



PLANNING GUIDE

FOR DOWNTOWN EVENTS



Introduction

If you've found our guide, you must be interested in organizing a downtown event! We're glad you've found us and are considering Downtown Florence as your event location.

We think you'll agree that Downtown Florence offers great community events, and executing a successful event is hard work requiring months of detailed planning and a solid strategy from start to finish.

This guide, developed by the Office of Downtown Development, was created to assist you with navigating the approval process, logistics, and many other details you'll need to take into consideration for a downtown event. Our office is available to assist you throughout the process, and we've compiled the information contained in this guide to the best of our knowledge at the time of publication. That said, we always recommend reaching out to outside entities as guidelines and procedures are subject to change.

We hope you'll use the event planning strategies in this guide to help you plan a successful event. If you have any suggestions for how we might improve this guide, please let us know. Our office is a downtown resource and we want to ensure your organization and our downtown community have a positive experience.

We appreciate your commitment to making Downtown Florence bold, vibrant, and FULL OF LIFE!



The Role of FDDC and the Downtown Development Office

Florence Downtown Development Corp. is a non-profit organization that exists to foster revitalization in Downtown Florence through promotions and business recruitment. We work to market the downtown area, support our downtown business community, and drive visitors to Downtown Florence. We provide marketing and promotional services for many of the downtown events in addition to organizing our own series of annual events and concerts.

Often, the Downtown Development Office is asked to help run events for other organizations. While we love to see events come to Downtown Florence, we do not have the staffing, capacity, or budget to get directly involved in the implementation of outside organization events, as our primary role as a downtown organization is not to fill the role of community event planner.

We realize that this is a different approach that we have taken in the past; however, we have a limited staff and resources to accomplish the many goals and projects that we are already committed to each year as an organization. Each event organized by the Downtown Development Office has a goal. Florence After Five brings visitors downtown and ends early enough to drive traffic into nearby restaurants. Our tasting events drive traffic directly into retail shops. The SC Pecan Music and Food Festival, Oktoberfest, and Downtown Christmas Magic expose a diverse audience to Downtown Florence and encourage tourists to come down from the interstate and encourage overnight stays in downtown hotels.

Taking on outside events, even when they include fun ideas, is generally outside of our ability and scope; and sometimes the proposed event does not align with the mission and purpose of the Florence Downtown Development Corp. Please know that just because we can't take on organizing your event, doesn't mean we don't support your organization or efforts.

How the Downtown Development Office Can Help

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

- *Direct approval of your event's location, date, and time.* The City of Florence and Florence Downtown Development Corp. are responsible for approving all proposed downtown street festivals and events. In a two-phase approval process, your event is reviewed by City Directors and then the FDDC board. If your event is approved, you will be notified that your planning can continue and be issued permission to host your event in Downtown Florence.
- *Assist with coordinating outside of downtown.* Our office has a finger on the pulse of other events happening in Florence outside of Downtown, potential conflicts, etc. We can also assist you if you want to join in on the efforts of another event or organizer.
- *Promote your event in newsletter and on our social media channels.* Our Facebook page is a great place to get the word out about your event. We have more than 10,000 followers and reach nearly 10,000 subscribers with our weekly email newsletter that comes out every Wednesday.
- *Add your event to our website's calendar.* We keep a constantly updated compilation of downtown events available on our website.
- *Help connect you to downtown businesses.* We are happy to make introductions and brainstorm ways to activate our downtown business community with your event.
- *Provide technical assistance.* Our office has planned and executed hundreds of events. We are happy to meet with you and provide you with ideas, resources, contacts, and more to help make your event successful.

Event Logistics

When organizing an event in Downtown Florence, 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 in the 100 and 200 blocks of S. Dargan Street. Limited 220 v. power is available, as is standard 120 v. power. Power needs should be coordinated through the Downtown Development Office. Be mindful of overloading a power source. If you are in doubt whether you or your vendors will have enough power to successfully run your event, consider bringing quiet-run generators with muffler covers. You are responsible for ensuring that vendor power needs can be reasonably accommodated before they show up. Power losses can happen, and FDDC and the City of Florence are not responsible if you or a vendor does not accurately describe power needs.

Road/Street Closures

If you intend to close a street for your event, the first step is to fill out the street festival application form available on the Downtown Florence website. All street closures are approved in a two-phase approval process beginning with the City of Florence Directors and final approval by FDDC's Board of Directors. Applications are accepted twice per year. Please see the application and policy for details. If your application is approved by all parties and an event permit is issued, you will need to fill out a parade form with the City of Florence Police Department Downtown Substation. Event organizers are also responsible for notifying businesses in the affected street closure area if applicable. Please note: Street festivals are a significant disruption to downtown businesses and careful consideration is made on the impacts to City services and downtown businesses when determining whether or not to approve a festival permit.

Trash and Recycling

Trash can requests are made through the street festival application form. Cans will be delivered to a central location within your event footprint. It is the responsibility of your volunteers to ensure they are placed throughout the event site and returned to the central location at the end of your event. Recycling cans can be made available upon request for paper and aluminum items. Fees will be applied for trash can rental and event organizers are responsible for all trash.

Restrooms

Consider how many attendees your event will draw and where attendees will access restrooms. Downtown businesses typically do not open their restrooms for event attendees, nor do the hotels. You will need to plan for port-a-jons in the event you need restrooms. Please be aware that restrooms cannot be left for extended periods in the downtown area and should be picked up within a day or two of your event. These facilities should be situated out of the way of parking spaces that will need to be utilized by businesses. Consider that restroom facilities are only useful if people know where to find them. Use clear signage to direct people toward the restroom area(s). This will help keep attendees and downtown businesses happy.

Parking

You can find a parking map on the Downtown Florence website. Encourage attendees to use the City of Florence free parking garages at 150 S. Irby Street, the County Complex, and the SC DHEC lot if your event takes place after hours. All of these are convenient to authorized event areas.

Accessibility

It is important to consider if your event is accessible to individuals with disabilities. This may include handicapped-accessible restrooms, parking areas, ease of access into the event area, and allowance of service animals to name a few. You should consult ADA guidelines for complete information.

Event Rental Equipment

The City of Florence and Florence Downtown Development Corp. do not provide set-up materials or set-up assistance for downtown events. You will need to plan to hire an event rental company or require your participants to bring their own set-up materials. Please note: No stakes may be driven into asphalt, brick, or concrete downtown. Water barrels and other approved tent weights should be used.

Vendors

Vendors can be a great way to attract attendees to your event. Please be mindful that all vendors preparing or serving food are subject to SC DHEC and City of Florence Fire Department regulations. All vendors should have a South Carolina Department of Revenue retail license and a City of Florence Business License or Peddler's License. Your vendors will need a City of Florence business license if they plan to vend at more than one event inside city limits throughout the year. They will need a peddlers license if they are from out of town and plan to vend at only one event per year inside city limits. Enclosed food trucks/trailers are subject to inspection and permitting by the City of Florence Fire Marshal.

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 may result in the revocation of your ability to host future downtown events. Please be mindful that fats, oils, and greases should be disposed of in proper containers and removed from the area. These materials must not be poured down sewer drains.

Downtown Business Involvement

When you bring an event into Downtown Florence, 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. Here are some tips to help ensure that your event has a positive impact:

- *Inform the businesses of your plans as early as possible.* Leave behind a description of your event and include all of the pertinent details. If a street will be closed, include a map of exactly which street, where on the street, and the closure times. Employees and customers will need advanced notice of how to get in and out of a business well in advance of your event.
- *Leave behind your contact information and clarify that you are the person to get in touch with regarding your event.* Florence Downtown Development Corp. and the City of Florence cannot speak on your behalf.
- *Pitch creative ways in which a business may get involved in your event.* Be considerate. Staying open late, setting up outside, and other requests outside of the day-to-day operations may not be feasible for some businesses with limited staff and resources. Don't assume that the business will participate just because the street is closed.
- *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 you can accommodate their requests.
- *Realize that just because your event may bring people downtown, it does not mean that your event will equate to sales for businesses.* Just think, if you are running a race, would you stop and do some shopping afterward 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 outside their door or block their entrance with a tent.

Getting Started Checklist

Below are some of the most important steps we recommend you take to get your event off to a good start Downtown:

- Review the Downtown Florence Event Guide.
- Work through the included event planning sheet or create one of your own. Organization is crucial to the success of your event.
- Contact the City of Florence Downtown Development Office to check on the timing of other downtown and citywide events to avoid conflict. Getting us involved from the start helps us ensure you are on the right track and have all of the necessary steps completed.
- Start planning—consider all of the logistics you may need, including those listed in the Street Festival Application. Planning an event takes time—give yourself months, not weeks, to plan.
- Fill out your Street Festival Application form and return it with any required support documentation to the City of Florence Downtown Development Office located on the 2nd floor of the City Center (324 W. Evans Street).
- Work on obtaining all of your necessary permitting such as the City of Florence Police Department Parade Form for street closures, SC Dept. of Revenue ABL (beer and wine) permit, SC DHEC Special Event Permit, etc.
- Once all your event details are worked out, send them to the Downtown Development Office so we can help you get the word out about your event.
- Be sure to coordinate with downtown businesses one to two months in advance of your event. If you're closing the street or taking up space in front of a business's storefront, make sure the business knows your plans.
- Create a marketing plan. We can't emphasize this enough. You wouldn't believe how often we hear people say that they were unaware events were taking place. Here are some ideas to get you started:
 - Create a Facebook event page
 - Send press releases to local media outlets
 - Advertise in a variety of sources, including those geared toward your target audience.
 - Ask the businesses downtown to post flyers about your event in their storefront.
 - Ask your vendors to take part in the promotion of your event to their network.
- If you are working with food or craft vendors, make sure you develop a good contract and be as organized as possible. Our office can help you make sure your contract has everything you need in it and there are some great examples online!
- Make sure you have contacted the City of Florence Business License Dept. to make arrangements for single day vendor licenses covered by the festival if applicable. This cost can be passed along to your vendors, or the festival can collect the fees and remit payment on behalf of the vendors to the Business License Dept.
- Make sure you estimate and secure enough tent rentals if applicable, portable restrooms and/or wash sinks, and other temporary equipment.
- Secure your special event insurance according to the requirements outlined in the Street Festival Application. Remember that the Downtown Development Office needs a certificate of insurance at least fifteen (15) days prior to your event.
- Establish a team to carry out tasks the day of your event or in the days leading up to your event. These folks can be volunteers, staff of your organization, board members, etc.
- Consider scheduling a meeting with the Downtown Development Office to go over your event's details and make sure nothing is left out before the big day.

Event Planning 101

We hope you'll consider the following planning suggestions when working through the details of your special event.

- **Your Goal:** What is the purpose of your event? Are you fundraising for your organization? 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 and what sets it apart from events already taking place Downtown? If there are already similar events happening, try thinking outside of the box to get the most interest from the community. Be mindful of competing with existing events. Your event theme needs to be fun, interesting, and/or exciting—but be clear. A vague or confusing event description or name will not resonate with prospective attendees and may lead to limited attendance.
- **Who:** There are many considerations here.
 - Who is your target audience? Families? Young professionals? Seniors? “Everyone” is too broad and unrealistic.
 - Who will participate? Are you having vendors? Asking downtown businesses to participate? Performers?
 - Who will volunteer to help? You need a good team of people to help you carry out all of the function of your event. Think about set-up, event operations, and event breakdown.
 - Who can partner with you that can play an active role? Will you solicit sponsors?
- **When:** Timing is key. If you plan your event the same day as several other events or in too close proximity to another event, you may end up competing for the same audience. Look through community calendars, news papers, school calendars, the CVB, Chamber of Commerce, local theatre and performance venue schedules, etc. If you're planning a fundraiser, take into consideration who else may be fundraising at the same time. If you're targeting the same or a similar audience, you may want to reconsider your event to avoid competing for the same dollars and attendees.
- **Where:** Community events are great, 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: streets cannot close to traffic until after 1:30 p.m.; locate convenient parking for attendees; identify restroom/port-a-jon placement. You also need to think about the limitations of the proposed space, the anticipated crowd size, and don't forget that safety is the top priority!
- **Budget:** Establishing a budget is important. What will your event cost to put on? Think rental fees, entertainment, supplies, giveaways, and advertising. Then consider opportunities to generate income—sponsorships, vendor fees, participation fees, etc.
- **Marketing Strategy:** One of the most important aspects of planning your event is how you will let people know about and entice them to attend. Think about all of the possible local and regional outlets who could help you promote your event, including free or in-kind options. Newspapers, social media, television, radio, flyers, and various digital platforms are all options. Go back to your target attendees and think about where you can best reach them.
- **Timeline:** Planning a successful event takes time and organization. Professional event planners suggest three to six months of planning for a single-day or evening event, and up to a full year for a major fundraiser. Plan out volunteer committee meetings between now and your event to set deadlines and work on various event aspects such as sponsorship and marketing.
- **Day-of Strategy:** Take into account logistics such as setup, check-in for vendors and/or participants, trouble shooting, and cleanup. Assign roles for your volunteers or staff ahead of time and make sure everyone understands their jobs.
- **Post event:** All downtown events must create an after-action report to determine what was successful and what went wrong. Be sure to host a debrief session and record notes with your event team for future planning. A post event worksheet can be obtained from the Downtown Development Office.

Event Planning Worksheet

Budget:	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Prepare the proposed budget	_____	_____	_____
Identify funding sources	_____	_____	_____

General:	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Check community calendars	_____	_____	_____
Fill out festival application form	_____	_____	_____
Prepare and sign any contracts	_____	_____	_____
Reserve rental equipment	_____	_____	_____
Coordinate event layout	_____	_____	_____
Arrange for security	_____	_____	_____
Arrange for ADA Compliance	_____	_____	_____

Comply with City Requirements	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Use of logos if sponsor	_____	_____	_____
Alcohol permit	_____	_____	_____
Parade Form with Police Dept.	_____	_____	_____
Business License for Vendors	_____	_____	_____

Decorations	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Decide on event theme	_____	_____	_____
Design plan	_____	_____	_____
Purchase Materials	_____	_____	_____
Day-of Decorating	_____	_____	_____

Entertainment	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Contract performer(s)	_____	_____	_____
Process deposit	_____	_____	_____
Secure lodging	_____	_____	_____
Secure stage if needed	_____	_____	_____
Arrange for hospitality	_____	_____	_____
Ensure day-of payment secured	_____	_____	_____

Promotion	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Develop strategy and schedule	_____	_____	_____
Design logo and promo materials	_____	_____	_____
Write and distribute press releases	_____	_____	_____
Design ads for print	_____	_____	_____
Write and submit radio ads	_____	_____	_____
Develop and manage social media	_____	_____	_____

Vendors	Completion Date	Assigned To	Date Complete
Contract vendor(s)	_____	_____	_____
Process vendor fees if applicable	_____	_____	_____
Establish electricity requirements	_____	_____	_____
Vendor layout	_____	_____	_____

Helpful Contacts

The following are important contacts for your special event. It is your responsibility to contact the following entities if applicable and communicate about your event.

City of Florence Downtown Development Office
843-678-5912
progress@florencedowntown.com

City of Florence Police Department
843-665-4008 (Parade Forms)
843-665-3191 (Jobs in Blue)

City of Florence Fire Department
843-665-3231

South Carolina Department of Revenue
181 E. Evans Street, Ste. 5
803-898-5864

SC Dept. of Health (SC DHEC)
[843-661-4835](tel:843-661-4835)
[Food Vendor Form](#)