



MAY 6-8

BIRMINGHAM
ALABAMA

MAIN STREET 2024 *Now*



MAIN STREET 2024 Now

FESTIVAL FIASCO:
Is it time to let that event go?

Introductions



Hannah L. Davis, TMP, HREDFP (she/her)
Downtown Florence (SC) Main Street Program
Director



Austin L. Watters (he/they)
Downtown Florence (SC) Main Street Coordinator
Former Main Street Fountain Inn Coordinator



Session Objectives

- **Critically analyze** special events for mission and strategy alignment
- **Distinguish** between events that primarily serve the community and events that primarily serve merchants or business owners
- **Effectively communicate** with board, community, and stakeholders when it's time to evolve or dissolve an event or program in your Main Street district.



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THE MAIN (STREET) EVENT

AN OUTLINE OF ARCHETYPES

Event Types on Main Street

- Community & Placemaking



- Business Enhancement & Merchant Events





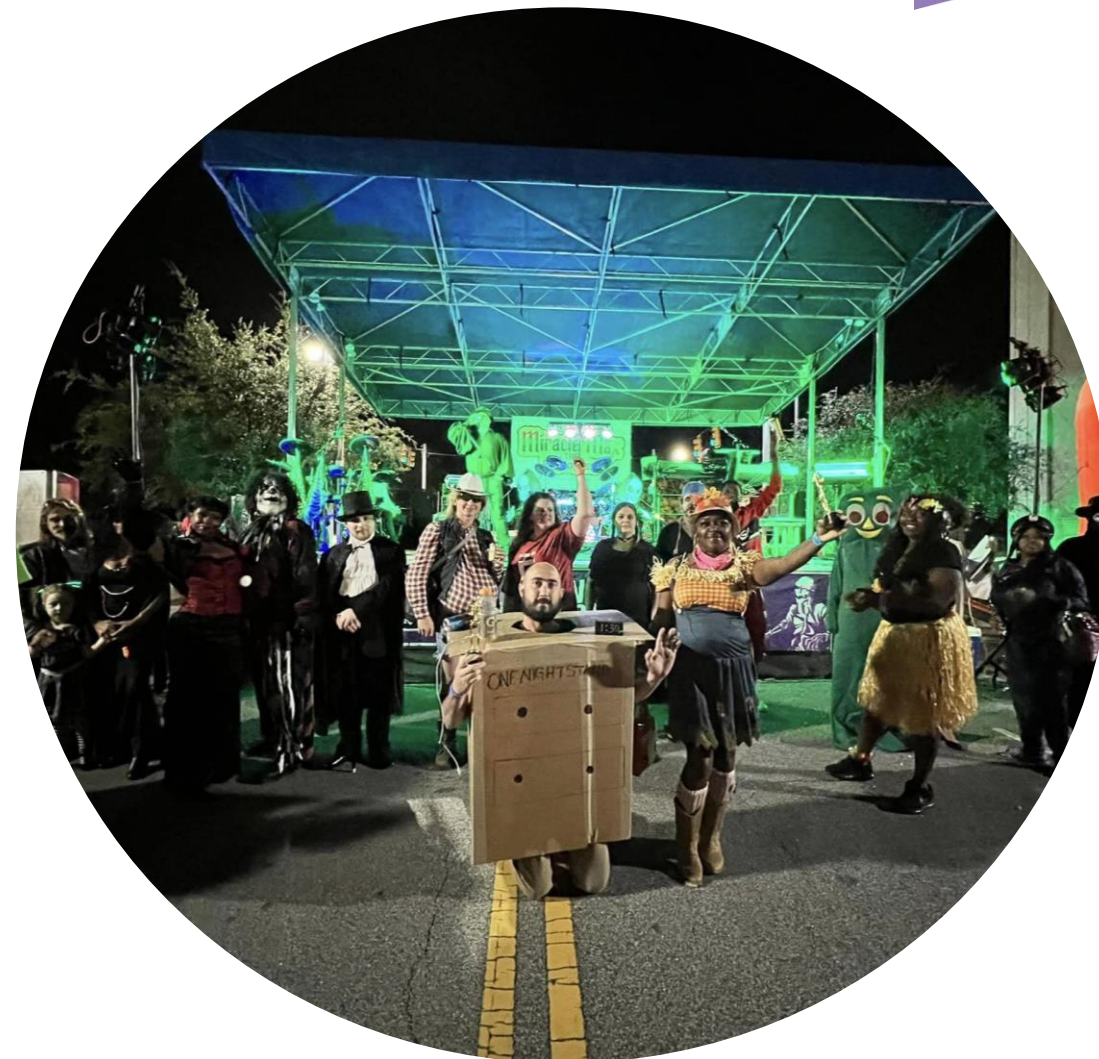
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EVENT EVALUATION

NOT EVERYTHING IS "A GREAT SUCCESS"

Evaluation – Finding the Why

- When should you evaluate events?
 - Once a year, no more than 2 weeks after.
- **Why** are you doing this event?
 - Define the “Why”
 - “We’ve always done it”
 - “Well, we have to celebrate X occasion”
 - “We need to do it because.....”
because why?
 - Because “I” want us to is not a reason.



Mission and Strategy Alignment

Successful Main Street Programs have a clearly defined mission and utilize market- and community-informed strategies to promote and enhance their districts.

- Do your events align with your organization's mission?
- Does the event you are evaluating tie into one or more of your adopted Transformation Strategies?



Community Perception

Data vs. Emotion

- What does the community think?
 - Apply both qualitative and quantitative data in feedback/decision making
- How are you collecting that information?
 - Surveys
 - Interviews
 - Social Media
 - Grape Vine Tactics
- Be receptive to reasonable criticism not combative

Community and Communication

- Community Demographic
 - If you don't know who's in your community how can you decide what they like, want, need?
 - Heritage events are great, but only when the community embraces and supports them
- How are you communicating?
 - Marketing is not communication
 - Maps, Closures, Time Frame
 - How are your communities' daily lives impacted by events?
 - Are they confused or informed?

**Main Street is for ALL, not some.
Does everyone feel welcome at your event? Who is missing?**

Community Perception

Ben Muldrow's Five Audiences of Main Street – have you captured qualitative and quantitative data points for each that your event affects?



**District
Business
Owners**

Positive Impact
Neutral Impact
Negative Impact



**Donors &
Sponsors**

Service Delivery
Exposure
Value



**Event
Attendees /
The Public**

Experience
Accessibility
Awareness



**Event &
Program
Volunteers**

Experience
Capacity



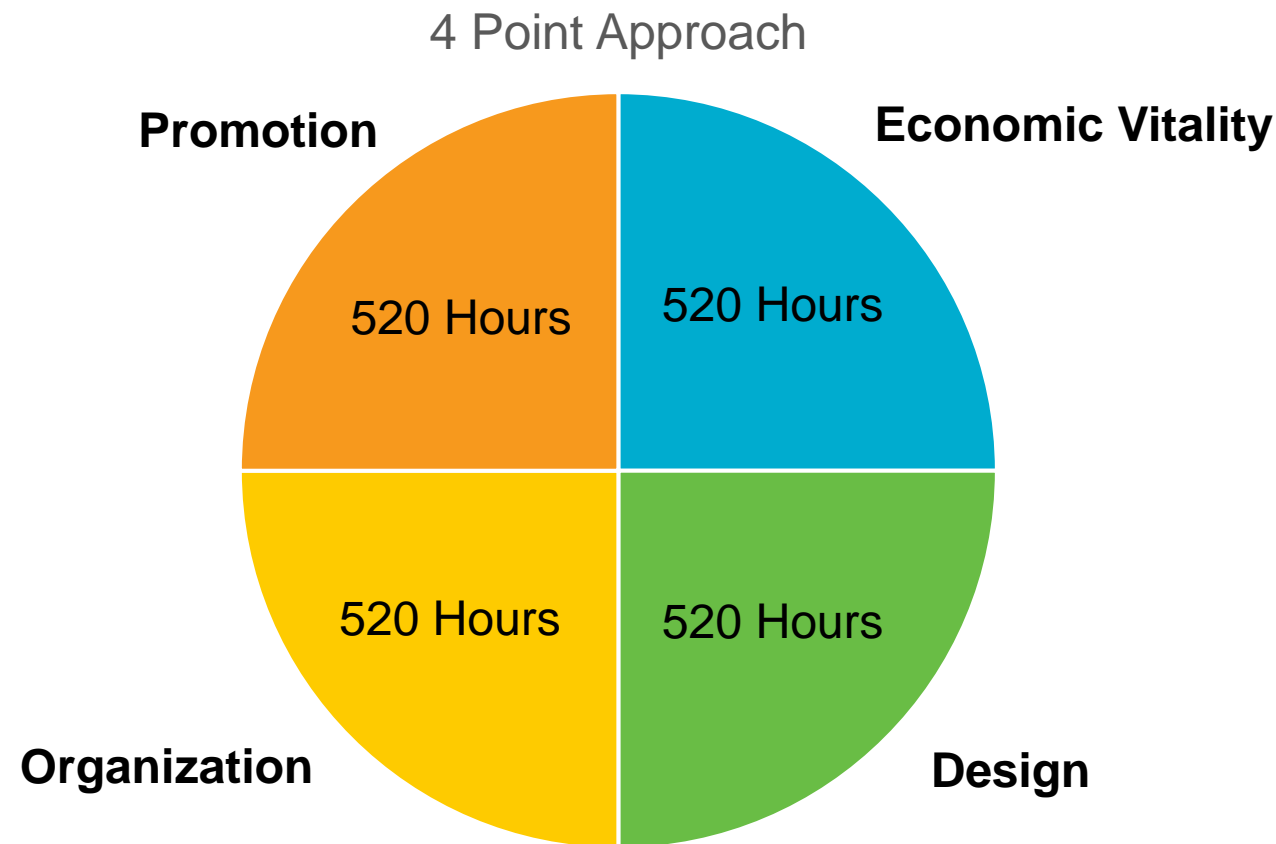
**Local
Government**

Capacity
Cost of Services
Logistics

Return on Investment (🕒)

Time Stops for No One

- What is the personal cost? Time.
- How much time are you spending on planning, communications, sourcing?
- Could that time be spent better?
- What if at the end of the year you could say, “We spent 1,440 hours doing direct to business support”
 - 30min a week = 1,440 hours
 - 1,440hr x 800 AMS = 1,152,000 hr.



You have roughly 2,080 hours in a working year, how are you spending it?

Return on Investment (\$)

- Is this event a revenue generator for or program, does it break even, or does it lose money to put on?
- Do we have enough human capital (volunteers, staff, board, participants) to manage this event?
- Does the event have a lead or champion?
- Are you relying on the local community to support your event, or relying on the surrounding region?
- Are our local sponsors/donors supportive of this event?
- Are sponsors/donors tapped out in the area?
- Did the event have a positive economic impact, neutral impact, or negative impact? How are you measuring this data?

Economic Impact *Lite*

When we measure economic impact, we are looking at direct, indirect, and induced effects from an event or program. Surveys are still the best data gathering solution!

DIRECT

Transactions between
visitor and host economy

Meals
Overnight stays
Gas purchased
Sales
Parking Fees

INDIRECT

Secondary impact;
business purchases to
support visitor influx

This is the passing effect of
visitor dollars through the
local economy

INDUCED

Increased personal income
resulting from direct and
indirect spending

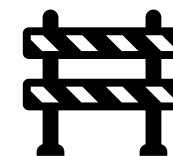
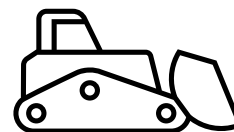


**DIY Economic Impact
Estimating by University of
Indiana**
(math and surveying involved)



Risk Management

- Can you reasonably ensure safety at your event? Can you mitigate risk?



- Crowd Control? Do you need it? Do you have enough security/officers? Think about the limitations of your district.
- Insurance is a rising cost, be prepared to pay.

Event Experience

- Is your event too large? Too small?
- Does the event's brand reflect the promises made to the attendees of the event?
- Does the event's brand align with your Main Street organization's brand? Is it clear that the Main Street program is supporting/hosting the event in the district?
- Did you have the resources to effectively market/promote the event? Marketing and advertising should be 40-60% of your event budget!



Audience Experience

- **Attendees**

- Did you meet attendee expectations?
- Did the event experience match the marketing promises?
- Was the event easy to navigate and understand?
- Was the event clean and safe?

- **District business owners**

- Did businesses participate or close during the event?
- Did business owners receive residual or post-event visits from the event?

- **Partners**

- Did you fulfill partner and sponsor expectations?
- Was your event a burden on partner organizations (local gov't)
- Was your event a good community partner?





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KEEP, EVOLVE, DISSOLVE

LESSONS AND TOOLS

Case Study: *Evolve*

**The SC Pecan Music
and Food Festival**

formerly

**The SC Pecan
Festival**



Quick History

Started in 2003 as a single block festival designed to attract people downtown to witness revitalization in action

Festival got its name from agricultural roots of the community, but did not fulfill promise of “pecans”

Festival highlights included live music, vendors, various “anywhere USA” attractions

Not tied to Transformation Strategy, but did aid getting locals to return downtown

Committee emotionally invested in the festival, surveys of the public were lukewarm



Evolution

In 2019, committee was persuaded to start evolving the festival to meet brand promises with the first step of adding pecans to all food vendor menus and begin shifting focus to music and food to align with Transformation Strategy – Dining and Entertainment

In 2020 during COVID, committee approved rebranding to SC Pecan Music and Food Festival; new website created; clear brand promises outlined

In 2021, relaunch was celebrated with record attendance and community impact; festival named Best Fall Festival in South Carolina by Travel + Leisure Online

Renewed enthusiasm, stronger district business participation

Case Study:
Dissolve

**Fountain Inn 9/11
Memorial Bike
Night**



Your turn!

KEEP • EVOLVE • DISSOLVE

**Mac Arnold
Cornbread and
Collard Greens Blues
Festival...**

And Jeep Jam...


And Spring Market.



Approaching the Conversation: Logic vs. Emotion



- Who is making the call to Keep, Dissolve, or Evolve your events?
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution for Main Street, and there is no one argument that will work for every decision maker.
- Know who on your team is a logical decision maker and an emotional decision maker
- Craft your appeal
 - **Logos, Ethos, Pathos**
 - Logos – appeal to logic
 - Ethos – appeal to emotion
 - Pathos – appeal of authority.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing sunglasses, a green t-shirt, and a blue denim jacket, is speaking to a group of people. She is pointing her right index finger towards the right. The background is blurred, showing other people in a social setting.

**“Wow! We love XYZ Main Street! Y’all
SHOULD do a _____
event!”**

**Getting *SHOULD* on
and how to handle it.**

When to Say NO (or Not Right Now)

- Is this event or program in line with the mission and values of our Main Street Program?
- Are we being efficient, effective and accountable to the services our program provides?

If you can't answer **YES** to both of these questions, then you need to say **NO**.

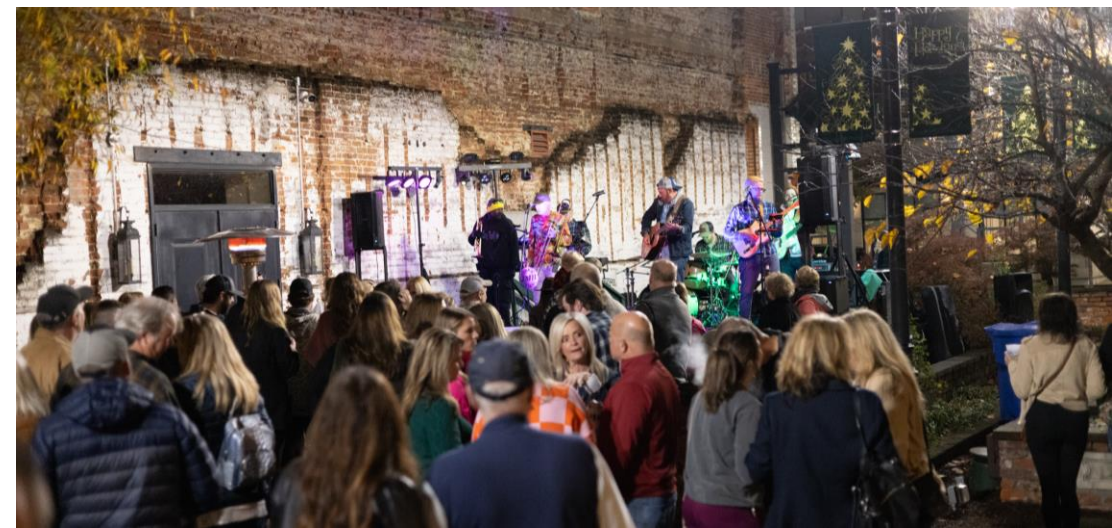


Building the Case for NO

- Before delivering a “no,” consider:
 - Funding of the event
 - Staff and volunteer resources
 - Service quality/diminishing services
 - Alternatives to the event
 - Fit within existing work plan/strategic plan

Even if you are being promised funding to execute an event, consider the true expense to the organization.

What is the actual cost and sacrifice made to other programs and events to support this new event?



How to Say No (or Not Right Now)

Frame the NO as a qualifying “yes.”

“In order for us to take on XYZ event, ABC needs to be in place and we need 123 resources, or we’d have to deprioritize an alternative event or program.”

Many times, the asking entity will come to a NO on their own.

Explaining the NO, follow a NO with the data-driven reason why something isn’t possible. Doing so will help limit emotional response and infuse logic.

“No, we cannot take XYZ event on because ABC infrastructure is not in place to support it/ABC would have to be put on hold/XYZ is not within the scope of this year’s work plan.”

Remember with this tactic, ideas often come loaded with emotion and not everyone approaches their pitches with logic.

How to Say No (or Not Right Now)

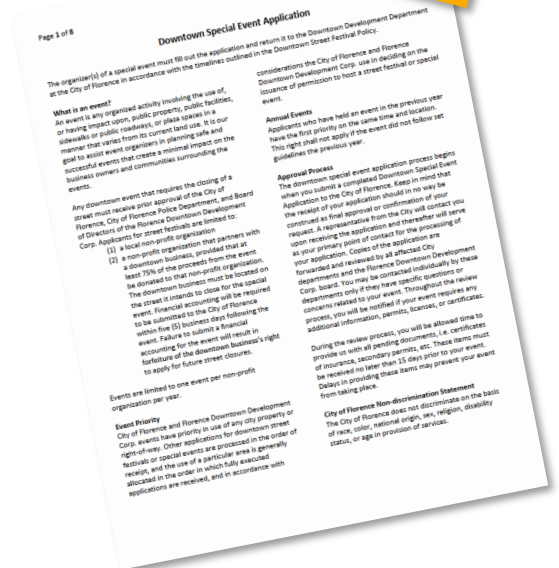
Consider the Main Street Program's role and responsibilities in the community.

Main Street Programs must set boundaries and understand their role and responsibilities before accepting a request for a new event or program.

Don't take on other entities' work just because your program has a track record of handling programs and events well.

Setting clear criteria and internal policies for a "YES" will help you balance the "NO."

Provide pathways for others to host events in your Main Street district that align with your program's values.



Key Takeaways

- While important, events can't be all a Main Street program focuses on
- Our events and programs should be mission and strategy aligned
- Regular evaluation of events and programs is critical to avoid burnout, ensure appropriate resource management, and keep our programs moving forward
- Data-informed decision making is imperative when evaluating events
- Don't let fear hold you back from making tough choices about what needs to be kept, evolved, or dissolved.



*Access Resources and
Slide Deck Here!*



We want to hear from you!



Help us make the Main Street Now Conference even better by sharing feedback on your conference experience.

Tell us about your favorite sessions and speakers, what you found most valuable, and what you'd like to see next year.

Look out for the post-conference survey to be released on Wednesday via email and on mainstreetnow.org.

Thank You!

Hannah L. Davis

Program Director

Downtown Florence (SC) Main Street

hdavis@cityofflorence.com

843-678-5912

Austin L. Watters

Program Coordinator

Downtown Florence (SC) Main Street

awatters@cityofflorence.com

843-678-5913



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