



ORGANIZATION & DESTINATION MARKETING



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

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ABOUT THE CREATORS

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The Main 5- Knowing Your Audiences

Balancing district marketing efforts while simultaneously advocating for and educating about the organization itself requires a multifaceted approach. This strategy must cater to the diverse interests and needs of five main audiences: owners, donors, the public, volunteers, and the government. Each group has unique priorities and ways they can support or benefit from the district, making it essential for the organization to tailor its communication and engagement strategies accordingly.

1. Owners

Owners, including property and business owners within the district, have a direct stake in the prosperity of the area. Marketing to this group should emphasize the economic benefits of a vibrant district, including increased foot traffic and higher property values. Advocacy efforts can focus on how the organization facilitates improvements and represents their interests in broader planning and development discussions. Educating owners on how they are funded and how they can contribute, perhaps through a Business Improvement District (BID) or similar special district assessment or fee, or through voluntary contributions, is also crucial.

2. Donors

Donors might include local philanthropists, foundations, and corporations interested in community development. Marketing to donors involves highlighting success stories and the impact of the district on the local community's quality of life. It's essential to advocate for the organization's role in these successes and educate donors on funding mechanisms, showing how their support is vital for ongoing and future initiatives.

3. The Public

For the general public, marketing should focus on the district as a destination for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Advocacy and education efforts should aim to increase awareness of the organization's role in enhancing the district's appeal and livability. This can include promoting volunteer opportunities and explaining how public support, whether through patronage of district businesses or participation in events and feedback initiatives, contributes to the area's vibrancy.

4. Volunteers

Volunteers are critical for many organizations, providing labor and support for events, beautification efforts, and other activities. Marketing to potential volunteers should highlight the personal and community benefits of involvement. Advocacy is less about persuading this group of the organization's value and more about fostering

a deeper commitment and understanding of the mission. Educating volunteers on the organization's funding and operational needs can also help build a more engaged and committed volunteer base.

5. The Government

Government entities at the local, state, and sometimes federal level can be crucial supporters of downtown and district organizations. Marketing to these stakeholders involves demonstrating the economic and social benefits of a thriving district, including job creation, tourism, and enhanced tax revenues. Advocacy efforts might focus on specific policies or funding opportunities that would benefit the downtown district. Education is key to helping government officials understand the organization's funding model, achievements, and future needs, thereby securing ongoing support and collaboration.

Balancing Act

Successfully balancing these strategies requires clear, consistent communication tailored to each audience's interests and preferred channels. This might include:

- Developing targeted marketing materials for each group.
- Hosting events or forums to engage different stakeholders.
- Utilizing social media, newsletters, and other digital platforms to share updates, success stories, and calls to action.
- Building partnerships and coalitions to amplify advocacy efforts.
- Regularly seeking feedback to adjust strategies and better meet stakeholders' needs.

Incorporating these approaches allows an organization to effectively market the district it serves while also advocating for and educating about its role, funding mechanisms, and how various stakeholders can offer their support.



Managing Your Brand

Organization branding and destination branding in a downtown or neighborhood commercial district context address different facets of branding within the urban landscape, each with its unique focus, strategies, and target audiences. Here's a breakdown of the differences:

Organization Branding in a District

Organization branding pertains to the identity and perception of the entity that manages or promotes the downtown or district. This could be a downtown development authority, a business improvement district (BID), a Main Street organization, or similar entity. The branding efforts here are centered around the organization itself—its mission, values, achievements, and the specific role it plays in enhancing the district.

Focus: The core focus is on the organization's image, its contributions to the community, and the services it offers. This includes its efforts in revitalization, economic development, and community engagement.

Strategies: Organization branding strategies may involve developing a strong visual identity (logos, color schemes), creating marketing materials that highlight the organization's achievements and projects, and engaging with stakeholders through events, newsletters, and social media to build recognition and support.

Target Audience: The primary audience includes local businesses, property owners, potential donors, volunteers, government officials, and sometimes the broader community—all of whom are stakeholders in the organization's mission and activities.

Destination Branding a District

Destination branding focuses on the district itself as a place to visit, live, work, and invest. It aims to create a compelling and attractive image of the area, highlighting its unique qualities, experiences, attractions, and ambiance. The goal is to draw visitors, attract new businesses, and encourage investment in the district.

Focus: The emphasis is on the district's unique selling points, such as cultural attractions, shopping, dining, events, and overall lifestyle opportunities. It seeks to capture the essence and vibe of the district, making it an appealing destination for various audiences.

Strategies: This involves storytelling through engaging content, utilizing social media, digital marketing, events, and PR to showcase the area's attractions and experiences. Visuals play a crucial role, with photography and videos used to capture the district's energy and atmosphere.

Target Audience: The target audience is broader than organization branding, including tourists, potential residents, investors, and anyone else who might be interested in what the district has to offer.

Key Differences Summarized

Purpose: Organization branding aims to build the profile and credibility of the organization managing the district, while destination branding seeks to promote the district area itself as an attractive place for various activities and opportunities.

Strategies: Organization branding focuses more on internal achievements, roles, and stakeholder engagement, whereas destination branding leverages the appeal of the district's offerings to engage a wider external audience.

Audience: The target audience for organization branding is more specific, including stakeholders directly involved with or impacted by the organization's activities. In contrast, destination branding targets a broader audience that includes potential visitors, residents, and investors.

In practice, both types of branding are crucial and often interconnected, with the success of one potentially bolstering the other. A strong organization can effectively promote a district as a destination, and a vibrant, well-branded district can enhance the reputation and effectiveness of the organization that manages it.



Crafting Your Message

Crafting an effective message strategy for a downtown or neighborhood business district organization, especially one operating with limited financial resources, requires a thoughtful approach that leverages storytelling, community engagement, and strategic partnerships. The goal is to build a compelling narrative that resonates across various stakeholders, laying the groundwork for tailored talking points for each of the main audiences: donors, owners, the public, volunteers, and the government. Here's how an organization might develop their message strategy under these constraints:

1. Define the Core Message

The first step is to crystallize the organization's core message. This involves articulating the vision and mission in a way that highlights the unique value the organization brings to the district. It should encapsulate the organization's goals, such as revitalizing the core, supporting local businesses, fostering community spirit, and preserving the area's heritage. This core message serves as the foundation upon which all communication is built.

2. Emphasize Storytelling

Stories have the power to engage and inspire. The organization should gather and share success stories that illustrate its impact on the district. These could be narratives of transformed spaces, revitalized businesses, successful events, or testimonials from community members whose lives have been positively affected. Storytelling not only makes the organization's work relatable but also helps stakeholders see the tangible outcomes of their support.

3. Leverage Free and Low-Cost Channels

With budget constraints in mind, the organization must make the most of free and low-cost communication channels. Social media platforms, the organization's website, email newsletters, and local community boards are all effective ways to spread the word without significant financial investment. The key is to maintain a consistent and engaging presence on these platforms, fostering an online community around the district.

4. Engage with Local Media

Building relationships with local media outlets can amplify the organization's message. Press releases, feature stories, and interviews can all raise the profile of the district and the organization's efforts. Even without a budget for advertising, news coverage and community interest pieces can provide valuable exposure.

5. Create Partnerships and Collaborations

Strategic partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, cultural organizations, and other community groups can extend the reach of the organization's message. These partnerships can lead to collaborative events, joint marketing efforts, and cross-promotion, multiplying the channels through which the organization's narrative is disseminated.

6. Foster Community Ownership

Encouraging community members to take ownership of their district's narrative is a powerful strategy. This can be achieved by inviting them to contribute ideas, participate in events, and share their own stories. A sense of ownership among the community can lead to more organic advocacy and word-of-mouth promotion.

7. Highlight the Value of Engagement

The message strategy should consistently highlight the value of engagement from all stakeholders. By demonstrating how each contribution, whether time, resources, or advocacy, leads to tangible improvements in the district, the organization can motivate more people to get involved.

As this narrative strategy unfolds, it sets the stage for developing targeted talking points for each of the main audiences (donors, owners, the public, volunteers, and the government). The overarching message of community improvement, shared value, and collective impact lays a strong foundation for engaging these key stakeholders in meaningful and specific ways. Through a combination of storytelling, strategic communication, and community engagement, an organization can effectively convey its mission and achievements, even with limited financial resources.

Lists of talking points to help you craft your message to reach each of the five audiences are included at the end of this document.



Marketing Toolkit

Creating a comprehensive toolbox for a downtown or district management organization requires a blend of traditional and digital marketing tools designed to effectively promote the district, its events, businesses, and investment opportunities to a broad audience. This toolbox should encompass strategies for direct engagement, content creation, online presence, and data analysis. Here's a curated selection of tools and platforms that can form the basis of a dynamic marketing strategy:

Digital Marketing Tools

Website: A well-designed, user-friendly website acts as the digital storefront for the downtown district, providing essential information, news, event calendars, and business directories.

Social Media Platforms: Utilize platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn to reach different demographics, share engaging content, and interact with the community.

Email Marketing Software: Tools like Mailchimp or Constant Contact facilitate the creation and distribution of newsletters, announcements, and targeted campaigns to segmented audience lists.

Content Management System (CMS): A CMS like WordPress allows for easy website updates and blog posting, crucial for SEO and keeping content fresh.

Google My Business: Enhances online visibility through Google Search and Maps, making it easier for people to find business listings, events, and location information.

Engagement and Networking Tools

Survey and Feedback Platforms: Tools like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms help gather feedback from stakeholders and the public, informing future marketing and development strategies.

Event Management Software: Platforms such as Eventbrite simplify the organization, promotion, and ticketing of events, helping to attract both local residents and tourists.

CRM Software: Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, like Salesforce or HubSpot, track interactions with key stakeholders, including donors, volunteers, and business owners, to tailor communications and engagement strategies.

Advertising and Promotion Tools

Digital Advertising Platforms: Google Ads and Facebook Ads allow for targeted advertising campaigns to promote events, attractions, and investment opportunities to specific audiences based on demographics, interests, and behavior.

Local Media Partnerships: Collaborations with local newspapers, radio stations, and TV channels for both paid advertising and editorial coverage of major events and stories.

Influencer and Blogger Outreach: Partnering with local influencers and bloggers to promote the district can enhance credibility and reach within the community and beyond.

Analytical Tools

Google Analytics: Provides insights into website traffic, user behavior, and the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns.

Social Media Analytics: Built-in analytics tools on social media platforms offer valuable data on post engagement, audience demographics, and the best times to post.

SEO Tools: Platforms like SEMrush or Moz help optimize website content for search engines, improving visibility and organic search rankings.

Creative Tools

Graphic Design Software: Tools like Canva or Adobe Creative Suite are essential for creating professional-looking marketing materials, from flyers and posters to social media graphics.

Video Editing Software: Applications such as Adobe Premiere Pro or Final Cut Pro enable the production of high-quality promotional videos to showcase the district's attractions and events.

Content Calendar Tools: Trello, Asana, or Google Calendar can organize and schedule marketing activities, ensuring consistent communication across all channels.

By leveraging this toolbox, an organization can effectively market itself, its events, and the unique opportunities within the district, engaging a diverse range of stakeholders and attracting visitors and investment.



Spread the Marketing Load

Recruiting volunteers to help a downtown or neighborhood business district organization market itself and its district requires a strategic approach to identify individuals with the right skills, enthusiasm, and commitment. Effective volunteer recruitment focuses on finding people whose capabilities align with the organization's marketing needs and who are passionate about contributing to the vitality of the district. Here are types of volunteers that make the most sense for these purposes, along with thoughts on a reasonable time commitment.

Types of Volunteers to Recruit

Social Media Savvy Volunteers

Ideal for managing and creating content for social media platforms. These volunteers understand trends, can create engaging posts, and can help amplify the downtown district's presence online.

Graphic Designers and Creatives

Useful for designing marketing materials, from digital graphics to print flyers and posters. Their skills can help in creating visually appealing content that captures the essence of the district.

Photographers and Videographers

Essential for capturing high-quality images and videos of district events, businesses, and attractions. This visual content is crucial for marketing efforts, especially in digital campaigns and social media.

Writers and Content Creators

Needed for blogging, newsletter production, and crafting compelling stories about the downtown district. They can articulate the value and appeal of the district, highlighting events, features, and success stories.

Event Planners and Coordinators

Key for organizing and promoting events that draw people to the district. These volunteers can manage logistics, engage with participants, and ensure events are well-publicized.

Street Teams and Outreach Volunteers

Useful for grassroots marketing efforts, including distributing flyers, engaging with the public during events, and gathering feedback from the community.

Market Research Volunteers

Can conduct surveys, gather data on foot traffic and customer preferences, and analyze trends that can inform marketing strategies.

Reasonable Time Commitment

Short-term vs. Long-term Commitments:

Volunteers can be segmented into those looking for short-term projects, such as a specific event, and those willing to commit to long-term roles, such as social media management or content creation. Clear delineation of these roles helps manage expectations.

Flexible Hours: Recognizing that most volunteers are offering their time around other commitments, flexibility is key. Providing options for both in-person and remote volunteering can also widen the pool of potential volunteers.

Specific Project Timeframes: For project-based volunteering (e.g., designing a campaign or planning an event), outline clear start and end dates, and estimate the hours involved. This approach helps volunteers fit their commitment into their schedules.

Ongoing Roles: For roles that are ongoing, setting a minimum commitment (e.g., 2-4 hours per week for at least 6 months) can help ensure consistency and reliability in your marketing efforts.

Engaging Volunteers Effectively

Orientation and Training: Offering thorough orientation and training sessions helps volunteers feel prepared and valued, increasing their effectiveness and satisfaction.

Recognition and Appreciation: Regularly recognizing volunteers' contributions can foster a positive and lasting relationship. This can be through public acknowledgment, appreciation events, or even letters of recommendation for outstanding service.

Feedback and Growth: Providing volunteers with the opportunity to give feedback and suggesting pathways for them to grow within the organization can enhance their engagement and commitment.

By carefully considering the types of volunteers needed and setting reasonable expectations for their time commitment, an organization can effectively leverage volunteer talent to enhance its marketing efforts and promote the vibrancy of the district.



Why Support Our Organization?

Corporate citizens should consider supporting the initiation of a Main Street organization in their community for several key reasons:

Community Goodwill and Brand Image: Supporting local initiatives can significantly enhance a corporation's image and reputation in the community. It demonstrates corporate social responsibility and commitment to the well-being of the local area where they operate.

Economic Stability and Growth: A thriving downtown or district contributes to the overall economic stability and growth of the community, which can create a more favorable business environment. This stability can benefit corporations both directly and indirectly.

Local Market Strengthening: By fostering a vibrant local economy, corporations can benefit from a more robust and diverse local market. This can translate into a more substantial customer base for their products or services.

Employee Engagement and Satisfaction: Corporations that engage in local community efforts often see higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. Employees value working for companies that demonstrate a commitment to their local communities.

Networking and Partnerships: Participation in downtown and district revitalization organizations offers opportunities for networking with local businesses, community leaders, and other stakeholders. These connections can be valuable for future collaborations and business opportunities.

Enhanced Local Talent Pool: A vibrant community with a strong downtown or district can attract and retain talent. Corporations benefit from having access to a larger pool of potential employees and a more dynamic local workforce.

Corporate Leadership and Influence: By supporting such initiatives, corporations can take on a leadership role in the community, influencing and contributing to important local decisions and development plans.

Tax Benefits and Incentives: In some cases, contributions to downtown and district revitalization organizations or similar community projects can offer tax benefits or qualify for incentives.

Long-term Community Investment: Investing in the community is an investment in the corporation's future. A healthier, more prosperous community supports sustained business success and can safeguard against economic downturns.

Corporate support for downtown and district revitalization organizations reflects a strategic investment in the community's future, aligning corporate interests with the well-being and prosperity of the area they serve.



Why Support Our Organization?

Downtown and neighborhood business district organizations play a crucial role in revitalizing and sustaining the vibrancy of their districts. Here are several talking points that highlight the importance of these organizations to downtown or district business owners:

Economic Development: Downtown and district organizations often spearhead initiatives that drive economic growth by attracting new businesses, supporting the expansion of existing ones, and enhancing the overall economic health of the district. This creates a more robust business environment for all.

Community Engagement: They foster a strong sense of community by organizing events and activities that bring people together, increasing foot traffic and patronage for local businesses. This engagement not only boosts sales but also strengthens customer loyalty.

Beautification and Preservation: Through beautification projects and historical preservation efforts, district organizations enhance the physical appeal of districts. A more attractive district attracts more visitors, benefiting the businesses located there.

Marketing and Promotion: They provide collective marketing and promotional support that individual businesses may not be able to afford on their own. By promoting the district as a whole, Downtown and district organizations help increase visibility and draw in customers for local businesses.

Advocacy: Downtown and district organizations serve as advocates for district businesses, representing their interests in discussions with government entities and other stakeholders. This includes advocating for supportive policies, infrastructure improvements, and funding opportunities.

Networking and Collaboration: They create platforms for business owners to network, share ideas, and collaborate on initiatives that can lead to mutual growth and success. This collaborative environment fosters innovation and resource-sharing among businesses.

Resource and Information Hub: Downtown and district organizations act as a central resource for business owners, providing valuable information on grants, business development programs, and other opportunities. They also offer guidance and support for navigating regulatory requirements and accessing economic incentives.

Increased Property Values: By enhancing the economic vitality and physical appearance of districts, Downtown and district organizations contribute to increased property values. This benefits business owners who own their premises and enhances the attractiveness of the district to potential investors.

Sustainability Focus: Many downtown and district organizations emphasize sustainable development practices, helping businesses become more environmentally friendly and resilient. This aligns with growing consumer preferences for sustainability and can give businesses a competitive edge.

Cultural and Social Hub Creation: They help transform districts into cultural and social hubs, where festivals, markets, and public art installations draw in crowds. These activities not only enrich the community but also provide businesses with additional opportunities to engage with potential customers.



Why Support Our Organization?

Community members should consider supporting the establishment of a downtown or neighborhood business district organization in their community for several important reasons:

Enhanced Local Economy: A thriving district can lead to a stronger local economy with more job opportunities and increased commercial activity. This economic boost benefits everyone in the community.

Preservation of Community Character: These organizations often focus on preserving the unique cultural and historical aspects of a community, maintaining its distinctive character and charm.

Improved Quality of Life: They work towards creating a more vibrant, clean, and safe environment, directly enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Community Pride and Engagement: Active participation in the revitalization and maintenance of their Main Street helps foster a sense of community pride and belonging. It allows residents to have a direct impact on their living environment.

Support for Local Businesses: District programs emphasize supporting local businesses, which helps to keep money within the community and fosters a diverse and robust local marketplace.

Social and Cultural Events: These organizations often host community events, festivals, and markets, which provide entertainment, socialization opportunities, and a sense of community cohesion.

Real Estate Value Improvement: Revitalization efforts can lead to improved property values, benefiting homeowners and property investors in the community.

Civic Engagement: Supporting an organization through volunteering or donating allows community members to be actively involved in decision-making processes and development projects that directly affect their neighborhood.

Environmental Benefits: Many downtown or neighborhood business district advocate for sustainable practices, contributing to a healthier local environment.

Networking and Resources: Being part of such an initiative provides access to a network of resources, knowledge, and expertise that can be valuable for personal and community projects.

Legacy for Future Generations: Investing in the community's downtown or neighborhood commercial districts is also about creating a legacy for future generations, ensuring that the community remains a vibrant and attractive place to live, work, and play.

Supporting a downtown or neighborhood commercial districts organization represents an investment in the economic, cultural, and social fabric of a community, offering extensive benefits for all members.



Why Support Our Organization?

Volunteers should consider supporting the initiation of a downtown or neighborhood commercial districts organization in their community for several compelling reasons:

Community Impact: Volunteering with the organization offers a tangible way to make a positive impact on the community. This involvement directly contributes to the revitalization and enhancement of the local area, improving the quality of life for residents.

Preservation of Heritage: These organizations often focus on preserving historical and cultural heritage, which is vital for maintaining the community's unique identity and character. Volunteers can play a crucial role in these preservation efforts.

Personal Fulfillment and Pride: Being part of a movement that improves one's own community can be incredibly fulfilling. Volunteers often experience a strong sense of accomplishment and pride in seeing the tangible results of their efforts.

Skill Development and Experience: Volunteering with the organization provides opportunities to develop new skills, gain experience in various fields like event planning, marketing, and community development, and enhance one's resume.

Community Connection and Networking: It offers a chance to connect with like-minded individuals, build a network within the community, and create long-lasting relationships with other volunteers, local business owners, and community leaders.

Advocacy and Influence: Volunteers can have a voice in the development and future of their community. They can advocate for issues they care about and influence decisions that shape the district.

Vibrancy & Activity: Through volunteering with the Organization, individuals can create a more vibrant community as they work on projects and programs that make improvements to the district, market the district and build a strong image for the community, or by participating in hosting community events.

Supporting Local Economy: The efforts of the organization directly benefit the local economy, helping small businesses thrive, which can be especially rewarding for volunteers who are residents of the area.

Civic Engagement and Education: It provides an opportunity for civic engagement and learning about the workings of community development, urban planning, and local governance, offering an educational experience beyond traditional settings.

Creating a Legacy: Volunteers are often motivated by the opportunity to leave a lasting, positive legacy in their community, contributing to a place that future generations can enjoy and be proud of.

Volunteering with a downtown or neighborhood commercial districts organization offers a unique blend of personal satisfaction, community service, skill-building, and the opportunity to make a lasting difference in the place one calls home.



Why Support Our Organization?

Municipalities have several compelling reasons to support the initiation of a downtown or neighborhood commercial districts organization in their communities:

Economic Revitalization: These organizations are instrumental in revitalizing local economies by attracting new businesses, creating jobs, and boosting tourism. This economic uplift benefits the entire community, leading to increased tax revenues and economic stability.

Preservation of Historic and Cultural Assets: They often focus on preserving historic buildings and landmarks, which not only maintain the unique character of the community but also attract tourists interested in heritage and culture.

Community Engagement and Pride: Downtown and district programs foster a strong sense of community by involving local residents, businesses, and stakeholders in setting a vision for the community and the development process. This engagement enhances community pride and cohesiveness.

Enhanced Quality of Life: By improving the physical environment, promoting clean and safe streets, and providing community-oriented events and activities, these organizations contribute to a higher quality of life for residents.

Sustainable Development: These organizations often advocate for and implement sustainable development practices, which align with broader municipal goals of environmental stewardship and long-term viability.

Leveraging Resources: Downtown or district organizations can leverage additional resources, such as grants and private investments, which can amplify the impact of municipal spending in these areas.

Positive Image and Branding: A thriving downtown or neighborhood commercial districts contributes to a positive image of the municipality, which can attract new residents, businesses, and investors.

Policy Development and Implementation: Working with a downtown or district organization allows municipalities to effectively develop and implement plans & policies related to economic development, urban planning, and community engagement.

Partnership Opportunities: It provides an opportunity for the municipality to collaborate with various stakeholders, including local businesses, residents, and other government entities, fostering a more integrated approach to community development.

In essence, supporting a downtown or neighborhood commercial district organization aligns with the broader goals of municipalities to enhance economic, cultural, and social vitality within their communities.

