

Planning Your Event in Downtown Rutland



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A guide to organizing and hosting events in Downtown Rutland, Vermont.

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Introduction

Congratulations on choosing to organize an event! We're excited that you are considering Downtown Rutland as your event location.

We think you'll agree that Rutland offers some of the best community events. As you know, launching a successful event is hard work that requires months of planning and a solid strategy.

This guide, developed by staff and board members of the Downtown Rutland Partnership, was created to help you navigate the permits, logistics and many other details you'll want to take into consideration for a downtown event. It is intended to assist you in the process and hopefully make things easier. We compiled this information to the best of our knowledge at the time, but please confirm all details with the appropriate entities, as we cannot speak for anyone else.

On the following pages we also include some event planning strategies based on our own experiences and what we believe may be helpful in your process. If you have questions, or want to offer suggestions on how we can make this guide even more useful, we'd be happy to hear from you. We're here to help! We are a downtown resource and want to see both you and our downtown community have a positive experience.

We appreciate your commitment to making Rutland a better, more vibrant, place for everyone.



Your Event & The Role of the DRP

The Downtown Rutland Partnership is a nonprofit organization that works to manage, market and maintain Rutland's downtown district. We support the business community by keeping the streets clean and attractive, offering development opportunities to downtown businesses, organizing our series of annual downtown events and providing marketing and promotional services for the many downtown happenings.

Often, we're asked to help run events for other organizations who may want to come into the downtown. While we love to see events come to Downtown Rutland, we do not have the capacity and budget to get directly involved in implementing them. Although we put on our own series of events, our primary role as a downtown organization is not to fill the role of community event planner.



We realize that this may be a different approach than we've taken in the past. However, we have limited staff and resources to accomplish the many goals and projects we are already committed to each year as an organization.



The common goal of the events that we do organize, such as our Friday Night Lives and Holiday Stroll, are directly focused on getting people into shops and restaurants and exposing the public to all that downtown has to offer. As with all nonprofits, we are required to use our funding for specific outcomes and must report back on how we spend our time and our funds.

Taking on other events, even when they include really fun ideas, is generally outside of our ability and scope. And often, your event may have an entirely different goal that does not directly relate to us, such as raising funds for your own organization. Please know that just because we can't organize your event, doesn't mean we are not in support of you and your efforts.



How the DRP Can Help

There are many ways we can support you in having an event downtown, including:

- **Advise on your event date and specific downtown location.**
 - We can let you know about other events, potential conflicts and most logical spaces in downtown.
- **Promote your event in our newsletters and our social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.**

- Our Facebook page is a great means of getting the word out about your event. We have more than 5,000 followers (and growing), which is one of the largest reaches of any local Facebook page.
- **Add your event to our website and Facebook event calendars.**
 - We actively compile downtown events and have a consistently large list of happenings specific to downtown. Our new website (launching this spring) will help improve this process.
- **Help connect you with downtown businesses.**
 - We are happy to make introductions and brainstorm ways in which downtown businesses could get involved and excited about your event. We cannot request donations on your behalf.
- **Offer event advertising opportunities with street banners and trash can posters.**
 - Downtown banners and trash containers get great visibility with both drivers and pedestrians. Capturing the interest of people already frequenting the downtown is a smart way to attract them back for your event. We can coordinate these advertising spaces for a small fee. Please see the appendix for details and application forms.



Downtown Logistics

When organizing an event in the downtown it is your responsibility to coordinate all of the necessary logistics. Below are some of the most common needs.

Electricity: Access to power is available at the top of many downtown light posts on Center Street and Merchants Row. At the top of the posts you will find a standard outlet where you can plug in a power cord. In order to reach these outlets you will need a 12 foot ladder. The outlets cannot accommodate large equipment or several items

connected via a power strip. They are only to be used for powering lights, electronics and small equipment with a low power draw. Too much demand can knock out power for an entire street and possibly much of your event. Trust us, we've done it.

When in doubt, consider using generators or solar powered batteries. If you're having vendors at your event who will need power, please talk with them prior to the day of the event to ensure their needs can be reasonably accommodated. You could try to coordinate (in advance of your event, of course) use of power via a nearby business. We suggest this only if you have a friendly rapport with the business owner and the business will be open during the course of the event. However, we make no guarantees that businesses will be willing to offer this to you.

The City of Rutland maintains the power on the light poles. If you have specific questions regarding what you can and cannot power, please contact DPW. In the event that you lose power during your event, they are who

you will need to call. The DRP does not have access to breakers on the street and cannot assist you in an emergency.

Road Closures: Road closure requests are coordinated with the Department of Public Works. You will need to communicate your request through the Special Events Permit form several weeks in advance of your event. Please see the Special Events Permit section for further details and the attached copy of the permit.

Trash & Recycling: There are 29 trash and recycling containers located throughout all of downtown. They are maintained by Casella Waste and are emptied on a weekly basis. While they serve the purposes of day to day waste in the downtown, they may not be sufficient for accommodating your event as well. If you are expecting a high volume of attendees you should contact Casella and inquire about their portable containers that you can place strategically throughout your event. Place them near sources of waste, such as food.

Restrooms: Consider how many people your event will draw and where attendees will access restrooms. Downtown businesses do not all have public restrooms and as we have often been told before, those with restrooms do not appreciate having people come in only to use their facility. In fact, sometimes businesses decide to close during events simply because they don't want to deal with this specific and common issue.

Please consider hiring portable restrooms and situating them in out of the way areas that will not be disruptive. As for how many you should hire, consider how many people will attend your event, the duration of the event and if alcohol is being served. A portable restroom company can help you make the determination.

Also, renting restrooms is only useful if people know where to find them. Use clear signage to direct people towards the restrooms and help keep everyone happy.

Parking: One of the easiest places for parking downtown, especially during an event, is in the [LAZ Parking](#) garage located at 102 West Street. The garage is clean, safe and now open 24 hours/day. It may be accessed by car from West or Wales Street and by foot on Center Street, West Street and through the ASA Bloomer building at 88 Merchants Row (during regular business hours). You can buy your attendees vouchers that they can use when exiting the garage for free parking. Or get in touch and see what other opportunities LAZ might be willing to offer you.

Accessibility: It is important to consider if your event is accessible to individuals with disabilities. This may include handicap accessible restrooms, handicap parking spaces, ease of access into the event space and allowance of service animals, to name just a few. For all of the specifics, [this guide from the ADA National Network is an excellent reference](#). Locally, you can consult the Disabled Access & Advocacy of the Rutland Area group.





Cleanup: It is your responsibility to leave downtown in the same condition as you found it. Leaving downtown a mess will reflect poorly on your organization and will frustrate the city, the DRP and downtown businesses and property owners who will have to clean up after you. It could also jeopardize your ability to receive approval on locating future events in the downtown.

When planning the volunteer team for your event, don't forget to schedule a group to pick up and survey the area afterwards.

Special Events Permits

If you're looking to close streets, parks and other public spaces, then you'll need a Special Events Permit through the City of Rutland. The permit grants you official permission to put on the event and use the space. Although it is often believed that it is the DRP who grants permission, it is in fact the city.

A copy of the permit is included in this guide. It requires you to receive signatures of approval from the fire department, police department, department of public works and city attorney. Included with this permit you must also provide proof of

insurance that lists the City of Rutland as an additional insurer.

Don't forget to mention your specific needs on the permit, such as the requested timing of road closures or requested police presence. Note: some requests may come with a fee from the city.

After you have signatures from the four departments, the permit then needs to go back to the clerk's office. It will then be added to the agenda for an upcoming Board of Aldermen meeting for approval. The clerk's office can inform you of the date of that meeting, as it is a good idea to attend in case there are any questions.

If you hope to serve alcohol at your event, you will need additional approval and an additional permit. You should chat with the city clerk and/or State of Vermont Liquor Department before making any plans to see if your idea is permissible.

Rooms, Meals and Entertainment Tax

The City of Rutland has a 1% tax for any rooms, meals and entertainment services provided within the city. If you or vendors attending your event provide any of these services and charge a fee, they are subject to this tax and are required to pay this fee to the City Treasurer's office. As event host, you are required to inform your vendors about this tax and provide them with the tax application (see appendix). You should also provide the Treasurer's office with their contact info for following up. There are exceptions to the tax, so please review the form for details. You are not personally responsible for collecting the tax, just providing the information.

Downtown Business Involvement

When you bring an event into downtown you need to consider the businesses that are located here. Although you may already have obtained a special event permit, it is the businesses who will be most directly impacted by the outcome of your event. But we believe you can help make this a positive, rather than a negative, impact in a few ways.

- Inform businesses of your plans as early as possible, such as one to two months in advance. Leave behind a description of your event and include all of the pertinent details. If streets are going to be closed, Include a map of exactly which streets, where on the street (is it the whole street or just part of one?) and from what times. Employees and customers will need to go how to get in and out of a business well in advance of the day of your event.
- Leave behind your contact information and clarify that you are the person to get in touch with regarding the event. The DRP cannot speak on your behalf.
- Pitch creative ways in which a business may get involved in your event. But be considerate. Staying open late, setting up outside and other requests outside of the day to day operations may just not be feasible for some businesses with limited staff and resources.



- Listen to their thoughts and concerns. Your event could potentially disrupt one of the busiest days for a business and cost them hundreds or possibly thousands of dollars. But there may be simple ways in which you can accommodate their requests.
- Realize that just because your event may bring people into the downtown, does not mean that equates sales for businesses. Just think, if you're running a race, would you want to stop and do some shopping afterwards when you're sweaty and tired? Likely not.
- Please do not intentionally aggravate a business. If a business chooses not to participate in your event, that does not mean it is a good idea to place a competing vendor right outside their door.

Getting Started

Here are some of the most important steps we recommend to get your event off to a good start in downtown.

- Review this entire guide.
- Work through the event planning sheet we've included here or create one of your own.
- Contact the DRP to check on the timing of other downtown events and avoid conflict. Informing us from the start helps us communicate with businesses and inform others looking to plan events downtown.
- Obtain a special events permit and any other permits, as needed, with the City of Rutland.
- Start planning! Consider all of the logistics you may need, including those mentioned here.
- Once you have determined all of the details, send them to the DRP to add to their calendars.
- Talk with downtown businesses one to two months in advance, if not earlier. If you're having streets closed or planning to take up space in front of a storefront, let each of the businesses know your plans.
- Create a marketing plan. We can't emphasize this enough. You wouldn't believe how often we hear people say "we didn't know that was going on." Here are a few basic ideas to get started.
 - Create a Facebook event page.
 - Send press releases to local outlets.
 - Advertise in a variety of sources, including those geared towards your target audience.
- Establish a team of volunteers to carry out tasks the day of the event or the days leading up to the event. Create a task list and assign duties to each volunteer. Not sure where to find volunteers? Look to some of the larger local businesses who dedicate time to give back to the community. Or look to organizations who include volunteer work as part of their mission, such as church groups or rotary clubs.



EVENT PLANNING

Some planning suggestions we hope you'll consider

Your Goal: What is the purpose of this event? Are you raising money? Creating awareness? Something else? An event should always have a goal that is clear to everyone involved.

What: What is your event? What makes it unique? If there are already similar events happening, try thinking outside the box to get the most interest from the community. It should be fun, interesting and/or exciting! But be clear. A vague or confusing description and name will not resonate with people.

Who : There are many different types:

- Who is your target audience? Families? Young professionals? Seniors? "Everyone" is too broad.
- Who will participate? Are you having vendors? Asking downtown businesses?
- Who will volunteer to help? Look to businesses or organizations dedicated to volunteer work.
- Who can you partner with that can play an active role?

When: Timing is key. If you plan your event the same day as several other events, or in close proximity to another event, you may end up competing for people's time and energy. Look through community calendars, newspapers, school calendars, local theatre schedules and sport schedules and talk to organizations that keep calendars, such as the DRP and Chamber of Commerce. If you're planning to fundraise, consider who else may be fundraising at the same time. If you're targeting the same audience, you may want to reconsider to avoid competing for the same dollars.

Where: Community events are awesome! But they may have unintended impacts. Think about where your event is located and how it may disrupt the normal schedule of business for others. Also keep in mind important logistics, such as where will attendees park, if the space accommodate the anticipated crowd, the location of restrooms and the accessibility for all. Don't forget safety, either!

Budget: Establishing a budget is a great idea. What will your event cost to put on? Think rental fees, entertainment, supplies, giveaways and advertising. Then consider opportunities to generate income. Think sponsorships, and participation fees.



Marketing Strategy: Half the battle of a good event is getting people to know about it and convincing them to care. Brainstorm all the possible outlets you can promote your event, including free or in-kind options. Newspapers, social media, radio, television, flyers and various digital platforms are all options. Go back to your target attendees then think of where you can best reach them.

Timeline: Planning a successful event takes time and organization. Professional event planners suggest 3-6 months for a single day event or up to 9-12 months for a major event or fundraiser. Plan out committee meetings between now and your event and detail due dates for various aspects, such as sponsorship commitments and press releases.

Day of Strategy: Take into account logistics such as setup, check-in, troubleshooting and cleanup. Assign roles for your volunteers ahead of time and make sure everyone knows their responsibilities.

Post Event: Be sure to thank everyone involved, both with personal thank you cards and publicly in some fashion. Have a debrief session and record notes for future planning.

Thanks to Karen Nevin at Revitalizing Waterbury (revitalizingwaterbury.org) for sharing many of these event planning ideas!

EVENT PLANNING WORKSHEET

NAME OF EVENT:

GOAL/PURPOSE:

EVENT DESCRIPTION:

WHEN:

WHERE:

PRIMARY PLANNER:

PARTNERS:

TARGET ATTENDEES:

FUNDING (INCOME/EXPENSE):

TIMELINE:

NEXT STEPS/TO DO'S

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & CONTACT INFO

The following are a few local recommendations for services and support. The list is neither comprehensive nor an endorsement of any particular business. It is your responsibility to contact and communicate about your event.

City Clerk's Office

802-773-1800

Department of Public Works

802-773-1813

Rutland City Fire Department

802-775-0005

Rutland City Police Department

802-773-1816

City Treasurer's Office

802-773-1800

Downtown Venues & Conference Rooms

Community College of Vermont: 802-786-6996

GMP Energy Innovation Center: 802-770-4088

Heritage Family Credit Union: 888-252-8932

Merchants Hall: 802-855-8081

The Bakery Annex: 802-775-3220

The Palms: 802-773-2367

The Paramount Theatre: 802-775-0570

Trinity Church: 802-7775-4308

LAZ Parking

802-855-8710

Event Planners

Ghostwriters Communications: 802-747-7900

The Event Sisters: 518-852-1133

Trash and Recycling

Casella Waste: 802- 282-4304

Restroom Rentals

Hubbard's Septic and Portable Restrooms:

802-773-2045

Preferred Restrooms: 802-558-8955

Chair, Table and Tent Rentals

Celebration Rentals: 802-247-0002

Vermont Tent Company: 802-863-6107

Sound, Stage and Lighting

Atomic Professional Audio: 802-775-5550

Banners/Posters/Printing

Awesome Graphics: 802-773-6143

Green Screen Graphics: 802-773-0683

Quickprint: 802-775-1029

Accessibility Information

VT Center for Independent Living (Rutland): 802-779-9021