



# PLANNING & PROMOTING EXTENDED HOURS



## ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

The Main Street Solution Center is a free access portal to resources for communities and organizations working to revitalize and strengthen their local economies. The Solution Center's curated resources are designed to help guide and inspire local leaders and advocates as they navigate the complexities of downtown and neighborhood business district revitalization and economic growth.

## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This Main Street Solution Center publication was underwritten by Michigan Main Street and Main Street Iowa. Their generous support demonstrates a shared vision and ongoing commitment to freely share knowledge, experience, tools, and best practices to fuel revitalization and economic growth in their own communities, and in locales spanning the nation.



## ABOUT THE CREATORS

**Leigh Young, AICP** is Senior Main Street Specialist with Michigan Main Street and a driving force behind the creation of the Main Street Solution Center. Her deep passion for planning, placemaking, community engagement, and sustainable urban development is evident in her work to advance the cause for revitalization and economic development in downtown and neighborhood business districts across Michigan.

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**Ben Muldrow** is a partner at Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a consultancy renowned for its creative approach to economic development, branding, and marketing strategies for small towns and cities across the nation. He brings an innovative mindset and a deep understanding of the unique dynamics of community branding to each engagement, blending traditional community values with modern marketing techniques to help communities and districts unlock their potential.

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# Planning for EXTENDED HOURS

Extended hours events in small districts play a crucial role in revitalizing local economies and fostering community engagement. They encourage foot traffic after traditional business hours, providing a substantial boost to retail and dining establishments while also offering residents and visitors alike an opportunity to experience the unique charm and social vibrancy of their town center in a different light. These events can transform perceptions of the district, highlighting it as not only a hub of commerce but also a centerpiece of communal life where memories are made, thus reinforcing the area's appeal as a destination for both leisure and business.



## Step 1: Set the Expectations

Different sources suggest it can take months or even years to change consumer habits. Embarking on an extended hours campaign will require a commensurate, upfront commitment.

## Step 2: Ramp up the Commitment

In year one, do one night a month. That means you are only asking for an extra 2 to 3 hours per month during the first year. In return, make a commitment to market the campaign, and offer ideas for in-store entertainment and activities to help attract attention and potential customers.

## Step 3: Smart Positioning

When you name the event, don't limit your ability to extend or expand the promotion. First Fridays, Second Saturdays and Third Thursdays are cute, but how will you extend and grow the momentum past one day a month. THE PURPOSE IS TO TEACH PEOPLE TO GO DOWNTOWN!

## Step 4: Strength in Numbers

You need to get as many businesses as possible to participate. If business owners say they don't have time or the employees



to cover the additional hours, consider organizing a corps of floaters who can work at multiple stores, or explore partnerships with other community organizations to increase participation.

## Step 5: Tell the Story

Uniform hashtags, social media promotions, decals, welcome mats, shopping bags and flags are all ways to promote the extended hours.

## Step 6: Measure the Progress

Businesses do not need to offer discounts the night of the promotion, but a return coupon is a great way to measure if people come back. Customer counts, store sales, and web traffic should all be used to measure success.



## 3rd Friday ArtWalk



# THE THREE YEAR PLAN

To create an extended hours event designed to draw people into the district, with a focus on a shorter planning cycle and a strategic approach that spans at least three years to gradually shift consumer behavior, all while minimizing the strain on small business staff, a streamlined and sustainable work plan is essential. This plan is aimed at incrementally building momentum for the initiative, ensuring long-term success without overburdening participants.

## YEAR 1: PILOT AND FOUNDATION BUILDING

Duration: 6 months

### Phase 1: Quick Planning and Initial Engagement (1 month)

**Objective Setting:** Define clear, achievable goals for the first year, focusing on laying a solid foundation and testing the waters.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Conduct quick, focused meetings with local businesses and community leaders to outline the initiative and secure initial buy-in.

### Phase 2: Streamlined Campaign Development (2 months)

**Branding and Quick Wins:** Develop a simple yet effective branding strategy for the event, focusing on quick wins like special offers or attractions that don't require extensive preparation.

**Event Planning:** Plan a series of small, manageable events or promotions that align with the extended hours, ensuring they are easy for businesses to participate in without additional staffing.

### Phase 3: Implementation and Promotion (1 month)

**Marketing Blitz:** Launch a targeted marketing campaign utilizing social media and local partnerships to create buzz around the extended hours and events.

**Kick-off Event:** Start with a modest but engaging kick-off event to draw initial interest and media attention.

### Phase 4: Operation and Iterative Improvement (2 months)

**Feedback Loops:** Implement simple mechanisms for collecting participant and visitor feedback.

**Adjustments and Support:** Make real-time adjustments to address any issues and support businesses in managing the extended hours.



## YEAR 2: EXPANSION AND ENGAGEMENT

Duration: 6 months annually, with events spread throughout the year

### Phase 1: Evaluation and Strategic Planning (1 month)

**Data Analysis:** Review data and feedback from Year 1 to identify successes and areas for improvement.

**Strategic Expansion:** Plan for a gradual expansion of the event, adding more participants or extending the hours/days based on the previous year's learnings.

### Phase 2: Enhanced Campaign Development (2 months)

**Community Involvement:** Increase community engagement through workshops or forums, empowering local businesses and residents to contribute ideas.

**Enhanced Marketing:** Develop a more comprehensive marketing strategy, incorporating lessons learned from the first year.

### Phase 3 & 4: Implementation, Operation, and Iterative Improvement (3 months)

Follow a similar structure to Year 1 but with enhanced events, improved support for businesses, and a stronger marketing effort.

## YEAR 3: CONSOLIDATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Duration: 6 months annually, focusing on sustainability

### Phase 1: Refinement and Integration (1 month)

**Sustainability Focus:** Shift the focus towards making the extended hours a sustainable part of the district's culture, integrating them into the regular operations of businesses.

**Partnerships:** Develop partnerships with local organizations or businesses that can help sustain the initiative over the long term.

### Phase 2: Full-Scale Campaign and Community Ownership (2 months)

**Full-Scale Events:** Organize larger scale events that draw significant crowds, supported by a robust marketing campaign.

**Community Ownership:** Encourage local businesses and community groups to take on more leadership roles in planning and executing events.

### Phase 3 & 4: Implementation, Operation, and Review (3 months)

Continue to support the operation of events, while also setting up a review process to ensure the initiative's long-term viability and success.

## SUMMARY OF ADJUSTMENTS FOR STREAMLINED PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY:

- Focus on quick wins and manageable events in the first year to build momentum without overwhelming participants.
- Utilize feedback and data to iteratively improve the initiative, gradually expanding and enhancing events based on capacity and interest.
- Shift towards sustainability and community ownership in the third year, ensuring the initiative becomes a self-sustaining part of the district's culture.

This approach ensures a gradual build-up of the extended hours event, allowing for consumer behavior to shift over time, minimizing strain on small businesses, and ensuring the long-term success of the initiative.





## READING ROCK STARS

**What:** Local educators will be reading stories and sharing a brief activity with kids while parents shop in the business as well as many other fun reading activities!

**Date:** Friday, March 4

**Time:** 5:30-8:00pm

**Location:** Participating downtown Troy businesses

Make sure to follow Troy Main Street on Facebook for up-to-date details.

Masks are recommended for anyone over the age of 2.

- Due to COVID-19, events are subject to change.

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