



How to Make Downtown Events Work For You

Tips and tricks to get the most out of events for your
Downtown Business



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Get Your Register Ringing During Downtown Events

Why the HDA Does Events

As a business owner, you have an important stake in the revitalization of downtown Hollister. While progress continues with work outlined in our new Downtown Strategic Plan, what puts the most “feet on the street” in downtown are our events.

Special events held downtown bring thousands of residents and visitors to Hollister. Bringing them to our downtown increases the opportunity for them to shop, therefore increasing your opportunity to generate additional sales for your business and tax revenue to help fund city services.

Special events allow attendees to see all that Downtown Hollister has to offer. While not everyone who attends an event will be shopping that day, they certainly will be looking—looking at what stores, restaurants and services actually exist in downtown Hollister. If they have an enjoyable time during the event, they are much more likely to return at a later date to make purchases or just to spend time in Downtown.

Successful events get people thinking about downtown as a place they want to be—to shop, to dine, and to be entertained rather than a place they simply drive through to get somewhere else.

We hope that these tips will help you make the most of our downtown events for your business.

*The Hollister Downtown Association
Promotion Committee*



Downtown Events Calendar

◆ HDA EVENTS

GET RED—February

Heart, Health and Happiness—businesses come together for a month-long promotion of special events, sales, and activities.

Charming Chairs—April

Artists in the community paint or decorate a chair of their choice, and then place the chairs in businesses downtown for silent bidding by the public during a two-week frenzy that culminates with an Artist’s reception.

Farmers’ Market—May through September

Local farmers gather in downtown to provide the community a one-stop shopping experience for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Movies Under the Stars—Thursdays in July

The 400 Block in downtown is transformed into an outdoor theater, complete with giant movie screen and lots of sound, attracting families who would like to spend an evening together watching a movie.

Street Festival—Third Saturday in July

This seven-hour event draws over 5000 classic car enthusiasts to downtown for a day of music, food, and fun. Nearly 150 cars from all over the Central Coast line San Benito Street and provide a nostalgic backdrop for your customers.

Lights On Celebration—Saturday after Thanksgiving

Downtown becomes a magical place with lights, live entertainment, parade, and merchant open houses in celebration of the holidays.

◆ OTHER EVENTS

Saddle Horse Show & Rodeo Parade—June

The San Benito County Chamber of Commerce hosts this parade to kick-off the Saddle Horse Association’s Rodeo at Bolado Park, a long standing tradition in our county.

Veterans’ Parade—November

The San Benito County Veteran’s Coalition hosts this parade in honor of our Veterans and brings patriotic citizens of all ages to downtown.

After-Event Tips

◆ FOLLOW UP

If you collected names and contact information from people who visited your business during the event, reach out to them. Even if they didn't purchase anything during the event, sometimes a follow up is all that is needed to make a sale or close a deal.

◆ STAY IN CONTACT

In today's world, staying in contact is easy and inexpensive. One of the simplest and most effective ways to stay fresh in the minds of your customer is to send them regular electronic newsletters. There are many programs available to help you with this. Use a newsletter to tell your customers what is new in your business. Let them know of other upcoming downtown events. Conduct a survey to find out what your customers are looking for. The possibilities are endless. Between newsletters, maintain contact with quick e-blasts about sales and specials.

◆ HELP PLAN OTHER EVENTS

Downtown special events don't happen by themselves. They take months of planning and organizing by volunteers and merchants just like you. If you are part of the planning, you have direct input on how events can be structured to better meet the needs of downtown business owners. Our Promotion Committee meets the first Thursday of each month at 8:30 AM. (Contact our office for location.)

◆ KEEP AT IT

Not every promotional idea will work for every business, every time. Try different things. Keep what works. Get rid of what doesn't. Come up with new ideas.

Talk to your downtown neighbors to see how they promote their business during special events. Maybe you could partner with them to make events work better for both of you—cross promotion is a perfect example.

Pre-Event Tips

◆ REMEMBER TWO

There are only two days in the entire year when San Benito Street is closed to vehicle traffic and thousands of people come to downtown. Your opportunity to make additional sales on one of these two days is greater than any other non-event day during the year.

◆ “PLANT THE SEED”

A few weeks before each event, put some items near your cash register or in your window that fit the event theme. The point is to raise awareness of the event by telling your customers about specials you will be offering during that day.

◆ PRINT FLIERS

Prior to the event, advertise upcoming specials. Design Line Granger Printing, will provide you with a 15% discount on all fliers you print for downtown events. Beginning a few weeks before the event, put the fliers in your customers' hands, shopping bags, etc. so they know about the event and what will be going on in your business.

◆ WORK YOUR CONTACT LIST

If you have an email list of your customers, send them an email and let them know about the event and what your offer is for the event. If you have a mailing list, consider sending a flier along with a coupon that is good only during the event. Staying in contact with your customers makes them feel valued and keeps your business in their mind.

◆ PREPARE COUPONS FOR EVENT ATTENDEES

Create your own coupons and hand them out prior to the event. The important thing is to let people know you will be open for business.

Day of Event Tips

◆ MAKE SURE YOUR BUSINESS REMAINS OPEN

You can't make a sale if you're not open. While special event attendees may not be your regular customers, they are your "potential" customers. Show them you are supportive of downtown and that downtown is a great place to be!

◆ HAVE A SIDEWALK SALE TABLE

Attract attendees to your store with items that compliment the event. If you don't have sale items you want to sell, just moving some of your regular merchandise outside brings extra attention to your shop.

◆ HAVE A SPECIAL IN-STORE TABLE

Create a special area in your business, providing good deals on selected food or merchandise that makes it worthwhile for people to come inside. Consider running an easy contest for those who enter your shop.

Have participants fill out a small form including name, address, phone number, email address and birth date (no year). By doing so, they've entered the contest and you've got important information that allows you to add them to your mailing list. By getting their birth date, you have the opportunity to send them a card on their special day—something your competition probably doesn't do.

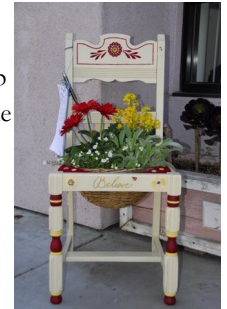
◆ OFFER "JUST LOOKING" COUPONS

Hand these coupons out to customers who are browsing in your store and invite them to come back. When making your coupon, remember that people are more likely to respond to "dollars off" than "percentage off" discounts.

Hollister Downtown Association

◆ HOLD CUSTOMERS' PURCHASES

Some people resist making purchases during special events because they don't want to have to carry them during the event. Offering to hold packages or to ship them for a nominal fee is an easy way to help close the sale and provide a great customer service that will be long remembered.



◆ HOLD AN OPEN HOUSE OR IN-STORE DEMO

This is a perfect way for service related businesses to introduce themselves and their services to the public. Have a brief sign-in form to capture the name and address or email address of everyone who attends so you can follow up with them after the event. Also, be sure to pass out fliers and business cards to all who attend.

◆ MIND THE "CURB APPEAL" OF YOUR BUSINESS

Sweep outside, clean your windows, and keep the walkway free from clutter. Inside, make sure your business is clean, well-lit and inviting. Fresh flowers and balloons are great quick fixes to add to the festive feeling of your business. Both are available from florists located downtown.

◆ BUILD YOUR MAILING LIST

Take every opportunity to get names and contact information from event attendees. Building your mailing list allows you to communicate directly and inexpensively throughout the year with your customers.

