

7 Ways that YOU can

Support Downtown Waterville AND Build Community

#1 Shop Downtown and Shop Local!


Whenever possible, patronize Downtown's wide array of locally owned businesses. These businesses are owned by your friends and neighbors – the same people who coach local sports teams, sponsor community arts events, and serve on the boards of local nonprofits. They also provide excellent customer service because they know you – your likes and dislikes, your children's wish lists, your wife's favorite gemstone, your husband's hobbies. Most importantly, they spend *their* money locally, too!

#2 Attend a Downtown Event!

Downtown Waterville hosts a year-round calendar of events designed to appeal to all ages – events like Harvest Fest, Arts Fest, and the Main Street Madness 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament – as well as weekly events based at local businesses, such as Thursday Night Trivia at Mainly Brews Restaurant & Tavern, Sunday Jazz Brunches at Soup to Nuts Coffee House, and nightly live music at The Speak Easy, Midnight Blues Club, and many other locations. All this without even mentioning the fabulous programming at the Waterville Opera House. When you attend a Downtown event, you are guaranteed to run into a neighbor or an old friend you haven't seen in far too long. Visit www.watervillemainstreet.org/events.php for more information.

#3 Dine at one of our Downtown Restaurants!

Downtown Waterville is PACKED with fabulous, locally-owned restaurants. Whether you are looking for lunch, dinner, or a late-night snack, you can find it in Downtown. Authentic Lebanese food, Thai, Vietnamese, and Chinese cuisine, eclectic American fare, pizza, delicious pub food... the list goes on. And, guess what? Because they are locally owned, many of these restaurants purchase fresh food at the Downtown Waterville Farmers' Market, patronize other downtown businesses, host the art walks, and support local events and organizations.



Downtown businesses will be open until 8pm every Thursday night between Thanksgiving and Christmas. You can find gifts for the whole family - from furniture to jewelry, clothing to housewares - in Downtown's rich array of independently owned shops. While you are visiting, enjoy a delicious dinner at one of our many fabulous restaurants, where gift certificates are also available. Also, enjoy special holiday entertainment coordinated by WMSt every Thursday night and enter a FREE raffle for \$500 Downtown Dollars.

Visit www.watervillemainstreet.org for a list of participating businesses, planned activities, and raffle details.

#4

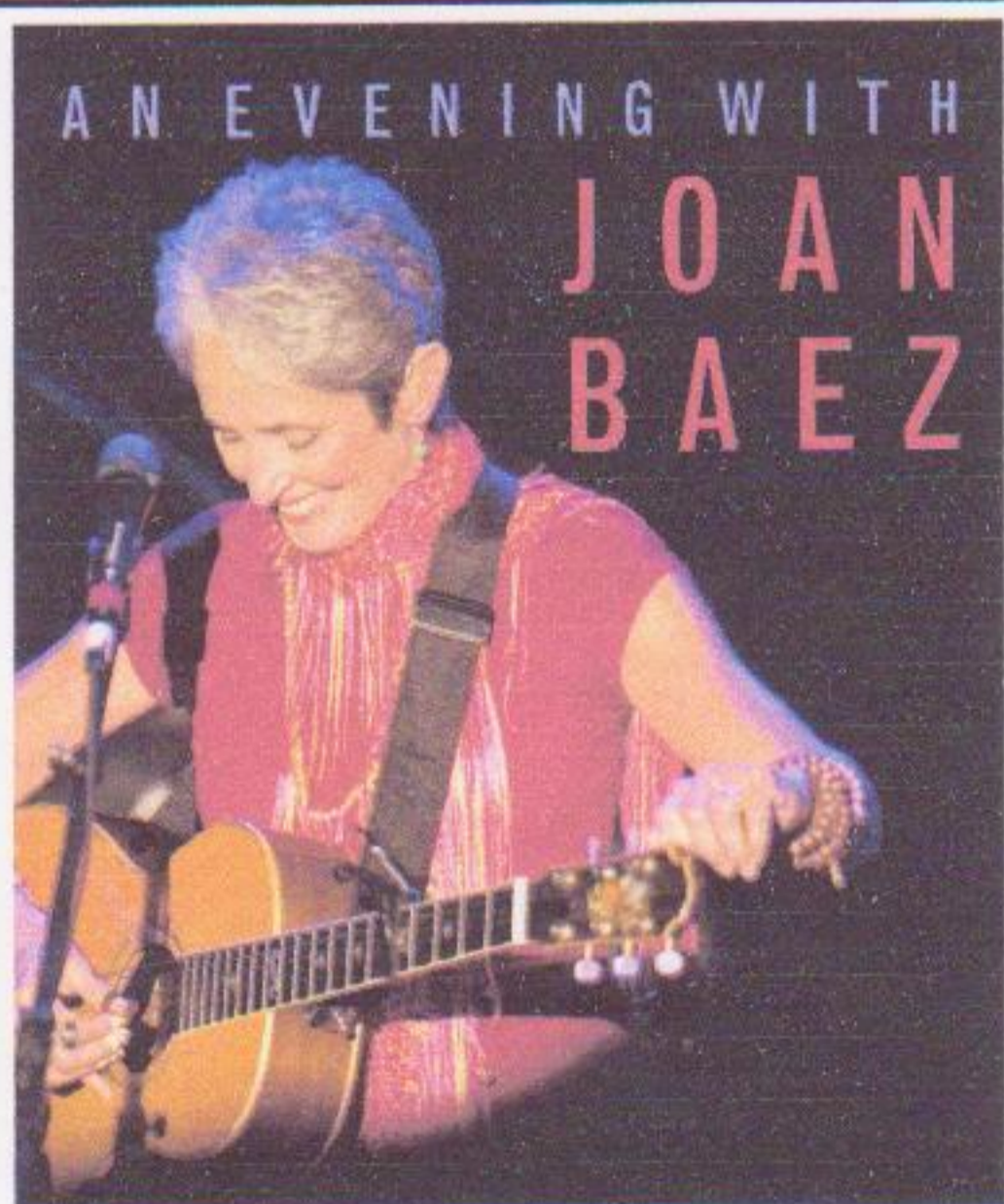
Go on a Downtown Art Walk!

On the second Thursday of every other month, around a dozen businesses host the Downtown Art Walk, offering refreshments and a chance to meet the artists whose work is on display. The Art Walks, which coincide with regular openings at Blue Marble Art Gallery (153B Main Street), highlight the amazing talent of our local artists and offer something for everyone! **The next Downtown Art Walk is Thursday, December 13, 4-8pm, which is also an Alive After 5 shopping night in Downtown.** Visit www.watervillemainstreet.org for more details!

#5

Shop at the Farmers' Market!

The Downtown Waterville Farmers' Market features a variety of locally produced food, including bison, beef, pork, chicken, cheese, milk, pies, bread, herbs, salves, perennials, eggs, and nearly every vegetable under the sun! How does shopping at the Farmers' Market help Downtown Waterville? It promotes the concept of buying local, it builds community as shoppers visit not only with the people who grow their food but also their neighbors who shop there, and in the big scheme of things, it helps people to realize that downtown revitalization and farmland preservation are two sides of the same coin. If you are thinking it is too late to support the market this year, we have good news! **The Farmers' Market is now YEAR-ROUND, with the next Winter Market scheduled for December 20, 2-4pm.** Visit www.watervillefarmersmarket.org for details!



Don't miss Live at the Opera House in Downtown Waterville, featuring rare acoustic performances by Rustic Overtones on December 29th and Joan Baez on March 24th. Call 207-873-7000 to purchase tickets, or visit www.liveattheoperahouse.com for more information.



Explore your creative side at Freshwater Arts, Downtown Waterville's community based arts education center. Freshwater Arts offers a wide variety of classes for adults and children. Our winter session starts on February 4. Visit www.freshwaterarts.org for more information!

#6

Volunteer!

Downtown is home to a number of nonprofit organizations working to create positive change in our community, including Hardy Girls Healthy Women, the Waterville Public Library, REM, the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce, Waterville Opera House, and of course, Waterville Main Street. Whether you are interested in serving on a committee or board or volunteering for a specific event, like a Downtown clean-up, YOU can be part of creating a vibrant future for Downtown and the greater community.

#7

Get Connected!

Stay up to date on what's happening in your downtown. The best way to do that is to sign up for the monthly What's Up in Downtown e-newsletter, which highlights upcoming events, special sales, new businesses, and much more! Sign up at www.watervillemainstreet.org. Don't forget to tell your friends, family, and colleagues, too!

I've also seen many Main Street programs start "Friends of Main Street", or "Main Street Believer" campaigns to solicit smaller donations of \$50-\$100. These are people who once you get on your lists, you can ask for support more than once a year. A good example from a number of years ago, came from Biddeford, Maine. I had made a contribution to their program and just before Thanksgiving, I received an email that basically said, "we're thankful for your past support and we couldn't have done all the great work in downtown without you. If you're thankful for the community events we host, the beautification of downtown, and all the other things we do to make your downtown great, we'd appreciate you making a contribution again. A donation of any size is greatly appreciated. Click here to make a fast and easy contribution." I thought that was very clever - then right before Valentine's Day, I received another email that said, "We love our downtown! We hope you love our downtown too. etc. etc". with basically the same message. No cost associated that with kind of solicitation.

Another Maine community (Waterville) knew that besides giving money, people could support downtown in other ways. I attached their two-page flyer of "7 Ways You Can Support Downtown". It's a great way to educate people before people become financial supporters. Get them using and loving downtown in hopes that they'll become supporters in time. I've also attached some other community examples.

Are you gathering contact information from people who buy tickets for your Ladies Night Out, your annual meetings, those who register for your car shows, vendors for your farmer's markets, volunteers for your clean-up days, etc. etc.? You already know these people are in and using your downtown. If you wanted to do an initial campaign to get new "Friends of Main Street", you could do T-shirt, reusable bags, coffee mugs, whatever, with your logo on it and give them away as an incentive for anyone who becomes of Friend during May (or whatever time frame you choose). Use your anniversary of your Main Street program at a time to ask. Skowhegan Main Street, during their 10th anniversary, set a goal to raise \$10,000 (great marketing strategy).

Some communities have tried to get 100 friends to donate \$100 to equal a Beautiful Downtown (brochure cover attached)

I also advise programs to look at your website and make sure there is a prominent message about your being a community development organization that relies on volunteer and community support. Some websites just feature events and business listings and don't highlight the fact that you need financial support to do all your good work.

These ideas come from communities of all sizes - and just because it might be from a city bigger or smaller than yours, you can still scale these ideas to your community. I hope more small towns will share their ideas. Good luck with all your fundraising efforts. Kathy