fairness and consistency, Columbia City Connect enforces a Three-Strike Policy for vendor violations. This system gives vendors an opportunity to correct behavior while maintaining the integrity of the event.

➤ **Strike 1 – Written Warning:** Vendor receives a written notice identifying the violation.

➤ **Strike 2 – Final Warning:** A final warning is issued. Vendors may be placed on probation.

➤ **Strike 3 – Removal from the Event Series:** Vendor is removed from the current event and suspended from participation in all future First Fridays for the remainder of the calendar year. A removed vendor will be allowed to grieve the removal by submitting a written appeal to the Columbia City Connect First Fridays Committee. The committee will make the final decision as to the temporary or permanent removal of the vendor. Columbia City Connect shall NOT refund fees already paid following a vendor's permanent removal.

Violations That May Result in a Strike Include (but are not limited to):

- Entering the event space without properly checking in
- Setting up before the designated setup time
- Changing assigned vendor placement or layout without approval
- Using more space than the allotted 10x10 area
- Tearing down before the official event end time
- Disrespectful behavior toward staff, volunteers, other vendors and attendees
- Repeated noncompliance with any event guidelines

By participating in Columbia City First Fridays, vendors agree to follow this policy. Your cooperation helps ensure a successful and enjoyable event for all!

